Concept Note for the development of the Second Edition of the IFAD Evaluation Manual

Contents

Concept Note

Second Edition of the IFAD Evaluation Manual

I. Introduction

1. The 2014 work programme and budget for the Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) of IFAD, as approved by the Board in December 2013, includes as a key activity the preparation of the second edition of the IFAD Evaluation Manual by IOE. This concept note identifies the objectives, methodology and processes for its preparation.

2. IOE organized a workshop for its staff and selected consultants on 9 July, 2013 to launch this process (see annex I for the workshop agenda). Preparatory analysis and, in the case of processes, findings of interviews with selected evaluation officers and consultants were presented as a basis for the discussion. The presentations and subsequent discussions at the workshop brought out a number of issues that will need to be addressed to enhance IOE methods and processes.

3. This document has three sections. Section I: A general background to the revision of the Manual; Section II: the objectives, scope and assessment framework; Section III: details on the evaluation team and the tentative time line for the work.

II. Background

4. The current Evaluation Manual was finalized in April 2009 and presents the core methodology and processes for designing and conducting project and country programme evaluations—at that time the types of evaluation most widely undertaken by IOE. It also includes a description of methodological fundamentals to be applied in all types of evaluations done by IOE. The manual builds on international good evaluation practice[1] and, among other issues: i) codifies and outlines IOE's approach to various methodological issues; ii) provides detailed guidance for undertaking CPEs and project evaluations and provides formats, templates and good practice for key evaluation deliverables; and iii) outlines IOE's protocols for internal and external communication at different stages of the evaluation process, a template for Agreement at Completion Point (ACP), and good practice guidelines for organizing workshops. The manual promotes consistency and quality across evaluations and helps clarify expectations and orient IOE staff and consultants.

5. A number of important developments that have a bearing on IOE evaluations have taken place since 2009. For ease of reference, these can be categorised into three types: i) ongoing developments with respect to evaluation practice within the international development evaluation community; ii) evolution of IFAD's priorities and operating model; and iii) the peer review by the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) of the MDBs of IOE completed in 2010.

6. Regarding the ongoing developments within the broader evaluation community, issues include those related to evaluation capacity, product development, methodology, standards and process, for example, Evaluation Capacity Development in partner countries, the "gold standard" debate[2], increasing use of Theory of Change in evaluations, more focus on evaluability assessments and impact evaluations, and emergence of a trend towards lighter evaluation studies and meta evaluations. Other important developments include, inter-alia, the issuance by the ECG of Good Practice Standards (GPS) for Public Sector

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[1] Notably ECG GPS for public sector project evaluations and CPEs, the UNEG Norms and Standards, as well as the OECD/DAC principles for evaluation.
[2] See for example Michael Quinn Patton's account of the debate: http://um.dk/en/~/media/UM/Danish-site/Documents/Danida/Resultater/Eval/Patton_RCT_April_2011pdf.ashx.

Evaluations, UNEG Impact Evaluation guidance and the emergence of Developmental evaluation and applying complexity standards.[3]

7. IFAD is in transition from a being mainly a financing institution to a full-fledged development organisation that takes responsibility for country strategy development, as well as project design and supervision and implementation support. A number of changes have occurred in IFAD's operating model in recent years that need to be factored in while developing the second edition of the Evaluation Manual. These include the introduction of direct supervision and implementation support, the plans to establish 50 country offices by end 2015, a strengthened self-evaluation system including impact evaluations, reimbursable technical assistance, and the introduction of an arms-length *ex-ante* quality assurance system.

8. Moreover, there have been changes in IFAD priorities to achieve the objectives in the organisation's strategic framework and overall mandate, which will also need to be considered. These include, inter-alia, a deeper focus on scaling up for wider impact, climate change, policy dialogue at country level, commodity value chain development, and increasing recognition of the role of remittances for rural poverty reduction.

9. A wide ranging Peer Review of IOE and the Evaluation Function at IFAD was completed in 2010. The recommendations from the Peer Review and further changes in recent years has led to a number of significant changes, which include:

- The introduction of evaluation synthesis reports as a new product by IOE;

- The transformation of IOE's approach to project evaluations (as done in the past) by introducing Project Completion Report Validations (PCRV) and Project Performance Assessments (PPA), for which IOE developed specific guidelines in 2011;

- The introduction of impact evaluations of IFAD-funded projects in 2013 as an instrument to experiment with alternative methodologies for capturing changes on rural livelihoods in a more quantitative manner;

- Enhanced role of independent evaluation to foster institutional learning for better operational performance; and

- More attention to evaluation capacity development in recipient countries, to strengthen national capacities for assessing results and impact.

10. **Audience.** The main audience of the evaluation manual are IOE staff and consultants. However, the manual will also be a useful guide for IFAD operations staff including IFAD-funded projects, partners at the country level, other development organisations, and evaluation practitioners in general.

