

Independent Office
of Evaluation



Investing in rural people

Overview of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD





From the Director

The evaluation function in the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), has evolved over more than 35 years of existence, from being discharged by a unit internal to the IFAD management into a fully-fledged independent evaluation outfit.

Today, the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) works under a very clear mandate – to evaluate IFAD-funded projects and programmes with a view to assessing what works and what does not, and to determine how far IFAD’s policies and strategies are successful in tackling poverty alleviation in rural areas. Such mandate is enshrined in the Evaluation Policy, approved by the Executive Board in 2003 and revised in 2011, that spells out the principles upon which the evaluation function shall operate - independence, accountability, partnership, and learning, taking into account the changes that have taken place in IFAD in the last years - such as the approval of the Fund’s direct supervision and implementation support policy, and the introduction of country presence - as well as the rapid transformation of the rural sector.

Today, with the recently launched 2030 global development agenda and the ensuing IFAD’s strategic vision - to invest in rural people for economic, social and cultural impact, leading to a sustainable and inclusive rural transformation - evaluation is facing new challenges and has the potential to become a powerful mechanism through which IFAD can better target poor rural people to improve its results in the countries where it operates.

After more than a decade of independence and more than 400 evaluation reports conducted between 1983 and 2015 at the country, corporate, thematic, and project level, IOE can proudly reaffirm its role as an instrument for IFAD to improve its business model, by increasing the impact of IFAD’s operations for a sustainable and inclusive rural transformation through excellence in evaluation.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Oscar A. Garcia', written in a cursive style.

OSCAR A. GARCIA
Director

Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

Mission, vision and strategies

In July 2015, IOE formulated its mission based on the mandate described in the 2011 Evaluation Policy and developed a common strategic medium-term vision for 2016-2025, which will guide decisions on IOE's undertakings and the work programme and budget. The vision is complemented by strategies which explain how the vision is to be reached.

Mission

IOE's mission is to promote accountability and learning through independent, credible and useful evaluations of IFAD's work.

Vision

Increasing the impact of IFAD's Operations for sustainable and inclusive rural transformation through excellence in evaluation.

Strategies

1. Building a stronger impact-oriented culture in IFAD
2. Bringing innovation in evaluation methodologies
3. Stimulating learning and growth in all our engagements
4. Creating dynamic partnerships
5. Developing and empowering our staff
6. Giving voice to the IFAD mandate



What we do

The Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) conducts independent evaluations of IFAD-financed policies, strategies and operations to promote accountability and learning. The main purpose is to contribute to improving IFAD's and its partners' performance in supporting rural transformation in developing Member countries.

IOE's evaluations assess the impact of IFAD-funded activities and give an analysis of successes and shortcomings – to tell it the way it is - as well as identify factors affecting performance. IFAD uses this knowledge to develop better instruments and policies to enable the rural poor to empower themselves and overcome their poverty.

Based on the key insights and recommendations drawn from evaluation findings, IOE communicates and shares IFAD's knowledge and experience in agriculture and rural development with a wider audience.

Evaluation Policy: our independence

The **Evaluation Policy** states the fundamental principles and operational policies of accountability, learning, independence and partnership. IOE has been fully independent from the Management, reporting to the IFAD Executive Board, since 2003, when the Board approved the first Evaluation Policy.

Ever since, independence has increased the credibility of evaluations at IFAD and is seen by governing bodies and the public at large as an assurance that the institution is working to improve itself and its results.

Such level of credibility and transparency is achieved also through the support given by the IFAD Management to the independent evaluation function, increasingly recognized as an effective tool to continuously strengthen the Fund's mandate and to improve, through its recommendations, the design of projects and country strategies and programmes.

The Executive Board oversees IFAD's evaluation work and assesses the overall quality and impact of IFAD's operations as documented in evaluation reports. The Board is assisted by the Evaluation Committee.





Mr Vimlendra Sharan, Minister (Agriculture) and Alternate Permanent Representative of the Republic of India to the United Nations food and agriculture agencies in Rome and Chairperson of IFAD's Evaluation Committee

