



## IOE EVALUATION ADVISORY PANEL 2022

**Report on the deliberations of the  
Inaugural annual meeting**

12 – 14 July 2022, Rome, Italy

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## Foreword

I appointed the first Evaluation Advisory Panel (EAP) of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) upon arriving at IFAD, in March 2021. The panel serves as a critical friend to IOE, drawing on its substantive experience and expertise to help improve the independence, credibility and utility of the Office. In this regard, the EAP is mandated to provide advice on quality assurance of IOE products of a strategic nature, develop options for strengthening technical and thematic expertise, identify potential topics for future evaluations, and strengthen the profile of IOE.

I appreciate the inaugural annual meeting of the EAP, its rich outputs, and the very broad participation by members of the IFAD Executive Board and senior management, as well as the Heads of Rome-based evaluation offices. During the three-day event, deliberations of the Panel confirmed that IOE is on the right path and that it is important for the Office to continue to strive to engage with stakeholders in a constructive fashion. The EAP has brought a wealth of global expertise and remains a valuable sounding board for IOE and IFAD, as it advances the evaluation culture and practice.

Looking ahead, in line with the recommendations expressed by the EAP in the present report and the priorities enshrined in the IOE multi-year evaluation strategy [[here](#)], IOE will continue to work with IFAD management to take matters forward as we expand and deepen the evaluation function across the Fund.

I congratulate the members of the EAP for the drafting of the present meeting report, which was finalized under the leadership of Rob D. van den Berg.



Indran A. Naidoo, PhD  
Director  
Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

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## Executive Summary

The inaugural meeting of the Evaluation Advisory Panel (EAP) of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) was hosted in Rome, Italy, on 12 -14 July 2022. The hybrid meeting featured in-person sessions with active contributions from participants joining on-line. The event included the high-level presence of members of the Evaluation Committee and the Executive Board of IFAD, in addition to the directors of the FAO, WFP and CGIAR evaluation offices, and a broad spectrum of IFAD senior management representatives.

During the course of the inaugural three-day event, the EAP reviewed IFAD's corporate needs and demand for evaluative findings and recommendations, including by discussing topics, levels of analysis, decision-making processes, and the use of evaluation for ex-ante quality assurance on project and country programme design. The esteemed panel also provided feedback to IFAD and IOE on the evolution of thinking in international development evaluation, gave advice on emerging priorities for evaluation, and participated in a session on the preparation of a Corporate-level Evaluation on Knowledge Management.

Members of the Evaluation Committee and the Executive Board of IFAD engaged prominently during the first day of the event, including by providing feedback to the inputs received from independent evaluation, discussing how they could obtain more value from independent evaluation, and analysing how they could make better use of findings and recommendations from independent evaluation.

IFAD senior management representatives were equally active, and illustrated key ongoing changes at IFAD, and underscored the ensuing demand for strategic and thematic evaluations. This included a brief presentation on the Updated Development Effectiveness Framework, and ongoing work to strengthen the Fund's self-evaluation function.

The three-day meeting also afforded EAP members the opportunity to engage in bilateral meetings with the directors of the evaluation offices of FAO and WFP and CGIAR, as well as with a variety of IFAD senior managers, including, among others, representatives from the Programme Management Department, the Strategy and Knowledge Department, and the Quality Assurance Group.

## Plenary session opening the EAP meeting, July 12

In the plenary meeting with the President, several Executive and Evaluation Committee Board members and representatives of Senior Management of IFAD, the Panel introduced its mandate to provide support to the IOE Director on:



