

Mandate

The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) is responsible for conducting 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 partner's performance in supporting rural transformation in recipient countries.

In identifying key insights and recommendations drawn from evaluation findings, IOE is also concerned, in accordance with IFAD's disclosure policy, with communicating and sharing IFAD's knowledge and experience of rural and agricultural development with a wider audience.

Impact evaluations

Objectives

The main objectives of an impact evaluation are to:

- Assess impact of IFAD operations in a quantitative manner and be able to attribute impact to operations funded by IFAD, while also paying due attention to qualitative aspects that form the critical pillars of IFAD's development approach;
- Apply and test innovative evaluation methodologies and processes; and
- Generate valuable evidence for other evaluations done by IOE, such as country strategy and programme evaluations, corporate-level evaluations and evaluation synthesis reports.

Methodology

Impact evaluations are conducted in accordance with the directives of IFAD's Evaluation Policy¹ and follow the core methodology and processes outlined in IOE's Evaluation Manual.² The prime focus of impact evaluations is on assessing rural poverty impact, but IOE impact evaluations also include assessments and ratings across all other key internationally-agreed evaluation criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of benefits.

The core of impact evaluations is to identify a proper counterfactual - a situation or condition which hypothetically may prevail for individuals, organizations or groups where there was no development intervention - and to be confident that impact can be attributed to IFAD operations. This may be done by assessing the situation of the beneficiaries "before and after" and "with or without" the project, by comparing them with the counterfactual on a set of observable and unobservable socio-economic characteristics in order to assess impact and attribute it to a given operation.

To do so, in most cases IOE uses a mixed-method non-experimental approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods. A common first step is to determine the sample size and sampling strategy to select a representative sample from both the treatment and comparison groups. The use of mixed methods is most appropriate in smallholder agricultural interventions, given that multiple inputs, processes and impacts are required to achieve sustainable economic and social advancement.



Process

Preparation and desk review phases. The preparation and design of the evaluation comprise three key activities: the preparation of the approach paper, the preparatory mission, and the development of the detailed terms of reference for the impact survey. The desk review consists in reviewing external and internal documents and may be conducted in parallel with the evaluability assessment and the drafting of the approach paper.

Field mission, data collection and analysis phases.

The research instruments, and in particular the questionnaire for the collection of primary data, shall be piloted in the programme areas before the data collection starts. The data collection starts once the research tools are finalized and the enumerators are trained. Once the impact survey is completed and other impact information and data have been collected, the information is categorized, systematized, interpreted and analysed. Findings then need to be triangulated, to ensure that they are drawn on a sufficiently solid evidence base.

Report writing, comments and communication phases. During this phase, IOE prepares the draft final report, and shares it with the IFAD Management and the concerned government for comments. Once such comments are received, the final report is shared with the Evaluation Committee and, upon request, to the Executive Board.

Expected results

Strengthen organizational accountability and learning, with the ultimate aim of promoting sustainable inclusive development and rural transformation; generate knowledge and good practices on methodologies and processes for conducting rigorous impact evaluations.



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¹ www.ifad.org/en/evaluation/policy_and_methodology/tags/2085763.

² www.ifad.org/en/evaluation/policy_and_methodology/tags/5702569.