



IOE Evaluation Advisory Panel 2023

Report on the deliberations of the second annual meeting



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13-15 November, 2023, Rome, Italy

Foreword

It is an honour to write this brief foreword to the report of the second annual meeting of the Evaluation Advisory Panel (EAP) of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE). During the past two years, IOE and IFAD have benefitted from the individual and collective expertise of the panel. This expertise, and the substantial experience of the panel members, has also fed into IOE's strategy and workplan. In addition, the panel has supported the IOE team through targeted interactions and clinics.

Specific inputs delivered over the last year have include: (i) evaluating climate financing and its contribution to transformational changes and the implications for IFAD and IOE; (ii) a review of the formulation of IOE recommendations and follow-up; and (iii) reflections on indigenous perspectives, gender and disability in evaluation. The panel has also provided a set of recommendations to IOE, to which we have responded at the end of this report.

I take this opportunity to extend thanks to all the members of the panel for their service to IOE, including to the current Chair, Professor Donna Mertens, who provided leadership to the panel and signed off on the report of the EAP. We are very thankful for your time and expertise, which has helped us build our own evaluative capacity.



Indran A. Naidoo, PhD

Director

Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

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Executive summary

The Evaluation Advisory Panel (EAP) of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) met in Rome on 13-15 November 2023. Indran A. Naidoo, Director of IOE and Fabrizio Felloni, Deputy Director of IOE, as well as many IOE and IFAD staff members were in attendance. The members of the EAP included: Donna M. Mertens, Chair; Bagele Chilisa; Rob D. van den Berg; Gonzalo Hernández Licona; and Hans Erik Lundgren. The EAP made three presentations: Rob D. van den Berg presented, "Evaluating climate financing and its contribution to transformational changes – implications for IFAD and IOE". Gonzalo Hernández Licona and Hans Erik Lundgren presented, "Review of the formulation of IOE recommendations and follow-up". Bagele Chilisa and Donna M. Mertens presented, "Leave No One, No Knowledge Behind: Indigenous Perspectives, Gender and Disability in Evaluation". This report summarizes the presentations and amplifies possible areas for further IOE action.

Climate finance in IOE evaluations

Rob D. van den Berg

There is a widespread call to increase climate finance dramatically, as the current amounts are insufficient to pay for everything that is needed to meet the 1.5 degrees Celsius global temperature increase that countries have agreed should be the limit of climate change impact that would be acceptable. However, current climate finance is approximately 0.1 percent of all global finance, and is unlikely to increase substantially over the coming years. This percentage is open for discussion, as there is no common agreement on what constitutes “all global finance”. Totals differ per source and range between \$44 trillion to \$440 trillion. There is also uncertainty about the exact amount spent on climate finance, as the OECD figure for 2020 (its last data available) at \$83.3 billion does not include local investments in countries. China, for example, has a national plan for climate action that could include funding that is substantially higher than the total OECD amount.

In theory, climate finance is supposed to cover all funding of climate action. It should include mitigation and adaptation efforts, it would fund “just transition” plans and frameworks, it would in future include the approach to loss and damage that is currently under negotiation in the Conference of the Parties (COPs) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and it would include funding the climate initiatives of communities, stakeholders, actors and investments in and by the private sector.

For the total amount of global finance, many sources of money should be taken into account, such as governments, the private sector, private citizens and philanthropy, including trade, currency exchange and activities such as whitewashing and illegal money laundering.

For IFAD, climate finance is relatively new. IFAD has a strong history of partnerships and scores high in this regard, both in the UN system and in the system of international financial institutions such as the regional multilateral banks and the World Bank. Yet this type of partnership is often somewhat removed from the internationally active banks that are involved in climate finance, as its main focus is on partner countries and their rural areas, where investment programmes are formulated. Some private banks may be co-funders of such programmes and are thus involved as partners.

Many private banks have set up green units to start up so-called win-win-win investments, which are intended to achieve high rates of return in the economic, social and environmental domains. Some of them focus on climate action and others prefer social innovation. The problem is that in many banks these units are not representative of what the bank is doing and often represent only a very small portion of the banks’ investment portfolio. Moreover, recent scandals in the financial sector, as well as examples of banks refusing to fund sustainable agriculture and livestock while offering loans to farmers wishing to increase their intensive livestock farming, show that it is time the international community hold them to account for what their prime business appears to be.

My suggestion is that the multilateral financial system take good notice of these failures in regulation and self-regulation, take a second look at its precautionary measures, and aim to ensure that the good reputation of multilateral finance is not blemished by the involvement of banks which lack transparency and accountability for what they are doing. IFAD’s Independent Office of Evaluation could raise these issues in the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) of the international financial institutions; IFAD itself could raise it as well in its contacts and partnerships with other banks.

This is an issue that is cause for concern worldwide. Some countries have great cooperative and development-oriented banks, like the Grameen bank in Bangladesh. Many middle-income countries have full banking systems that often play a constructive role in the further

development. Some may have green credentials, but there are many standards that they could apply, and what works in one country may not work in another. Some of the least developed countries and some small island development states have hardly any banking system at all and may face difficulties in raising local money for investment schemes. In several countries in the Global South, banks may play a role in illegal trade, money laundering and so on. The question is whether IFAD and its partners have sufficient sight on these risks, and whether the Independent Office of Evaluation has the links to knowledge providers on these issues to support them in evaluating the financial side of IFAD's investment programmes.