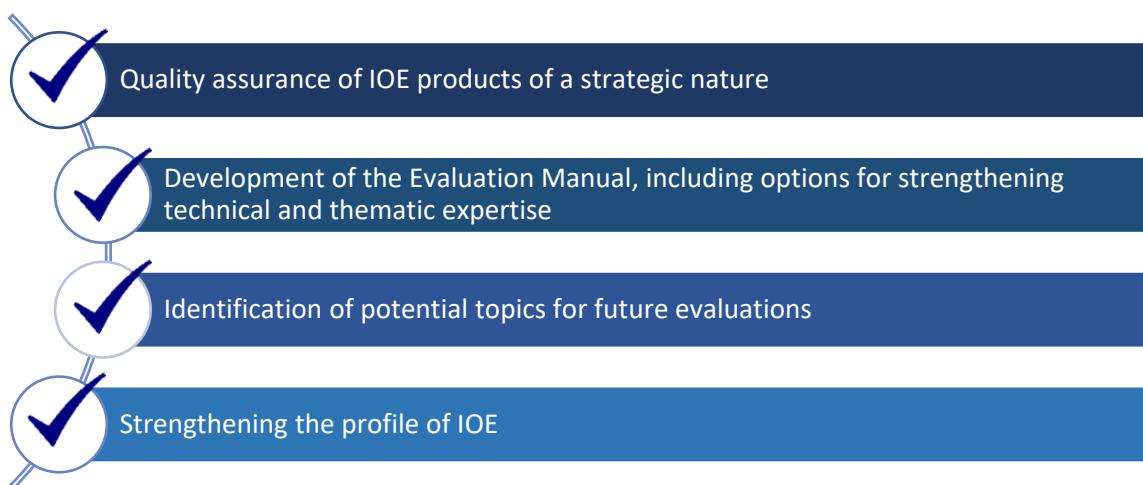
Enhancing the professionalism of the evaluation function

Incorporating cutting edge methods and approaches

Independence, credibility and utility of IOE

IOE's alignment with accountability & learning in IFAD

The support of the Panel to the Director took shape throughout 2020 and the first half year of 2021 through providing advice on:



More concretely, the Panel took note of the new [Evaluation Policy \[here\]](#) and provided inputs on the [Multiyear Strategy \[here\]](#) and the new [Evaluation Manual \[here\]](#). The panel notes that these documents are important developments building on the peer review recommendations, with the aim to modernise IFAD's overall evaluation function – both independent and self-evaluation. Furthermore, panel members provided comments on various draft reports of evaluations.

The panel also indicated its willingness to continue to contribute to IOE on:

- Ensuring accountability while focusing on learning possibilities
- Planning and programming in evaluation
- Role in IFAD for independent evaluation in relation to self-evaluation
- Interaction with M&E systems of partner countries
- Sharing advanced thinking on evaluative methods and analytical tools, with divergent perspectives of panel members to enrich discussions
- Follow-up webinars on specific subjects of interest to IOE

The EAP is available for IOE and through IOE for the Board and Management to provide comments on developments in evaluation at IFAD from a perspective of best international evaluation practice

## EAP meetings overview

The programme of the EAP meeting from 12-14 July 2022 gave the panel a fascinating insight in how evaluation is a vibrant and much appreciated input into the knowledge and learning systems of IFAD, including its strategic discussions with partner countries. Furthermore, a meeting with the Heads of other evaluation units of UN organisations and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) based in Rome, gave insight in how agencies focused on the Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 2 (tackling poverty and hunger) can collaborate on evaluation issues. Much appreciated was also an in-depth session with staff of the Independent Evaluation Office, which gave additional insight on methodological development and the evaluation processes at IFAD and more specifically IOE.

Our comments are grouped according to two perspectives. First, we discuss our observations regarding the role of evaluation – its system within IFAD – in general, focusing on the relationship between IOE and self-evaluation in IFAD, as well as its interaction with knowledge and strategy development throughout IFAD and with its partner countries. A second section focuses on evaluation in the Independent Office of Evaluation, and the challenges and opportunities that the Office is facing.

## Role of evaluation in IFAD

The independence of IOE is well established and recognised by all in IFAD. Management and the Board members know what they want and this leads to detailed procedures. In our meeting, some Board members raised the issue that there is a creative tension between IFAD policies and procedures with country perspectives and operations on the ground in partner countries, which raises the challenges for IFAD and partner countries and local/indigenous communities to shape ownership of IFAD funded activities. IOE manages the challenge embedded in its independence and its focus on learning especially well in the Country Strategic Programme Evaluations (CSPE) that create space for finding solutions for future collaboration. Several panel members have experience with these challenges and could, if so wished, provide support for IOE on this issue.

IOE manages the challenge embedded in its independence and its focus on learning especially well in the Country Strategic Programme Evaluations (CSPE).

Board members were generally appreciative of evaluation while confirming the need, recognized by IOE, for involvement of partners and borrowing countries in the evaluation process, as well as Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB). Representatives of IFAD operations emphasised the usefulness of CSPEs: there is strong demand for this product. The usefulness of CSPE was emphasised with the Malawi case brought up by the Quality Assurance Group as an example where a Country Strategic Opportunity Programme was heavily influenced by IOE findings and recommendations. It was good to note at our meeting that the opportunities of matching of timing and of demand and supply continue to be further explored by IOE and management.