November 2015

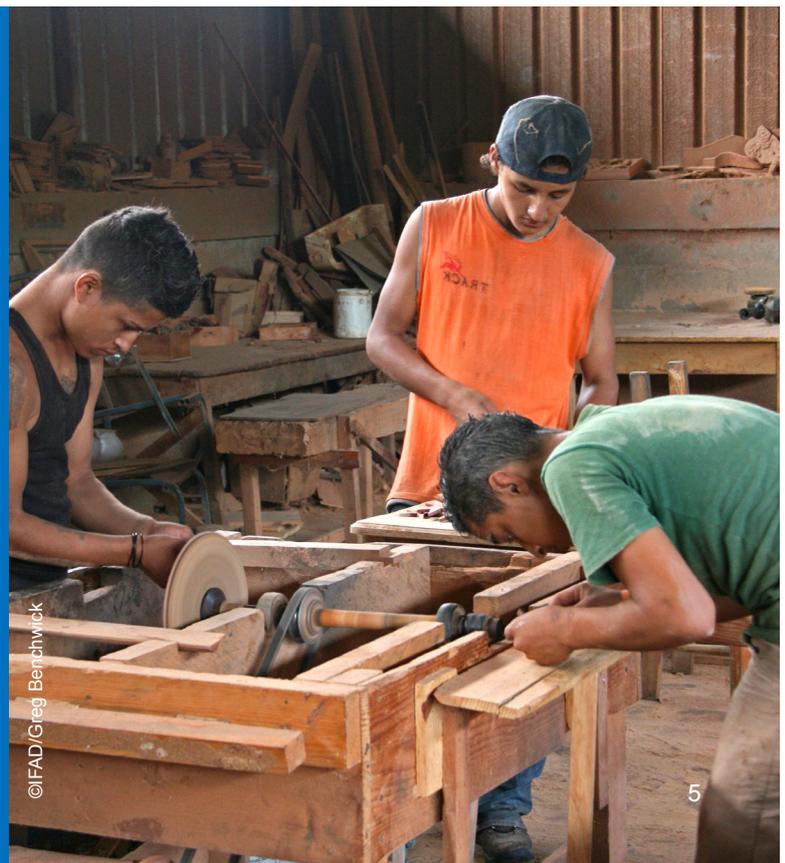
Functioning as a bridge between the Membership, Management and IOE, the Evaluation Committee (EC) - through its detailed analysis and deliberation of evaluation products from IOE and Management's views thereon - has helped the Executive Board and the Management take timely and appropriate decisions towards strengthening of the organization, and has helped integrate evaluation findings into programmes and policies of IFAD.

EC members, also being members of the Executive Board, carry their understanding from the EC meetings to the Board, thus making the Board deliberations better informed and results-oriented. This role of the EC is of as much importance if not more than its supervisory role over IOE.

My personal experience over the last three years, first as member and now as Chair, has convinced me of the evaluation function's utility and importance in IFAD's development and growth. It has also convinced me of the need for ensuring a high level of independence for IOE - constrained neither by budget nor the absorptive capacity of the organization, but guided by the touchstone of quality over quantity.

Evaluation Committee

The Evaluation Committee is a permanent subsidiary body and sub-committee of the Executive Board which performs in-depth reviews of selected evaluation reports and IOE's annual work programme and budget. The Committee meets formally four times a year and may also hold informal meetings when required. The Evaluation Committee is currently composed of the following Member States: Egypt, France, India (Chair), Indonesia, Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway and Switzerland.



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The learning loop: partnerships and Management's response system

IOE builds constructive partnerships around evaluations and engages partners throughout the evaluation processes so as to generate relevant recommendations and ensure their ownership. IOE establishes feedback loops from evaluation to policy makers, operational staff and the general public through in-country and in-house workshops, short communication products, evaluation syntheses and the review of new IFAD policies and strategies.

IFAD has established an articulated system to respond and keep track of IOE's recommendations. Such system includes:

- The Management's responses, which are provided by the IFAD Management to all evaluation reports (except country strategy and programme evaluations).
- For each country strategy and programme evaluation, an agreement at completion point is signed between IFAD Management and the concerned government on its commitment to adopt and implement evaluation recommendations within specific timeframes.
- The President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions (PRISMA), which is used to monitor the implementation of the evaluation recommendations agreed by IFAD Management and, in the case of country strategy and programme evaluations, also by the government concerned.





**Ambassador Maria Laura da Rocha
Permanent Representative of Brazil to
the Food and Agriculture Organization of
the United Nations (FAO), the World Food
Programme (WFP) and IFAD**

April 2016

Evaluation is a crucial tool for the improvement of the work of public institutions, especially financial institutions, as IFAD. To have an internal specialized office such as IOE to handle this important subject shows the commitment of IFAD to better understand the successes and shortcomings of its own policies and operations. The fact that the Evaluation Office is also independent confirms the Fund's interest in transparent, impartial and credible assessments of its achievements.

For Brazil, the IOE is an assurance that IFAD is constantly working to improve its institutional framework and its operational model with a view to fulfil its mandate to eradicate rural poverty.



**P erin Saint-Ange, Associate
Vice-President, IFAD Programme
Management Department**

April 2016

The Programme Management Department appreciates the findings of dedicated professional evaluation work and takes note of the relevant alternative approaches they identify to bring added value to the content of our country specific projects. We will continue to learn and adopt innovative and effective approaches and methodologies that increase opportunities for achieving results and impact at scale.

We are aware of the challenges of rural poverty reduction. As an agency which is at the forefront of investing in rural poverty reduction programmes we remain committed to meeting the agreed goals and targets while aligning ourselves fully with the development effectiveness principles for sustainable agriculture and rural development. All continued efforts to improve quality, operational effectiveness and development impact, will benefit from the use of a robust monitoring and evaluation framework, accompanying sound implementation and policy support, particularly in countries most in need of our investments and development programmes.

Our evaluation approach

Our evaluation approach reflects and is harmonized with internationally accepted evaluation norms and principles – from the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Evaluation Cooperation Group of the multilateral development banks and the United Nations Evaluation Group.