A second issue that becomes important when climate finance has been arranged is the context in which the investment programme functions. Many of IFAD's investment programmes are national in origin and in scope. A rural area aims for better climate resilience or for adaptation to changing weather patterns and the climate. While a national perspective is quite natural for IFAD and for the nation that will implement the programme, climate issues are often transboundary. Weather systems do not care about national borders, and changes in climate – for example higher temperatures, increasing droughts, or heavy rainfalls, emergence of new diseases, and so on – may first become visible in one area before extending more widely. What is happening in neighbouring countries may be highly relevant for the investment programme. While it would be beneficial if the investment programme itself contained transboundary elements and contacts, the evaluation should also be designed to take more expansive perspectives into account. It requires a broader contextual analysis, which needs a heuristic perspective of asking quick questions about whether issues are relevant or not. Rising sea levels? Not important in Ethiopia. Disappearing ice in the mountains, which will reduce water in rivers? Unimportant in many small island developing states. Such a broader context analysis will not take up too much time but could be of prime importance to get the full picture of what is happening and is expected to happen.

Much of the information needed to judge the climate aspects of investment programmes can be found in the country itself, in sister organizations like the other multilateral organizations, in the special funds set up to tackle the nexus between development and the environment (GEF, CIFs, GCF and bilateral climate funds, as well as regional funds like the African Climate Change Fund hosted by the African Development Bank). When writing approach papers for evaluations, a search through available knowledge about the environment/development nexus would be useful to enrich the evaluation.

Climate action investment programmes have a final goal to reach a sustainable climate balance that remains within 1.5 degrees of the mean temperature of the Earth as it was in pre-industrial times. At the moment this balance is disturbed by the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. However, a balanced and sustainable climate does not only depend on greenhouse gases; many other elements are also involved, with green coverage an increasingly important one. It is a major challenge for IOE to incorporate the sustainability aspect in its evaluations. This is especially relevant for the evaluation syntheses and thematic evaluations. I have the following suggestions.

- Corporate-level evaluations: especially if the funding/banking side of investments could be looked at for IFAD as a whole, it would make sense to look at the investment policies of partners and assess whether they would lead to sustainable outcomes and impact.
- Thematic evaluations: depending on the subject, such evaluations could focus on climate sustainability in the IFAD portfolio.
- Subregional evaluations: if these are focused on a number of countries sharing ecosystems and weather profiles or a range of environmental issues (water,

deforestation, biodiversity, etc.), it would make sense to include the sustainability of the balance between development and the environment in the longer term.

- Country strategy and programme evaluations: it would be important to focus on longer-term sustainability where the climate portfolio is substantial.

An important issue in many countries is whether climate-related money is made available for mitigation or adaptation. This also came up in the discussions in Rome. Mitigation and adaptation were initiated as funding targets in the first meetings of UNFCCC in the 1990s. At that time, there was hope that mitigation would lead to a solution for climate change, and that spending should focus on mitigation, as it would solve the problem and adaptation to climate change would not therefore really be necessary. As a result, most new money was pledged to mitigation, and adaptation was funded with low voluntary contributions. Gradually it became clear that mitigation would not solve climate change, and adaptation became increasingly important. However, the split funding and the focus of major climate funds and facilities continued, leading now to a general perception in the Global South that there is ample money for mitigation, but hardly any for adaptation. This perception is correct.

My view is that the old sharp distinction between mitigation and adaptation, which made sense at the start of UNFCCC, is no longer helpful and in fact may have become harmful, in that adaptation is of increasing importance, but money is not flowing in its direction. This also came up regularly in the panel's meetings. If we look at mitigation and adaptation issues, they are nowadays intimately connected. If a country wanted a rural area to emit less greenhouse gases, it would need to offer its rural population adaptation measures as well: for example, introducing intercropping systems that increase carbon sequestration, or other adaptation measures. This leads to the conclusion that the strong division between mitigation and adaptation funds is no longer useful, which should be discussed in UNFCCC, but more importantly for IFAD, it should be discussed with partners: the multilateral banks and the partner countries where the rural investment programmes take shape. This is a role for IFAD beyond IOE, but IOE could certainly in its evaluations look at whether mitigation and adaptation flows of funding are adequate to address the problems identified and what rural development needs, or whether there are imbalances in what is funded. This is the key role of evaluation: to learn from what happened.

While the current manual presents a range of options for methodologically sound evaluations that include an emphasis on transformational change (as for example in box 7 of the 2020 Evaluation Manual) and theories of change that include attention on how change can be effected (see for example figure 9 of the 2020 Evaluation Manual), the focus on the transformational change of complex systems could be augmented by including the latest conceptual work in a future version of the manual or in online guidance that IOE could provide.

The most recent and up-to-date work on how evaluations can support the transformational change of systems is to be found in the briefing notes prepared by the Transformational Change Learning Partnership (TCLP) of the Climate Investment Funds. I recommend the following publications:

- Principles for Transformational Climate Finance (June 2023): <https://tinyurl.com/4v72by7h>
- Toolbox for just transition: <https://cif.org/just-transition-toolbox/home>

- Concepts and dimensions of Transformational Change (2021):
<https://tinyurl.com/4zmfrb6j>