The Panel fully recognizes the achievements of IOE and IFAD to move in the direction of transformational change, supported by evaluative evidence, as required in Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 2. While much has already been taken on board, this also provides scope for adopting

more transformational perspectives in upcoming evaluations and in evaluation's contribution to development of knowledge and strategy for IFAD's operations and in its relations with partner countries, as witnessed in the upcoming knowledge strategy evaluation, which was discussed with the panel. Furthermore, sustainability is addressed in evaluations in accordance with the evaluation criterion as revised by the DAC Evaluation Network. However, sustainability is a confounding issue, especially in light of the overstepping of planetary boundaries that has led to a systems perspective on sustainability. In Agenda 2030, and in the SDGs, sustainability is expressed as an adaptive balance between the social, economic and environmental domains, within planetary boundaries. IOE could over time incorporate emerging scientific insights on sustainability in its evaluation practice. The Panel can provide advice on this issue.

IOE has the potential to increase its contribution to addressing the needs of the poorest of the poor and various mainstream groups (gender, youth, Indigenous) and issues (nutrition and climate) to achieve the SDG equity goals. Further integration of the principles of transformative evaluation can strengthen IOE's response to these challenges as it explicitly focused on the three pillars of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental justice. This calls for implementing strategies in the evaluations that make them more proactive in engagement with members of the marginalized and vulnerable groups in order to consider culture and context when planning evaluations. It also calls for IOE to engage with IFAD's departments that are responsible for program development to provide data that reflects cultural considerations and ensures that the voices of the mainstream groups are included and valued. The EAP can provide further guidance in this regard. It is also possible that IFAD's division for environment, climate, gender and social inclusion could contribute as well.

The willingness of IOE and IFAD to engage with cultural and indigenous knowledge is recognized and it provides an opportunity to explore indigenous methodologies that could be transferred to other contexts. IFAD and IOE have built up a strong international reputation of interaction around and partnership in rural development; it thus has set up the structure to include new participative methodologies, such as indigenous and decolonisation perspectives, which could support IFAD and IOE to reach out and include local communities in interventions and evaluations. The EAP is available to support such efforts on a demand-driven basis.

Overall, the panel saw constructive relations of IFAD management with IOE and a willingness to "agree to sometimes disagree" without straining relations. Senior Management expressed their appreciation of synthesis work of IOE and of cluster evaluations, which cover more ground than for example project evaluations. The efforts and resources devoted to impact assessment as part of self-evaluation was noted by the panel. These impact assessments are being studied and reported upon by IOE, as "when triangulated with other evidence sources, (they make) self and independent evaluation of impact more robust".<sup>1</sup> In this light, the panel would be interested to learn more about how the results of the impact assessments are incorporated into the work of IOE, and it could provide further assistance in this regard.

Overall, the panel saw constructive relations of IFAD management with IOE and a willingness to "agree to sometimes disagree" without straining relations.

<sup>1</sup> To quote from a report of IOE on the impact assessments, that came available after the meeting of the panel in Rome. See *Comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the IFAD11 Impact Assessment Report* (EB 2022/136/R.8/Add.1), 19 August 2022, para 16, page 3.

Overall, IFAD has taken Monitoring and Evaluation seriously. The panel saw this reflected in all stakeholders it met, starting with the President, who said that with limited resources evaluation is key for the decision-making process. Both the self-evaluation and the independent evaluations are essential for this process. There is still room to improve on the learning part of the evaluation process at IFAD, both at IOE and in the Knowledge and Strategy Department. The EAP could potentially advise on these challenges.

The Quality Assurance Group (QAG) plays an important role at IFAD. When evaluations from IOE coincide in time and content with what the QAG needs, then the evaluation is used and makes a difference in terms of the design of programs. There could be more dialogue between IOE and QAG to improve these coincidences. It is clear that the QAG appreciates IOE and finds it useful as a source of evidence when reviewing designs and concept notes. They would welcome more evaluation reports to coincide with their quality reviews. Furthermore, QAG expressed a feeling to the panel that especially in self-evaluations more attention could be made to mainstreaming issues (see next paragraph), and it welcomes thematic evaluations such as on gender. This reinforces the value of adding transformative and Indigenous frameworks that include equity issues throughout IOE's evaluation processes. The panel is ready and available to interact with IOE to provide concrete suggestions for this on a demand-driven basis, where these suggestions would be useful and applicable in specific evaluations that IOE is preparing.