III. Objective, scope and key issues

11. **Overall Objective:** The main objective in developing the second edition of the manual is to carefully consider the changes that have occurred since 2009 within and outside IFAD that have a bearing on independent evaluations by IOE and introduce necessary adjustments to IOE methods and processes, within the broader framework of the IFAD Evaluation Policy approved by the Board in May 2011. It will also serve as a basis for revising the harmonisation agreement between IOE and IFAD management, to ensure the alignment of the organization's independent and self-evaluation systems.

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[3] Michael Quinn Patton: Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use, 2011.

12. **Scope and Key Issues:** This revision will focus on four issues: (i) the changing context; (ii) Methodology; (iii) Process; and (iv) Formats. These are briefly discussed below.

13. *I - The context – major trends in international development:* Major global trends in evaluation thinking and approaches will be reviewed and trends and issues in peers and key donors of particular relevance for IFAD will be identified. Key questions include:

    - What are the major trends with respect to new and emerging types of evaluation?

14. *II - Methodology:* The current Evaluation Manual builds on internationally recognised evaluation criteria and a six point rating system. There are some criteria that are specific to IFAD in light of the organisation's mandate (e.g., innovation and scaling up). However, feedback from key partners has underlined that IOE will need to reflect which and how many evaluation criteria should be considered as core and form an integral part of the assessment of operations evaluated by IOE, and which criteria may be considered as additional, but would not be included in the overall assessment. While the six point rating system is in line with international good practice, it might be worth reflecting whether sharper guidance is needed in the application of the system.

15. There are other methodology-related issues that will also need to be considered. Some of the main points include: whether the rural poverty impact criteria should be eliminated given IOE has introduced impact evaluations as specific products; how to better assess efficiency at both the project as well as country programme level; how to factor in changing country contexts in independent evaluations; to define more sharply the questions to assess the performance across non-lending activities (policy dialogue, knowledge management and partnership building); how to reconstruct the results chain if logical frameworks and M&E quality at entry is deficient; how to deal with attribution; and what should be the focus and methodology for preparing evaluation synthesis reports.

16. *III - Review of IFAD evaluation processes:* According to the process review report prepared in preparation for the 2013 July workshop, current IOE processes were designed to be the "ideal", but there are opportunities for streamlining and achieving efficiency gains. There are a number of points that will need discussion, for example: how can the length of the entire process be shortened; how to strengthen the core learning partnership for country programme evaluations; what are the interim deliverables necessary for each type of evaluation; how to identify high quality consultants; whether it is appropriate to share simultaneously draft evaluation reports with IFAD management and concerned government authorities for comment; and what steps can be taken to ensure timely production and dissemination of evaluation reports.

17. *IV - Formats:* The evaluation manual contains a number of standard formats and templates, including for project evaluation reports, CPE approach papers and aide memoires etc. Standardization is important so IOE products have a minimum quality benchmark and can effectively serve as inputs for the ARRI and higher plane evaluations. However, while the current Evaluation Manual provides room for flexibility, in practice sufficient customization to specific contexts has not taken place in the application of the manual. There are therefore a number of issues that merit reflection while developing the second edition of the manual. Some of these are: what should be the indicative length of final evaluation reports by type of evaluation product; how can reports be best tailored to specific circumstances and what are the essential elements that need to feature in all reports; what formats would be conducive with enhancing communication and dissemination; and what are the pros and cons of translating the reports or parts of the reports into official languages and languages of the country concerned.

IV. Process, team and timeline

18. Every effort will be made to make the process as engaging as possible, and to draw upon existing knowledge and work, as well as good practices and knowledge from peers and internationally recognized experts. The development of the second edition of the manual will therefore include intensive consultation and participation of IOE staff and, selectively, of consultants throughout the process.

19. The review will be carried out in **five phases:**

20. **Phase 1:** Finalization of concept note, initial review of documents and key interviews. This phase will include an internal IOE review and discussions with key stakeholders in house.

21. **Phase 2:** Preparation of draft working papers. The papers will be initiated in sequence, starting with the context paper, followed by the other papers, some of which may be initiated simultaneously. For the paper on global evaluation trends, it is proposed to consider inviting one or two internationally recognized evaluation persons to make presentations to a half day workshop on trends. This could serve as input to the paper and would stimulate discussion on which of these seem most relevant for IFAD, and what staff see as the implications.

22. **Phase 3:** Preparation of second edition of the evaluation manual. This phase will be devoted to the preparation of the individual draft chapters of the manual, building on the inputs from staff and consultants. The draft chapters will be discussed in dedicated sessions, respectively, with IOE staff and the consultant. IFAD management and staff including representatives of recipient countries, and the Evaluation Committee will be briefed and consulted as appropriate.

23. **Phase 4:** Dissemination. Dissemination of the revised manual is done with due use of modern e-learning facilities including *You Tube* clips. Given the changing environment, careful thought will be given to how best to ensure updating the manual when needed and how to disseminate updates.