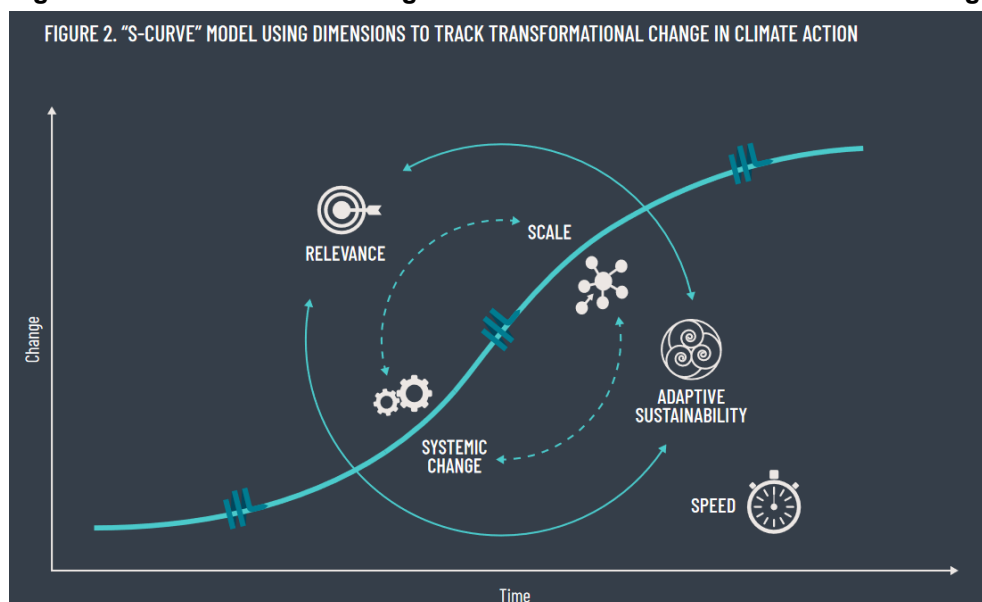
The TCLP is shifting from a learning partnership to a community of practice for transformational change. Management/practitioners and (independent) evaluation practitioners are both involved in the new community of practice. IFAD has been involved at the start of TCLP but not recently – my suggestion would be to explore whether IOE could become a member, which could be of interest for management as well.

Let me end this overview with presenting figure 2 of the TCLP concepts and dimensions briefing note (2021). It shows how complex systems should be influenced towards transformational change through a dynamic and adaptive process, ensuring the five dimensions of transformational system change promote the famous S-curve (originally developed for R&D innovations and their adoption in society) through an adaptive process. Evaluation (and ongoing monitoring, evaluation and learning [MEL] activities) play a key role to support programmes in guiding the process towards a new balance that hopefully will be sustainable.

An interesting discussion took up the issue of climate justice, which on the one hand points to the common but differentiated responsibilities of countries for climate change. The Global West has caused the problem of climate change and has emitted by far the most greenhouse gases. While countries like China and India are now also large emitters, the historic responsibility remains with the West. This has been the justification for donor contributions for mitigation and adaptation, and future funding through for example loss and damage discussions. Furthermore, increasingly legal actions are taking place against governments currently supporting the fossil fuel industry through subsidies, and against the fossil fuel industry itself. There is not yet a large impact on climate finance.

A second perspective that is important for climate justice is the just transition processes that are supported by the European Union and many multilateral organizations and have been taken up by countries throughout the Global South, in all continents. The Climate Investment Funds have published online guidance that is available for countries and includes guidance for the role of evaluations and MEL activities. See the resources above.

Figure 1: “S-curve” model using dimensions to track transformational change in climate action



Source: TCLP (2021), figure made available courtesy of TCLP.

A last point raised in discussions was in regard to knowledge depositories and what could be done to ensure that IFAD will have access to knowledge about on the ground experience in rural development and – for climate action – transformational change processes in rural areas. It is precisely for this reason – access to knowledge – that I recommend connecting with the TCLP, and to continue a strong partnership with the Global Environment Facility, for which IFAD is already an implementing agency.

[PowerPoint presentation here](#)

Review of the formulation of IOE recommendations and follow-up

Gonzalo Hernández Licona and Hans E. Lundgren

I. Context and method

It is important to first understand the context and role of IOE recommendations in IFAD. The evaluation recommendations are aimed at strengthening IFAD's ability to achieve development results. The quality of the recommendations is seen as a critical factor to stimulate learning and organizational effectiveness.

This said, the usefulness of an evaluation clearly involves other dimensions - such as learning by participating and interaction during the evaluation process, disseminating and following up.

Several international good practices and standards have been elaborated to support the formulation of quality recommendations. As IFAD is both a multilateral financial institution and a UN organization, the most relevant are the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) checklist and the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) Good Practice Notes. The ECG guidance is structured around the following questions: who should formulate the recommendations; when recommendations should be formulated; and how should they be formulated. An indicative checklist with no less than twenty-five items has been developed. Moreover, there are complementary good practice notes on a) following up and reporting on the implementation of recommendations, and b) on the formulation of management responses and action plans. It is quite a comprehensive package.

The UNEG checklist was finalized in 2018 and has four principal areas: process, structure, content, and implementation and follow up. The checklist contains thirteen so-called "mandatory standards" for formulating recommendations and fifteen "desirable" features. Many of the UNEG and ECG standards are similar, for instance on the importance of a consultative process for arriving at the recommendation, and indicating that they should be based on evidence, and action oriented.

The Evaluation Manual of IFAD refers to the above checklist and focuses on six of them: evidence-based, relevant to purpose, targeted, clearly stated, and with a process for developing the recommendations (for full description see manual).

For this analysis, the Evaluation Advisory Group reviewed relevant IFAD documents: Evaluation Policy, Evaluation Manual, PRISMA 2022 and 2023, IOE responses to PRISMA, as well as at least ten evaluations contained in these two PRISMAs.