IFAD and IOE's commitment to the mainstream issues (gender; youth; nutrition; climate; and perhaps receiving more emphasis in the future: Indigenous Peoples and people with disabilities) is explicit and commendable. IOE has the potential to contribute more to the achievement of these goals (and the SDGs in general) through its evaluations, which would be a great opportunity to explore new, transformative and Indigenous, approaches and methodologies that reflect this commitment. The panel is ready and available to provide suggestions for these, where needed. The Rome based agencies have relevant and interesting evaluation activities and with new evaluation management in the other agencies, there should be scope for expanded collaboration, joint or aligned evaluations (on for example separate interventions in the same areas) where valuable and feasible, and exchange of practices and experiences which could be mutually useful.

## Opportunities for IOE

IOE has set the stage for its further development in its first ever multiyear strategy for evaluation, based on consultations to meet the learning and accountability needs of various stakeholders. Furthermore, the new evaluation manual, which is covering both independent and self-evaluation, will refresh and contribute to a more coherent approach across the organisation. These important efforts are noted with appreciation by the panel.

The panel notes that IOE promotes transformative change as reflected in its evaluation policy that is supported by a research and evaluation manual. Key to its approach is the commitment for continuous improvement of the evaluation and research methodologies, characterised by one of the Panel members as "leaving no knowledge behind". While this journey is at its starting point, the joint development with IFAD management of the latest version of the evaluation manual was much appreciated by management and did not lead to any diminution of the independence of IOE. The adaptive management,

The panel notes that IOE promotes transformative change as reflected in its evaluation policy that is supported by a research and evaluation manual.

performance plans and incentive structures in the operations departments creates opportunity for continuous evolving innovative approaches. This area of work, of innovation of approaches and analytical tools, including Indigenous and transformational knowledge, can potentially be further supported by the EAP.

While the structures and intentions are positive, Indigenous methodologies are not visible in IOE's menu of methodologies and data gathering tools. Integrating knowledge systems and adapting methodologies to make them legitimate and contextual relevant remains a challenge and a concern for IFAD and for other agencies. There is growing awareness of the complexity of issues and the need for a breakthrough in evaluation and research methodologies. The IOE staff and the Rome based evaluation units do not seem to recognize or use methodologies that fully reflect and incorporate culture and its contexts, including Indigenous perspectives. Based on both transformative and Indigenous frameworks, greater involvement of stakeholders who represent women, youth, people with disabilities and Indigenous communities can provide insights in that regard. Power issues can otherwise lead to key findings related to respect for these groups rights to be deleted or dismissed. This presents an opportunity for IOE to explore and document innovative practices and turn them into learning products that they can share to inform other processes and practices within IFAD and beyond. The EAP is serious in its intention to support these processes and practices with concrete examples of theoretical and practical approaches and is willing to study concrete situations and provide recommendations on how engagement with marginalised communities (as detailed in the mainstreaming issues) can take shape.

The Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) mandate gives IOE (and IFAD) an opportunity to explore training that goes beyond mainstream methodologies. Engagement with the full range of stakeholders throughout the process of evaluation may encourage evaluation designs that are more culturally responsive and valued and used by the stakeholders (beyond IFAD management). It should be noted that ECB includes so much more than training; IOE is well placed to include all aspects, as its Director was instrumental in setting up the Global Evaluation Initiative in his previous position as Director of the Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP. IOE is a current partner in the Global Evaluation Initiative.

The main challenge that IOE is facing in its evaluations, is that while these are tackling more complex issues, difficult choices will need to be made on what can be addressed in each evaluation, given budget and time limits. An example was the draft of the knowledge management evaluation approach, which fully recognizes the complexity of the subject, but is faced with the difficulty of identifying analytical tools that can help evaluate what is happening without costing too much and taking too much time. The panel appreciated the meeting with the knowledge management

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evaluation team highly and wishes them and IOE success in undertaking this important evaluation. IOE in general uses a mixture of standard evaluation tools, new analytical approaches, using existing relevant evidence, building an evidence database through its knowledge of and insights in self evaluations and evaluations from other sources. While the panel supports this approach fully, it asks attention for the increasing complexity of the issues that need to be tackled in evaluations, and offers their support on a demand-driven basis to provide advice and suggestions for building up a database of existing evaluation evidence, of key issues that need to be addressed and of the availability of innovative evaluation approaches and practices that tackle complex issues.

