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Evaluation Committee
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Statement for the IOE 20th anniversary

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In the April session of 2003, the Executive Board approved the first IFAD Evaluation Policy. From that time, the evaluation office of IFAD reported to the Executive Board directly, with the support of the Evaluation Committee. IFAD was the first UN agency with an independent office and one of the first in the International Financial Institutions to have a fully-fledged evaluation office. The IFAD evaluation policy became the model for many other policies and for a guidance note on institutional independence of the Evaluation Cooperation Group of the Multilateral Development Banks. The IFAD evaluation policy was revised in 2011, 2015 and 2021. The essence did not change: functional and behavioural safeguards to independence continue to be there. However, the important change in 2021 was that the policy covered both self and independent evaluation and fostered further collaboration between Management and IOE, in view of better transferring the evaluation findings and recommendations to the design and implementation of corporate strategies, country strategies and projects on the ground.

IFAD has in principle good systems to translate evaluation in new strategy and programmes and I wish to recognize the important role and support that we have received from the Executive Board, the Evaluation and Audit committee and from Management. So, our efforts should not be on creating new systems but on ensuring that the current one is used.

Evaluation serves both accountability and learning and serves them simultaneously. The two are mutually necessary: there cannot be real learning without being accountable and vice versa.

Independence needs to be upheld constantly: our experience is that, in the majority of cases, evaluations are appreciated by IFAD management, by the governments and other key stakeholders. Cases of serious disagreement are a minority but independence needs to be protected precisely in those few cases.

Independence reflects well on IFAD in general, not just on IOE. As the MOPAN report findings have highlighted in the past: it is IFAD, not just IOE, that becomes a more credible institution, with an independent evaluation. Moreover, our office has served IFAD well. Just to mention a few, IOE was instrumental in fostering major institutional changes of IFAD, such as direct supervision, field presence, decentralization and the reform of IFAD's financial architecture. At the operational level, we provide a wealth of analysis that can lead to far stronger country strategies and project design, if there is commitment to follow up.

Independence is not synonymous with isolation. We do want to live in an ivory tower. Evaluation is most fruitful when it addresses real problems and helps solve them. We want to preserve independence of analysis and judgment but we want to engage with our stakeholders. Our evaluation process has many opportunities for them to signal their priorities and share their experience.

Finally, we do recognize that the word "evaluation" comes to most of us with a feeling of apprehension. This is human and there is a literature on neurosciences that has studied this type of situation. Because of this, we are planning to introduce a training, first for our staff and then for the general audience on conducting evaluations and communicating evaluation findings in a way that reduces anxiety and promotes collaboration.