II. General observations about the recommendations and follow-up process of IOE and Management

Implementing recommendations is considered an important marker of IFAD's use of evaluation. In IFAD, there is a remarkably high uptake and agreement by Management on recommendations. In the 2023 PRISMA, Management agreed to all fifty-nine and there was also strong agreement in PRISMA 2022. The Evaluation Committee, in its 122nd session, welcomed the PRISMA and the IOE response to it, while noting certain delays in implementing some recommendations. Trend analysis in 2020-23 shows an increase in fully- implemented recommendations for three years but a drop in 2023 - to implementing fewer than half of the recommendations. Hence, the timeliness of follow-up is an issue for Management to address.

It is clear to us that IFAD has an important focus on learning. Evaluation plays a crucial role in the learning process of the institution, and clear processes are adhered to in the generation

of recommendations and their follow-up. The Evaluation Manual details these processes and the way IOE and Management interact during the evaluation process.

The review found that the recommendations are based on findings and conclusions. They are clearly stated and actionable – although some are of course more complex, necessitating several follow-up steps and actions over time. The target group for a recommendation – using the language of the manual – is often specified but sometimes referred to just as IFAD in general. The recommendations are related to the objectives of the evaluation as mentioned in the documents. One of the standards in the manual is that the report should describe the process followed in formulating recommendations. There is information about interaction in the acknowledgements of the evaluation reports, but this refers to the whole evaluation process. In many cases, there is impressive engagement with stakeholders, with consultations, workshops, and learning events acknowledged. In one study, a subregional evaluation, Management mentions in its comments that there has been consultation also on the recommendations. In the CSPE reviewed, this is more evident as the agreement on completion point contains recommendations and follow-up actions agreed by IFAD and a government.

The evaluation syntheses contain no recommendations but many useful insights and lessons to which Management also responds positively. Since PRISMA appears not to be applicable as an instrument for follow-up on these studies, it would seem appropriate that another tool or means of following up should be considered.

Although not included among the six good practices for formulating recommendations in the IFAD Evaluation Manual, many recommendations use an action verb, or a “must” or “should” in the wording of the recommendation (as advised in several good practice standards).

Moreover, the number of recommendations in the evaluations reviewed seem reasonable and in line with good international practice. It is considered that they should be few in number and consistent.

Overall, there is evidence of clear and well-formulated recommendations. There is high Management uptake of the evaluation recommendations contained in the PRISMA with some slippage recently in terms of fully implemented recommendations – the reasons for which should be explored. The evaluation reports contain many important substantive findings and suggestions for making IFAD’s operations increasingly effective in using its comparative advantage and focusing on the rural poor.

We believe that IFAD has among the best recommendation and follow-up processes we can find in an international development organization.

PRISMA is an excellent document where recommendations and follow-up are reflected in a clear and transparent way. Both learning and accountability can be seen displayed in this document. It will be an important development when this information moves online, as scheduled for 2024.

Despite these advances, the 2022 Annual Report on the Independent Evaluation of IFAD still finds challenges in terms of learning during IOE’s evaluation process, especially within countries. This is an area where various partners can work with IFAD to improve national M&E systems.

III. Specific observations

In every evaluation analysed, the Management response to all recommendations was clear. For all recommendations PRISMA shows the follow-up actions as either ongoing (O) or finished (F).

Only in one evaluation of those reviewed by one of the authors (Mexico), the documents showed the institutions and partners responsible for the follow-up process.

All recommendations addressed the IFAD Evaluation Manual's checklist for evaluation recommendations, except for clearly showing the process followed in developing the recommendations.

There are currently seven categories of implementation status for recommendations. In the IOE response to PRISMA 2023, it is suggested that a further category be added indicating a "non-implemented" status. Since several categories are currently not used, some further trend analysis should be done to clarify the rationale for this suggested addition.

IV. Issues for consideration

- The target audiences of IOE are IFAD's Management and governing bodies, Member States, and the international development community. The recommendations and follow-up process has enhanced learning for IFAD's Management and governing bodies, but it is not clear that governments and the broader international community are benefiting fully from these insights. Do we know if governments are learning from IOE's evaluation process? IOE may need to use other mechanisms for this to happen.
- During the recommendation process there is engagement between Management and IOE, but this process is not clear from reading the documents. For example, it is not obvious that Management can also make suggestions or improve the recommendations coming from the evaluation team in collaboration with the team. This is an important part of the evaluation process (at least in Mexico), because the recommendations can strongly benefit from the ideas coming from Management, who have a deep understanding of programme operations. This is currently unclear because the recommendation process is not specified in the evaluations. Being more specific about setting out this process in the future for all evaluations would be important.
- Some follow-up actions are taken by countries/governments, but it is not clear that they are sustainable or if they are still present because of turnover of government officials or other priorities within governments. It would be important for IFAD/IOE to check if some of these follow-up actions are still intended within countries.
- The ARIE is now an important document reflecting the work of the IOE, but it does not contain a summary of changes driven by the IOE evaluations. We believe it would be highly relevant to have a summary in ARIE of the factors that improved in IFAD programmes due to the evaluation process (a very brief summary of that year's PRISMA). PRISMA would continue be the key document summarizing the recommendations and follow-up from Management, and the ARIE would include a summary of what has changed in IFAD due to evaluations.
- To improve the learning process within IFAD, it would be important to add three elements to the evaluation process. First, for every evaluation, the connection between the evaluation questions and the recommendations should always be clear. Either through the audit trail or any other document, the link between the evaluation questions, the findings, the conclusions, the exchange with Management and the recommendations should be obvious for anyone wanting to review it, so everyone should understand the logic of the recommendations. Second, IOE should present the findings from the evaluations to the Executive Management Committee, to improve the learning of the whole organization. The meeting would not be about negotiating findings, but given the findings, to learn about the process in a more open space. Third, IE could engage on seeking findings in the international literature identifying what works (and what does

not work) according to rigorous evaluations on IFAD subjects. This learning process would be important for the organization.

