



Monitoring and Evaluation for South-South and Triangular Cooperation in IFAD

BACKGROUND

The global landscape for sustainable development is enriched by the pivotal role of South-South and Triangular cooperation (SSTC), which serves as a vital complement to traditional North-South collaborations. SSTC empowers developing nations to collaboratively bridge gaps in knowledge and resources, offering cost-effective solutions that foster inclusive partnerships.

As we navigate the intricate path towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the indispensability of accessible, timely, and reliable data becomes apparent. Establishing a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework is key to evidence-based decision-making.

IFAD's efforts in M&E for SSTC are enhanced in three dimensions:

- 1) IFAD corporate strategy level;
- 2) country strategy level; and
- 3) initiative/project level.

SSTC M&E at corporate level

A key focus of the IFAD SSTC Strategy 2022-2027 is to provide an enabling environment for a robust M&E framework for guiding performance, facilitating adaptive learning and generate lessons related to SSTC as an instrument in IFAD's country programmes.

A comprehensive monitoring and learning system, mirroring the theory of change, is put in place to monitor, assess and report on the progress and results of the Strategy. This includes a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches to measure success through the results measurement framework (RMF).

The RMF provides indicators for outcomes (e.g. SSTC contribution to country programme objectives and capacity enhancement) and outputs, such as number of solutions, knowledge products and partnerships promoted.



Panel Discussion: Evaluation policy for institutional effectiveness © IFAD

Embedding SSTC M&E in COSOP

A country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) is a framework for making strategic choices about IFAD operations in a country, identifying opportunities for IFAD financing and facilitating management for results. Strengthening M&E systems is a priority to gather, process, and analyse information on progress made in meeting the COSOP targets.

According to the [guidance note on embedding SSTC in COSOPs](#), the COSOP RMF should indicate one or more outcome indicators and milestone/ output indicators, to which the SSTC activities will contribute, to facilitate monitoring and assessment of the envisaged SSTC initiatives.

Upon COSOP completion, the evaluation of SSTC initiatives under COSOP is based on their grounding in clearly defined needs and opportunities, the fitness of the solutions and partnerships to the country context and their contribution to the overall COSOP strategic objectives.

M&E at the project level

Project level M&E is a systematic process integral to effective project management. In essence, project level M&E is a dynamic process that empowers organizations to adapt, improve, and deliver impactful results in their projects.

IFAD's M&E at SSTC project level is guided along the following lines:

- the categories and modalities of SSTC deployed by IFAD in its operation;
- using the Theory of Change (ToC) and logical framework (logframe) to establish the M&E system for SSTC initiatives at project design;
- using SSTC Core Indicators and SSTC-related Indicators to monitor the performance of SSTC initiatives; and
- developing the M&E plan to track, report and assess progress against the SSTC indicators.

Categories of IFAD SSTC activities and examples

Knowledge and Policy Exchange

The Eswatini Country Programme organizes a two-day workshop where experts from global livestock projects from 4 countries shared their production and marketing innovations.

Technical Assistance

The Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences uses the Farmer Field School approach to train smallholders in the Republic of Congo to detect and treat cassava plant disease.

Business Collaboration

In Ghana and Nigeria, IFAD works in partnership with the private sector to facilitate the transfer of cage systems technology and the delivery of training for aquaculture business development.

Trade Facilitation

In Tanzania, a project supported young rural entrepreneurs in the Lake Zone to attend business docking meetings and trade fairs to facilitate the export of dry cassava chips.

IFAD SSTC Core Indicators as below are used for monitoring and evaluating IFAD-funded SSTC initiatives. Stand-alone SSTC projects should also include sustainability SSTC-related indicators at the outcome level.



Investing in rural people

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Core SSTC Output Indicator

Outreach: People receiving support directly from the SSTC initiatives, disaggregated by female, male and young people and by Indigenous Peoples and people with disabilities when relevant, such as when these are a specific project target group

Core SSTC Outcome Indicator

Ownership: People reporting adoption of new techniques/solutions or access to markets or financing in the medium to long-term as a result of the SSTC initiatives, disaggregated by female, male and young people and by Indigenous Peoples and people with disabilities when relevant, such as when these are a target group

Core SSTC Outcome Indicator

Effectiveness: Percentage (average) increase in production /income or decrease in cost/waste resulting from the SSTC initiatives, disaggregated by female, male and young people and by Indigenous Peoples and people with disabilities when relevant, such as when these are a specific target group

Inter-institutional exchange on monitoring and evaluation in SSTC

In celebration of the UN day, IFAD's Global Engagement, Partnership and Resource Mobilization Division and South-South and Triangular Cooperation & Knowledge Centre for Asia co-organized a seminar at the UN compound in Beijing aimed at sharing knowledge for effective monitoring and evaluation of SSTC on 24 October 2023.

While the importance of SSTC to advance development is broadly acknowledged and conceptually integrated in IFAD's business model, how to systematically assess the contribution of SSTC to rural development remains an area with space for improvement.

The seminar brought together more than 70 seasoned experts from the development community to share approaches, methodologies and discuss key challenges. Participants included representatives of Chinese ministries, experts from academia and think tanks and evaluation specialists from IFAD, UNICEF, and the OECD.



"To maximise the trade-off between simplicity and complexity – this is the secret for making a simple but at the same time complex evaluation."

Ms Sara Savastano, Director of Research and Impact Assessment at IFAD

Challenges in monitoring and evaluating SSTC

The evaluation of the core principles of SSTC – solidarity, mutual learning, equality - is complex and difficult to assess with standard evaluation methodologies. The evaluation of these key principles requires the participation of partner countries, which are not necessarily available to participate in the evaluation process.

Rigorous impact evaluation is costly and often unavailable for small-scale SSTC interventions. Self-monitoring and evaluation by country offices has its own challenges due to lack of quality of data and lack of capacity.

Evaluation reports are often long and time-consuming to produce, which affects their accessibility to stakeholders and does not allow for timely sharing of lessons learned for improving SSTC implementation.

Solutions for meaningful M&E

For more information on the SSTC Unit in IFAD please consult: www.ifad.org/en/sstc.

For further details on the event, please visit the news website by scanning the QR code:



SSTC needs a different framework for monitoring and evaluation which is context specific and places emphasis on evaluating the quality of learning and ownership building. However, overarching principles still apply, such as the need to evaluate relevance, impact, and sustainability of SSTC initiatives.

International organizations need to invest in capacity building at national statistics offices, and at project level. IFAD's independent evaluation office is strengthening the capacity of operations teams to conduct self-evaluations. New technologies, such as remote sensing which has been used for real-time monitoring of IFAD projects, can also improve quality and availability of data.

Evaluation results need to be made more accessible and their communication better targeted. This can be achieved by involving different stakeholders in the evaluation process right from the beginning and by sharing short documents with lessons learned on platforms with relevant stakeholders, including policy makers and civil society.