Evaluation methods and processes are documented in the [Evaluation Manual](#), which was first issued in 2009 and a second edition released in 2015. The second edition also contains the core methodology for evaluations that were not contemplated in the first edition, such as corporate-level evaluations, impact evaluations and evaluation synthesis reports. The Manual aims to ensure consistency, rigour and transparency across independent evaluations with the view to enhance our effectiveness and the quality of our work.

The Evaluation Manual is available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish to facilitate its use in all geographic regions covered by IFAD operations.



Our evaluation products

Our independent evaluations help IFAD enhance its development effectiveness as well as disseminate knowledge to partners and the development community.

Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations (ARRI)

This is IOE's flagship annual report. Aiming to provide an integrated perspective across all types of evaluations, the report gives a consolidated picture on results and impact of IFAD activities, discusses lessons learned, and draws attention to related systemic issues with a view to further enhancing IFAD's development effectiveness. Each edition also includes a dedicated section on one learning theme. For instance, the 2016 ARRI deals with knowledge management.

Corporate-level evaluations

Corporate-level evaluations assess the results of IFAD-wide corporate policies, strategies, business processes or related organizational aspects. They generate findings and recommendations that can be used to formulate more effective corporate policies and strategies, or to improve business processes and organizational architecture.

Country strategy and programme evaluations

These evaluations assess the performance and impact of IFAD-funded operations in a given country and generate findings and recommendations to serve as building blocks for the preparation of a new IFAD results-based country strategic opportunities programme.

Evaluation synthesis reports

IOE produces evaluation syntheses with the aim to facilitate learning and wider use of evaluation findings by identifying and capturing accumulated knowledge on common themes and findings across a variety of evaluation reports. The evaluation syntheses address specific topics such as gender, indigenous peoples and middle-income countries.

Impact evaluations

Impact evaluations are project-level evaluations intended to assess the performance and impact of an IFAD-funded project in a more quantitative and rigorous manner and provide recommendations for future operations. They apply mixed methods and triangulate from different sources. Compared to other IOE evaluations, they benefit from a larger set of primary data collected through a qualitative and quantitative survey.

Project performance evaluations

These evaluations assess project results and impact based on the report validation and a field mission. Project performance evaluations generate findings and recommendations that can inform other projects that IFAD supports.

Project completion report validations

These validations are independent desk reviews of project completion reports.

Dissemination products

Evaluation Profiles are two-page summaries of the main conclusions and recommendations from an IOE evaluation. Evaluation Profiles are prepared for corporate-level and country strategy and programme evaluations, evaluation synthesis reports and impact evaluations.

Evaluation Insights focus on one learning issue emerging from evaluations, with the aim of generating further debate among development practitioners.

Infographics. IOE develops infographics to allow readers to easily understand the most important findings and recommendations of an evaluation by using visually engaging graphics.

Videos. IOE may produce videos that accompany evaluation reports to show the highlights of an evaluation and illustrate beneficiary perspectives in relation to the evaluation results and activities on the ground.



Memberships

IOE is a member of the **Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG)**. ECG was established in 1996 by the heads of evaluation of multilateral development banks and is dedicated to harmonizing evaluation work among its members.

IOE is a member of the **United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)**. UNEG is an interagency professional network that brings together the evaluation units of the United Nations system, including UN departments, specialized agencies, funds and programmes, and affiliated organizations. It currently has 46 such members and observers.

Collaboration among Rome-based agencies

The evaluation offices of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), IFAD, the World Food Programme (WFP) and CGIAR, issued a joint statement in 2013 with their collective commitment to systematically strengthen cooperation in evaluation. The joint statement caters to strengthen collaboration in a number of areas, including joint evaluations on the ground, knowledge sharing, and peer reviews of important evaluations.

Events

As part of IOE's efforts in promoting learning through evaluation, IOE actively organizes and participates in evaluation events, including evaluation learning events held at IFAD headquarters and international events such as national round-table workshops held in partner countries, and evaluation society events (e.g. UNEG and ECG annual meetings). Moreover, IOE is keen on enhancing evaluation capacity development cooperation with partner countries through bilateral and multilateral events held in countries and in Rome as well.

In 2015, In the context of the initiatives for the International Year of Evaluation, the evaluation offices of FAO, IFAD, WFP and CGIAR jointly organized a **technical seminar entitled “Enhancing the evaluability of Sustainable Development Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”**, which took place on 17-18 November at IFAD Headquarters, in Rome. The seminar allowed for broad discussions on the importance of thinking upfront on the evaluability of SDG2 and its implications for the evaluation functions in development organizations and to the monitoring and evaluation systems available at the country level. It also confirmed the importance of sustainable and inclusive agriculture and rural development in achieving the goals set for SDG2, and provided an opportunity to reflect on the SDGs in general and SDG2 in particular, its underlying indicators and targets, the implications for the development community and for the Rome-based agencies.

IFAD invests in rural people, empowering them to reduce poverty, increase food security, improve nutrition and strengthen resilience. Since 1978, IFAD has provided US\$17.7 billion in grants and low-interest loans to projects that have reached about 459 million people. IFAD is an international financial institution and a specialized United Nations agency based in Rome.

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All evaluation reports are disclosed to the public at:

www.ifad.org/evaluation

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