During EAG meetings with stakeholders, there were various elements of principles that emerged.

There is a tension between communicating and interacting on findings and recommendations with stakeholders and preserving independence. It seems that to ensure the latter, there are limited bilateral approaches. We think it would be important for IOE to find ways to continue to organize learning events during the programmes' processes, for Management to be made aware of key evaluation findings that will be useful at key stages.

A possibility is to brief Management when a new programme is about to start, and provide lessons learned from previous evaluations. This could be feedback using synthesis lessons from previous evaluations to feed into their thinking, without engaging in programme design and still maintaining independence.

[PowerPoint presentation here](#)

Leave no one, no knowledge behind: indigenous perspectives, gender and disability in evaluation

Bagele Chilisa and Donna M. Mertens

The UN SDGs commit nations to leave no one behind when working to achieve these goals; this commitment is based on a recognition that inequities have historically existed and persist in the present day. IFAD's IOE makes clear that it shares this commitment by the language found in the Evaluation Manual (2022) that includes ensuring access to evaluation processes and products by all relevant stakeholders, with specific mention of the need to give attention to: sex, gender, race, language, country of origin, LGBTQ status, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities. IFAD's operational pillars specified in the Evaluation Manual identify a need for transformational country programmes, inclusive approaches which will leave no one behind, deepened partnerships, and investment in innovation and risk. While IFAD and the countries committed to the SDGs have made a commitment to such inclusiveness, challenges in terms of budget, time, capacities, and cultural norms need to be explicitly addressed for this to happen. In the following section, we address strategies to address these challenges.

Indigenous evaluation perspectives

IFAD has adopted an adaptive learning centered approach which aims at closer interaction with clients, tailored solutions and adaptive programming to drive rural transformation. The approach ensures flexible project design and implementation that constantly reacts to emerging results and learning, as well as external changes and events. This may include, for example, the turnover of government officials which in most cases results in changes in the priority of programmes or interventions within governments. IFAD's core quality evaluation principles include the usefulness of evaluations, impartiality of evaluators, credibility of results, transparency, partnership, consultation, collaboration, evaluability of programmes and value for money.

Today's biggest challenge is how to conduct evaluation that does no harm to people, does no harm to the environment, leaves no knowledge behind and builds relationships among people, between people and the environment and integrates knowledge systems. This challenge calls for diverse and inclusive evaluation approaches, which is a core principle of IFAD evaluation approaches. A decolonization wave is calling for stamping out decontextualized evaluation practices and ensuring a corollary decolonization of evaluation paradigms so that the two-third majority of people's experiences are not solely constructed through Western hegemony and ideology.

Evaluation takes place within a context dominated by relational, political, discursive and historical power. In the power-based context, there is blind reliance on Western-based evaluation, models, frameworks, strategies and data-gathering instruments leading to inadequate assessment (a methodological colonialism). Evaluation focuses more on the need to account for funds spent on projects and to ensure compliance (funder colonialism). A colonial attitude also dominates the field, where whatever is from the North is considered as superior.

Under the decolonization wave there are questions about the ontologies, epistemologies, axiologies and indigenous evaluation methodologies (IEMs) and whether they can be accommodated in the "big four" Western-based paradigms of positivism, interpretivist, pragmatism, and transformative paradigms. Some scholars (Held 2019), claim Western paradigms and indigenous paradigms are irreconcilable and propose a new paradigm that integrates Western and indigenous knowledge systems. Others, like Chilisa and Bowman (2023), call for a fifth paradigm informed by the histories, ontologies, epistemologies and

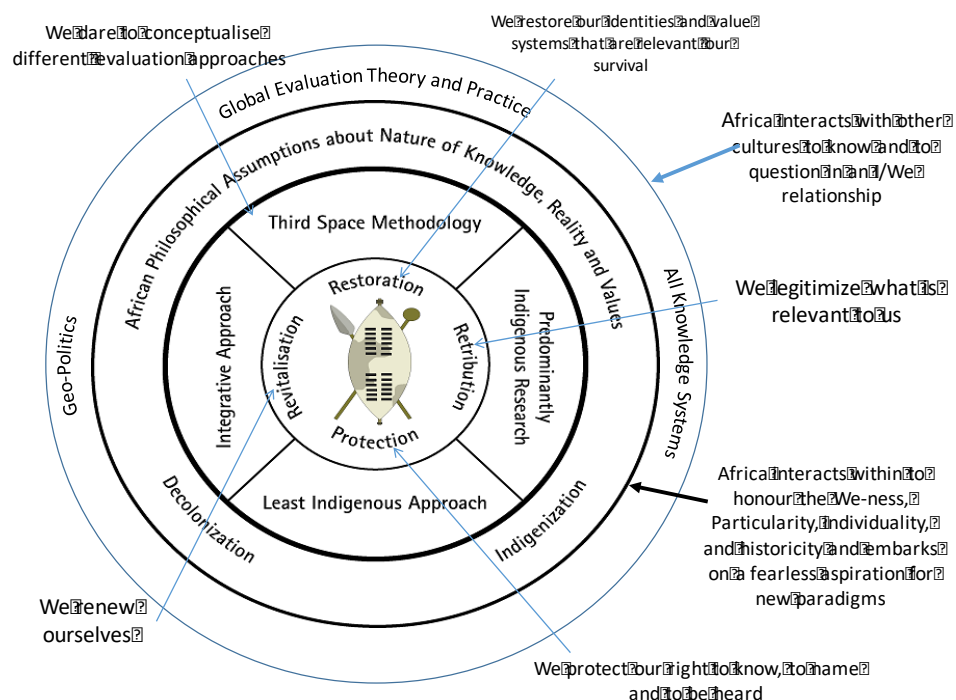
axiologies of the formerly colonized societies in the Global South and the Indigenous peoples of Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and USA.

