



Breakout Session 1

Innovative digital tools for evaluation

Learning from COVID experience: enriching data collection methods and evaluation tools.

Fabrizio Felloni, Deputy Director
Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE)
ioe.ifad.org

6 March 2023
#ElBevaluation





Agenda

1. **Drawing from evaluation under COVID**
2. **Harnessing ICT potential for evaluation**
3. **Just in time evaluation**



Evaluating under COVID

What we learnt



EIB EVALUATION CONFERENCE 2023

Picking up the pace: Evaluation in a rapidly changing world

6 March 2023, Luxembourg | Hybrid

#EIBevaluation



COVID: from challenges to opportunities

No international missions, domestic travels restricted. NB: IFAD-funded projects are in remote rural areas.

Reactions / opportunities:

- 1) Rediscover **under-utilized secondary data** (e.g. surveys conducted by projects)
- 2) Remote interviews with national counterparts; **remote mini-surveys** of local organizations
- 3) **Geographic information systems** and remote sensing technology
- 4) For most evaluations, **national consultants** visited the field → caveat: impartiality?
- 5) **'Vicarious' field visits** in extreme cases (more on this later on)
- 6) **Quality assurance** process: reviewers with knowledge of country / local context for further 'reality check'





Coastal Climate Resilient Infrastructure Project in Bangladesh

Infrastructure for market and market access

Exceptional case in 2020

- ✓ No travel, including national consultants
- ✓ Natural experiment 'Cyclone Amphan'

Changes to adapt the approach to the pandemic

- ✓ GIS
- ✓ Phone interviews with project end-users
- ✓ Vicarious visits: through network of national consultant, local users / persons took photos / videos of project sites



Images / videos taken by local stakeholders

Gathered 103 ground images, 11 videos

Roads and embankments

Market infrastructure

➤ ... and their use

Triangulation with

- Technical expert: infrastructure engineer (construction, quality, materials, damages...)
- GIS images
- Phone interviews with local users



Banishanta Bazar,
Dacope, Khulna



Banishanta Bazar,
Dacope, Khulna

Some of these evaluation features are there to stay



- ❑ **Full substitute to field visits not discovered yet**

- ❑ **GIS data and images:** useful for projects with 'visible' outputs / outcomes: infrastructure, cropping pattern change, reforestation....

- Some changes not detectable 'from the sky' (power relationships, gender equality...). Need **triangulation** (expert interpretation, interviews with local people, surveys)

- ❑ **Vicarious field visits** for situations of insecurity (can train local people to collect basic information, photos, short videos)

- ❑ **'Greening' our evaluations and focus on field visits.** Reduced our international travels. For country-level evaluations from four to one or two (and increased % of time spent in the field)



Harnessing Information and Communication Technology for Evaluation



EIB EVALUATION CONFERENCE 2023

Picking up the pace: Evaluation in a rapidly changing world

6 March 2023, Luxembourg | Hybrid

#EIBevaluation

Guidance on Geospatial Tools for IOE

Experiences in using geo-based data since 2017

Produced Guidance note (2023) to make more consistent use of geo-tools and seize opportunity of massive data on-line (many free of charge)

- Focus on online applications, requiring limited input of external expertise
- Ex. retrieve data before and after intervention: infrastructure vegetation cover, cropping patterns, soil characteristics,
- Project Evaluation in Cuba 2022: GIS coordinates of the field sites visited → *SoilGrids*: carbon content in soil as indicator of soil health (triangulated with other evidence)

Global Forest Watch



Earth Map



Geofolio





Some insights – ICT for evaluation

- Our emphasis has been on Geo-based data. Additional source of evidence analysis, to **complement** traditional methods (field visits, interviews, focus Group, mini-surveys....)
- So far, focus is on **low-cost tools**, involving time-bound consultant input
- **Artificial intelligence**: an opportunity to synthesize from very high number of sources and interface between different databases
 - manage expectation on software analytical capacity
 - lengthy teething period (algorithm training, software adjustment)
 - we plan to build on current work done by ICT unit of IFAD





'Just in time' Evaluations



EIB EVALUATION CONFERENCE 2023

Picking up the pace: Evaluation in a rapidly changing world

6 March 2023, Luxembourg | Hybrid

#EIBevaluation

'Just in time' Evaluations

- ❑ 'Just in time' = to produce findings to feed into design of new policy strategy: exceptionally tight schedule
- ❑ Contemplated in 2021 IOE Evaluation Strategy, piloted in 2022: Synthesis note on Targeting.
- Methodology: based on synthesis of available evaluations, small set of interviews and focus group discussions
- ❑ Just in time evaluations can be used *in lieu of* conducting a repeat valuation on an already evaluated topic, when it is too early or too costly
- ❑ IOE-IFAD not receiving large demand of just in time evaluations
- ❑ ≠ 'Real time' evaluation: feedback during early implementation, can be a **process** review. Question: 'how early'? When is this for independent evaluation? In many cases, should be responsibility of Management of funding / implementing entity, particularly if it is for programme design revision.