Keeping the independence of IOE is fundamental. But this should be combined with good communication and creating opportunities for increased understanding with various stakeholders. Evaluation will be more useful, in the broader context, when there is a solid exchange of points of view. Sometimes, the tension emerging from the evaluation findings can be solved through a better communication strategy during the evaluation process.

### **Appreciation**

The panel has appreciated the programme organised for its first annual meeting. We would like to thank the team at IFAD, especially the support of Shaun Ryan and Laure Vivaud, as well as the intellectual challenges posed by the Director, Indran Naidoo, and the Deputy Director, Fabrizio Felloni, for the impeccable preparation and great series of substantive meetings, as well as the dinner at the end of the three intensive days. For the panel this was a golden opportunity to have a look in the kitchen of one of the key international organisations working hard to end rural poverty in the world.

### **Next EAP meeting**

The next EAP meeting will take place in October 2023.

## Annex 1: Programme of the first annual meeting of the EAP

**12 July 2022**

**10.00am – 12.30pm** Plenary Meeting of EAP with: (i) Evaluation Committee (EC) and selected Executive Board (EB) members (convenors); (ii) IFAD Senior management. Staff from IOE and Management connected via Zoom.

The objective of the session is to obtain feedback from EC/EB members on: (i) the inputs received from independent evaluation; (ii) how could EC/EB obtain more value from independent evaluation; (iii) how could EC/EB engage to make better use of findings and recommendations from independent evaluation.

Chair: Director IOE

Introductory speech by the President of IFAD or a Senior Management Representative

Panellists: representatives from IOE and Management, EAP members

- IFAD Management will briefly illustrate key ongoing changes at IFAD and the ensuing demand for strategic / thematic evaluations. Brief presentation on the Updated Development Effectiveness Framework and ongoing work to strengthen self-evaluation (total 8 minutes)

- IOE presentation on the multi-year evaluation strategy, early insights on its implementation and ongoing reforms of methodology and products (total: 8 Minutes)

- Self-presentation by EAP members and brief PowerPoint presentation summarising the key activities and the initial insights of the EAP (15 minutes)

- Questions and answers and discussion with EC and EB representatives

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**12.30pm –** Lunch

**1.20pm**

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**2.30pm –** EAP members hold a meeting with the President and Senior Management of IFAD

**3.20pm**

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**3.30pm –** EAP members meet representatives from the Operational Policy and Results Division (Programme Management Department) and from the Strategy and Knowledge Department of IFAD.

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**5.00pm –** Internal meeting for the EAP members

**6.00pm**

## **13 July 2022**

**9.30am - 10.20am** Meeting with the Quality Assurance Group of IFAD. Use of evaluation for ex-ante quality assurance on project and country programme design

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**12.00pm -** Lunch  
**1.20pm**

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**1.20pm -** Internal meeting for EAP members  
**2.00pm**

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**2.00pm -** EAP members meet with IOE staff.  
**3.20pm**

- EAP panel to present emerging items from their review of IOE strategy, methodology and evaluation work
- Followed by Q&A with IOE staff.

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**3.30pm -** EAP meet with directors of evaluation offices of FAO and WFP and CGIAR  
**4.30pm**

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**4.30pm -** EAP members meet in a closed session and prepare a summary of key points for a presentation to the IOE Directorate  
**6.00pm**

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## **14 July 2022**

**10.30 am -** Session on the preparation of a Corporate-level Evaluation of Knowledge  
**12.30 am** Management Practices at IFAD

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**12.30am -** Lunch  
**13.30pm**

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**2.00pm -** EAP members present to IOE Directorate and wrap up  
**3.30pm**

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**3.30pm -** EAP closed meeting on the preparation of the EAP joint report  
**5.30pm**

## Annex 2: Contributions of the panel members to IOE and evaluation in IFAD

Bagele Chilisa

[\[on-line profile\]](#)

**Focus of advice:**

- An integration of knowledge systems from the global north and the global south will improve the quality of evaluation, especially in Low- and Middle-Income countries. Indigenous Science evaluation has largely been left out of the evaluation discourse resulting in insufficient integration of the socio-cultural in evaluation programming, theory and practice.
- Indigenous science evaluation proposes improvement of the quality of evaluation through a holistic approach to addressing program context and prioritizing needs. Spirituality and people's connectedness with each other and with the environment influence how people interact with development projects and should therefore be an important aspect of program context.
- Webinar for IOE staff on Indigenous evaluations