Relatedness, connectedness, spirituality, and heart knowledge are the main features that distinguish IEMs from methodologies based on Western paradigms. Neuroscience research alludes to the idea that all have a heart brain and that we mainly operate with heart intelligence. Heart intelligence links the physical to the spiritual. The heart is intimately responsible for how we think, feel and respond to the world. This thinking is in line with indigenous epistemologies where spirituality, vision and intuitive thinking are recognized as informing our day-to-day experiences and interactions with the world around us. Neuroscience research also shows that to promote transformative and sustainable evaluation outcomes, project design, implementation and evaluation should take place in an environment where there is dialogue, compassion, psychological safety, space to allow voice, autonomy, heart knowledge and the building of social relations. These evolving neuroscientific research studies validate the indigenous science ontologies, epistemologies, and value systems. IFAD can use neuroscience as a stepping stone to promote spirituality as a research tool and heart knowledge as legitimate.

There is theoretical diversity within the IEM. Of interest are the cultural paradigms and indigenous research frameworks emanating from the histories, experiences and world views of the majority world that is currently excluded from the global knowledge dialogue and production. Bringing together these cultural paradigms and frameworks is a step towards legitimizing IEM and making it accessible globally to be adapted in the research and evaluation which seeks to address power asymmetries in knowledge production and promote relation-building among peoples and between people and their environments.

IEMs give emphasis to context as the epistemology of a dynamic world that values the connection between the living and non-living and is itself alive. In IEM context is viewed as the deep connection to spiritual practices and religious practices and how they influence how learning and knowing occurs. The connection that people have with the environment teaches them how to behave. Spirituality situated in the heart knowledge will influence how recipients interact with a project. The people have connections, networks, relationships with each other, with all that exists, including the living and the non-living. The culture, values, language, rituals, metaphors, international relations, animal and plants behaviour and everyday experiences inform their ways of knowing. Figure 1 below illustrates an evaluation framework based on Ubuntu, an African philosophy that emphasises connectedness of the living with the non-living, spirituality and harmony with the environment. In the diagram, the global evaluation discourse has influence in African-rooted evaluation frameworks. African-rooted evaluation is nevertheless centered on African philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge and values. These assumptions give rise to methodologies that are either predominantly indigenous, integrative, least indigenous or are in the third space where indigenous and non-indigenous evaluators meet to create frameworks that are a product of multiple paradigms, both indigenous and non-indigenous. The inner circle points to the need for evaluators to restore, protect and revitalize indigenous knowledge by promoting its documentation and validation as an important contribution to improving the quality of evaluation.

Figure 1. Evaluation framework based on Ubuntu



Source: Integrating Western and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (Chilisa, 2017).

Indigenous research paradigms seek dialogue with western-based paradigms. Under the metaphor of a dance-floor, various scholars bring together frameworks and methodologies for integrating knowledge systems, addressing knowledge asymmetries and conducting indigenous mixed methods research. Figure 1 in the attached slides demonstrates how western-based frameworks were adapted through a combination of mainstream qualitative data-gathering tools and indigenous qualitative methods. An ethical framework based on the "8R" of relationality, responsibility, reverence, reciprocity, respectful representation, reflexivity, responsivity, rights and regulations together with a decolonization intent can serve as a tool to inform evaluation practice.

In line with its aim to make significant investment in innovation and risk, IFAD is advised to promote documentation, uptake and testing of innovative techniques from Indigenous Peoples, and build new theories, frameworks and approaches based on indigenous peoples' experiences. During the discussion a concern was raised that evaluation takes place within a specified timeframe which does not necessarily allow time to introduce untried and untested evaluation frameworks and tools. Another concern raised was that local indigenous communities' participatory approaches were time-consuming and that well-documented, tried and tested indigenous methods were not sufficiently visible in the literature. In line with an adaptive learning-centered approach, IFAD can add a parallel activity to each evaluation that uses mainstream evaluation approaches. The parallel activity could be aimed at testing emerging local indigenous frameworks and tools.

Gender and disability

Gender as a binary concept (women/men) is well covered in IFAD's Evaluation Manual. The manual also includes language that reflects a commitment to leaving no one behind, such as social justice, intersectionality, contextual analysis of history and discrimination; addressing

the root causes of gender-based inequities (i.e. gender roles, norms, and power relations); the need to promote social change; and the importance of participatory methods to address power inequities and to be inclusive and culturally responsive. Challenges in gender transformative evaluation include addressing gender as a non-binary concept (i.e. the inclusion of members of the LGBTQ communities) and addressing the root causes of inequities.