24. **Phase 5:** Development of a training programme. A program to train IOE staff and consultants, PMD and the Evaluation Committee, will be developed, to ensure full implementation and use of the revised evaluation manual.

25. **Evaluation Team:** Ashwani Muthoo, IOE Deputy Director will lead the process that will culminate in the production of the second edition of the IFAD Evaluation Manual. He will be closely supported by Catrina Perch, IOE Evaluation Officer, and Linda Danielsson, Assistant to the Deputy Director. Dorte Kabell (consultant) will work with the IOE team on drafting the manual, whereas Osvaldo Feinstein (consultant) will also provide inputs on selected topics.

26. **Deliverables:** The primary/final deliverable would be the second edition of the evaluation manual. Intermediate deliverables will include:

    i)   Final concept note – including annotated outline;

    ii) Working paper/PPT on global evaluation trends and changes in IFAD's priorities and operating model with implications for evaluation methods and approaches;

    iii) Chapters on methodological fundamentals; evaluation synthesis reports, project completion report validations/project performance assessments, country programme evaluations; corporate level evaluations; impact evaluations; dissemination and learning; and collaboration and partnerships;

    iv) Foreword, background, and annexes.

27. **International Quality Assurance Panel:** IOE will put together a small expert panel, represented by a number of internationally reputed development evaluators. Their role will be to review selected drafts of the manual and provide overall

guidance to IOE at different stages of the process. The panel will include, among others, representatives from UNEG, ECG and OECD/DAC Network on Evaluation. Feedback on the draft manual will also be sought from the Rome based Agencies.

Proposed timetable

#	Task	Date
1.	1st Draft chapter on PCRV/PPAs 1st draft chapter on Evaluation Synthesis	15 August
2.	Comments by AM and CP	22 August
3.	Revised draft chapter on PCRVs/PPAs Evaluation Synthesis	1 September
4.	Final draft chapter on PCRVs/PPAs/Evaluation Synthesis distributed to IOE staff	19 September
5.	1st draft CLE and CPE chapter	19 September
6.	**Feedback session PCRV/PPAs/ES**	**26 September**
7.	Final PCRV PPA /Synthesis Chapter Comments by AM and CP on CLE/CPE chapter	1 October
8.	Revised CPE/CLE chapter	15 October
9.	Final draft CPE/CLE chapter distributed to IOE staff	20 October
10.	**Discussion with Management (PDMT) on the evaluation criteria**	**21 October**
11.	**Feedback session on CPE**	**27 October**
12.	**Feedback session on CLE**	**28 October**
13.	1st Draft dissemination and learning collaboration and partnership Final CPE/CLE Chapter	3 November
14.	Comments by AM and CP on dissemination and learning, collaboration and partnership chapter	7 November
15.	Revised chapter on dissemination, learning and collaboration and partnership	12 November
16.	Final draft dissemination and learning/ collaboration and partnership chapter disseminated to IOE staff	16 November
17.	1st draft IE	24 November
18.	**PowerPoint presentation to the 86th Evaluation Committee Session**	**27 November**
19.	Comments on IE by AM/CP/SS	1 December
20.	Final draft IE sent to IOE staff	7 December
21.	**Feedback session Dissemination and learning/partnership/ Impact evaluation**	**12 December**

#	Task	Date
		2015
22.	1st full draft Evaluation Manual II Including foreword, background methodological fundamentals	9 January
23.	Comments received AM/CP	20 January
24.	Final draft Evaluation Manual II distributed to IOE staff	27 January
25.	**Feedback session with IOE Staff on draft Evaluation Manual II**	**3 February**
26.	Revised Evaluation Manual II sent to external panel	13 February
27.	**Panel workshop**	**25 February**
28.	Revised version of draft Evaluation Manual II sent to Management	6 March
29.	**Management workshop, including Rome based Agencies**	**16 March**
30.	Final Evaluation Manual II sent to SEC	27 March
31.	**Presentation of the draft Evaluation Manual II to an informal session of the Evaluation Committee**	**May 2015**
32.	Finalisation of Evaluation Manual II	May 2015

Agenda

Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) of IFAD

Evaluation Methodology and Processes Workshop

9th July 2013 – Casa San Bernardo, Rome

Time	*Session*
8:45 – 9:00	Welcome – Coffee
Part 1: **Selected Methodology issues**	
9:00 – 9:15	Introduction by A. Muthoo, IOE Acting Director
9:15 – 10:45	IOE: Retrospective and Future Products and Priorities (A. Muthoo)
	Discussion
10:45 – 11:15	Health break
11:15 – 12:30	Methodology (Kris Hallberg)
	Discussion
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch break
Part 2: **Evaluation processes**	
14:00 – 16:00	Processes (Inder Sud, Anil Sood)
	Discussion
16:00- 16: 30	Health break
16:30 – 17:00	Wrap up and next steps
20:00	Workshop dinner (optional)