Gonzalo Hernández Licona

[\[on-line profile\]](#)

**Focus of advice:**

- To produce and use evidence globally for better decision-making, it is essential that countries develop national Monitoring and Evaluation systems. Evaluations owned by national stakeholders are more likely to be used for improving programs and strategies. IFAD's evaluations will benefit if robust national evaluation capacities exist.
- Evaluations also benefit when key development indicators are combined. This is the case with multidimensional poverty indicators (MPI). The work of IFAD could be enhanced by using MPI in rural areas to assess impact of programs and strategies on multiple dimensions of poverty. Being a multi-dimensional tool, this is a good entry point for the SDGs.
- Webinar on measuring multidimensional poverty

Hans Lundgren

[\[on-line profile\]](#)

**Focus of advice:**

- A top-class evaluation function and system that continues to evolve to meet the changing accountability and learning needs of board members, management and operations, partners, and local beneficiaries.
- A continuous and systematic focus on evaluation quality and purposefulness including participatory processes and use of a diversity of methods and analytical approaches. A quality focus in evaluation that draws on international good practice and provides a range of useful products and clear and actionable recommendations.
- Webinar on the revised evaluation criteria.

Donna Mertens

[\[on-line profile\]](#)

**Focus of advice:**

- Transformative change is supported by transformative evaluation that calls for a model of evaluation that is present throughout the development and evaluation of a program in order to contribute to a culturally responsive intervention.
- Transformative evaluation critically examines the cultural and contextual barriers that sustain an oppressive status quo and provides guidance in the development of power dynamics that address historical inequities and values community-based knowledge.
- Webinar on evaluation and social justice.

Rob D. van den Berg

[\[on-line profile\]](#)

**Focus of advice:**

- Evaluation for transformational change as promoted in the Sustainable Development Goals; this also requires for evaluation to be transformed, and it includes an integrated systems approach with attention for complexity, focusing on the nexus between development and environment.
- Evaluation of sustainability, defined as the adaptive and dynamic balance between the social, economic and environmental domains, at all levels (global, regional, national and local).
- Webinar on evaluation and sustainable development.

## Annex 3: List of participants

### **Members of the IFAD Executive Board and Evaluation Committee**

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Medi Moungui – Deputy Permanent Representative of Cameroon to FAO, WFP and IFAD  
Mei Hongyong – Deputy Permanent Representative of China to FAO, WFP and IFAD  
Caka Alverdi Awal – Alternate Permanent Representative of Indonesia to FAO, WFP and IFAD  
Sylvain Fournel – Alternate Permanent Representative of France to FAO, WFP and IFAD  
Eric Hilberink – Deputy Permanent Representative of The Netherlands to FAO, WFP and IFAD  
Yaya Olaniran – Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Nigeria to FAO, WFP and IFAD  
Bjorg Skotnes – Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway to FAO, WFP and IFAD  
Miguel Garcia Winder – Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Nigeria to FAO, WFP and IFAD  
José Luis Delgrado – Alternate Permanent Representative of Mexico to FAO, WFP and IFAD  
Yves Guinard – Deputy Permanent Representative of Switzerland to FAO, WFP and IFAD  
Haifa Aissami Madah – Permanent Representative of Venezuela to FAO, WFP and IFAD

### **IFAD Management**

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Gilbert F. Houngbo – IFAD President  
Donal Brown – Associate Vice-President, Programme Management Department  
Jyotsna Puri – Associate Vice-President, Strategy and Knowledge Department  
Katherine Meighan – Associate Vice-President, Financial Operations Department  
Luis Jimenez-McInnis Luis Jiménez-McInnis – Secretary of IFAD  
Nigel Brett – Director, Operational Policy and Results Division  
Sara Savastano – Director, Research and Impact Assessment Division  
Edward Gallagher – Officer-in-Charge, Quality Assurance Group  
Chitra Deshpande – Lead Advisor, Operational Policy and Results Division

### **Heads of Rome-based evaluation offices**

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Clemencia Cosentino, Director, FAO Office of Evaluation  
Andrea Cook, Director, WFP Office of Evaluation  
Allison Grove Smith, Director, CGIAR Advisory Services Shared Secretariat

## Annex 4: Multimedia resources

### Photos



## Online resources

**Summary video of the inaugural meeting** [[here](#)]



**News item** [[here](#)]



**Event page** [[here](#)]



**Social Media** [[here](#)]





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Independent Office of Evaluation