IFAD also has a Disability Inclusion Strategy (2022) that includes several strategies to increase the inclusion of persons with disabilities, however, these are not currently reflected in the Evaluation Manual. Attention needs to be given to strategies for ensuring inclusion in evaluations; addressing the root causes of inequities for persons with disabilities, such as negative attitudes and social norms; and the lack of resources and capacity to appropriately include these persons, provide accessibility and support, review institutional commitment and political will, and data and evidence.

Disability inclusion strategies are present in documents from several UN agencies (e.g. IFAD, UN Women, and UNEG). Such strategies include the following practices.

- The development of evaluation strategies for disability inclusion that include the collection and use of disability-disaggregated data.
- Consultation with persons with disabilities and advocacy organizations and the formation of partnerships (e.g. Global Action on Disability Network, International Disability Alliance, and ILO).
- The use of participatory approaches that allow for persons with disabilities to influence the design and implementation of the evaluation.
- The provision of reasonable accommodations that increase access, such as necessary support and resources, sign language, braille, assistive technology, interpreters, augmented audio or visual materials, and verbal or written materials that are responsive to the person's needs. Kenney et al. (2023) expand on these ideas by suggesting that evaluators gather prior knowledge about the communication capacities of the persons with disabilities, provide multiple means of engagement and responses (e.g. activity-based interviews, photo elicitation, drawings, collages, or walking interviews). Evaluators can also provide extra time if needed and ensure a comfortable environment that is free of distractions. Additional accommodations might include providing sensory aids, a personal assistant, assistance animals, or assistive technologies and communication methods. Technology can be used to provide images or videos for those who are less literate, and the content can be adapted to the user's needs.
- The use of Universal Design throughout the evaluation to integrate disability sensitive measures into the design, implementation, and use of the evaluation.
- The application of principles of engagement: dignity and respect, equal opportunities, non-discrimination, effective participation, accessibility, and consideration of intersectionality (e.g. gender and disability).
- Begin evaluations with a disability-focused poverty and livelihood analysis.

Strategies that enhance the potential transformative impact of an evaluation for gender and disability-focused evaluations include taking the time to build culturally-responsive relationships, develop coalitions, integrate social activist strategies, address root causes such as cultural norms and structural barriers, considering power inequities, and recognizing the heterogeneity of targeted groups. Two examples of evaluations illustrate how these strategies can be used to enhance the pursuit of equity for gender minority persons and persons with disabilities.

First, Stocker et al. (2020) conducted an evaluation of an economic development project for women who worked from home in Pakistan. As they began the evaluation, they realized that their methods of data collection were leaving out two groups: women with disabilities and transwomen. Through cultural analysis, they reported that these women seldom, if ever, left their homes because of the social stigmas they faced. They changed their methods and used a case study approach that was informed by the women with disabilities and transwomen. Through this amendment to their evaluation, they were able to provide data to support a change in the intervention (economic training) to be more locally based and supportive for women with disabilities. Even with these efforts, they were only able to collect data from one transwoman. The next example illustrates strategies for being more inclusive of transwomen.

Miller et al. (2021) used coalition-building strategies (see the work of Wolfe and Price 2023; Community Tool Box 2023; Treacy et al. 2018) to evaluate a health services programme for gay and bisexual men and transwomen in countries in which homosexuality is a crime punishable by death or prison. The evaluation team worked with an activist agency and identity organizations to identify representatives from this population to participate in the planning the evaluation. The data collection instruments were constructed to address issues of concern to the community; data collectors from the community were trained to go to clinics. In debriefing sessions, the data collectors reported a high level of stress during their clinic visits due to overt discriminatory behaviour by clinic staff. In response to this, the data collectors were given more training in how to respond in such adverse contexts; additional data collectors were trained; and the project provided psychological support to the data collectors. These strategies led to transformative effects for the community, as well as in health clinics.

[PowerPoint presentation here](#)

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Inclusion and transformative resources

Community Tool Box Table of Contents <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/promotion-strategies/start-a-coalition/main>
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Resources on cultural and transformative evaluations

- [Culturally Responsive and Equity-Focused Evaluation](#): Philosophies and Approaches
- [Culturally Competent Evaluation](#): Leading with self-reflection and cultural competence
- [Culturally Responsive Evaluation](#): Centering culture in evaluations by including community members and evaluators with direct lived experience
- [Culturally Responsive and Equitable Evaluation](#): Aiming for equity through culturally responsive approaches
- [Culturally Responsive Indigenous Evaluation](#): Striving for sovereignty and self-determination
- [Empowerment Evaluation](#): Empowering communities with tools used for self-determination

- [Equity-focused Evaluations](#): Conceptualizing, conducting, and using evaluation in service of equity
- [Transformative Evaluation](#): Fighting for human rights and social justice using mixed methods; see also www.transformativeresearchandevaluation.com

Annex: Key suggestions from the Evaluation Advisory Panel 2023 - by theme

Climate finance in IOE evaluations

Suggestion from the panel	IOE's observations
Corporate-level evaluations: especially if the climate funding/banking side of investments would be looked at for IFAD as a whole, it would make sense to look at climate investment policies of partners and whether they would lead to sustainable outcomes and impact.	If the funding/banking side of investments is included in a corporate-level evaluation, the evaluation can perform a rapid review of the investment policies of partners (scan of documentation).
Thematic evaluations: depending on the subject, they could focus on climate sustainability in the IFAD portfolio.	This can be done in a thematic evaluation if the main topic is pertinent. The country strategy and programme evaluations and project-level evaluations assess climate sustainability as a part of the standard methodology.
Subregional evaluations: if these are focused on a number of countries that share ecosystems and weather profiles, as well as a range of environmental issues (water, deforestation, biodiversity, etc.), it makes sense to include the sustainability of the balance between development and the environment in the longer run.	This can be done in depth if the theme is included in the strategic priority. Otherwise, the sustainability criterion can address this broadly.
The most recent and up-to-date work on how evaluations can support transformational change of systems, is to be found in the briefing notes prepared by the Transformational Change Learning Partnership of the Climate Investment Funds. I recommend the following publications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principles for Transformational Climate Finance (June 2023): https://tinyurl.com/4v72by7h Toolbox for Just Transition: https://cif.org/just-transition-toolbox/home Concepts and dimensions of Transformational Change (2021): https://tinyurl.com/4zmfrb6j 	These references will be included in the IOE multimedia source webpage, linked to the 2022 Evaluation Manual.

Review of the formulation of IOE recommendations and follow-up

Suggestion from the panel	IOE's observations
There are currently seven categories of implementation status for recommendations. In the IOE response to PRISMA 2023, it is suggested to add a further category with a "non-implemented" status. Since several categories are currently not used, some further trend analysis should be done to clarify the rationale for this suggested addition.	This is to be raised in the 2024 IOE comments on the PRISMA, which will hopefully migrate to an electronic database.
Some follow-up actions are taken by countries/governments, but it is not clear that they are sustainable or if they are still present because of the turnover of government officials or priority changes within governments. It would be important for IFAD/IOE to check if some of these follow-up actions are still in place within countries.	This can be done via a 'repeat' evaluation in the same countries. In the future, IOE could also run an ad hoc exercise in a set of countries to review how recommendations have been implemented and why.
The ARIE is now an important document about the work of the IOE, but it does not have a summary of the things that changed due to the IOE evaluations. We believe it would be	This could be done in the ARIE on a two-year basis, notably focusing on strategic evaluations,

highly relevant to have a summary in ARIE of the things that improved in IFAD programmes due to the evaluation process (a very brief summary of that year's PRISMA). PRISMA would continue to be the key document summarizing the recommendations and follow-up from Management, and the ARIE would include a summary of things that have changed in IFAD due to evaluations.	as there may be less evidence at the project/ country level.
<p>To improve the learning process within IFAD, it would be important to add three elements to the evaluation process:</p> <p>(a) For every evaluation, the connection between the evaluation questions and the recommendations should always be clear. Either through the audit trail or any other document, the link between the evaluation questions, the findings, the conclusions, the exchange with Management and the recommendations should be clear for anyone who wishes to understand the logic of the recommendations;</p> <p>b) IOE presents the findings from the evaluations to the Executive Management Committee, to improve the learning of the whole organization. The meeting will not be about negotiating findings, but given the findings, to learn about the process in a more open space;</p> <p>c) IOE could engage on finding in the international literature what works (and what does not work) according to rigorous evaluations regarding IFAD subjects. This learning process would be important for the organization.</p>	<p>a) This is an aspect that IOE ascertains as a part of the internal peer review process. It can be made more explicit in the phrasing of conclusions and recommendations.</p> <p>b) For practical purposes, this can be done with higher plane evaluations, such as CLEs and maybe TEs. Less so for country or project-level evaluations (unless there is an ad-hoc request).</p> <p>c) Agreed. This is done and will continue to be done as a part of the thematic and corporate evaluations.</p>

Leave no one, no knowledge behind: indigenous perspectives, gender and disability in evaluation

Suggestion from the panel	IOE's observations
<p>Disability inclusion strategies are present in documents from several United Nations agencies (e.g. IFAD, UN Women, and UNEG). Such strategies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop evaluation strategies for disability inclusion that include the collection and use of disability-disaggregated data. • Consultation with persons with disabilities and advocacy organizations and form partnerships (e.g. Global Action on Disability Network, International Disability Alliance, and ILO). • Use participatory approaches that allow for persons with disabilities to influence the design and implementation of the evaluation. • Provide reasonable accommodations that increase access, such as necessary support and resources, sign language, braille, assistive technology, interpreters, augmented audio or visual materials, and verbal or written materials that are responsive to the person's needs. Kenney et al. (2023) expand on these ideas by suggesting that evaluators gather prior knowledge about the communication capacities of the persons with disabilities, provide multiple means of engagement and responses (e.g. activity-based interviews, photo elicitation, drawings, collages, or walking interviews). Provide extra time if needed and ensure a comfortable environment that is free of distractions. Additional accommodations might include providing sensory aids, personal assistant, assistance animals, or assistive technologies and communication methods. Technology 	<p>The majority of these points refer to strategy or project design features. IOE's evaluation may review these as a part of their analysis, for example under relevance, effectiveness and gender equality.</p> <p>IOE will also follow these principles in evaluation design along with the 2020 UNEG Ethical Principles (Integrity, Accountability, Respect, Beneficence).</p> <p>IOE will raise awareness and strengthen the capacity of its staff, for example through coffee talks on these topics.</p>

<p>can be used to provide images or videos for those who are less literate, and the content can be adapted to the user's needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Universal Design throughout the evaluation to integrate disability sensitive measures into the design, implementation, and use of the evaluation. • Follow principles of engagement: dignity and respect, equal opportunities, non-discrimination, effective participation, accessibility, and consideration of intersectionality (e.g. gender and disability). • Begin evaluations with a disability-focused poverty and livelihood analysis. 	
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