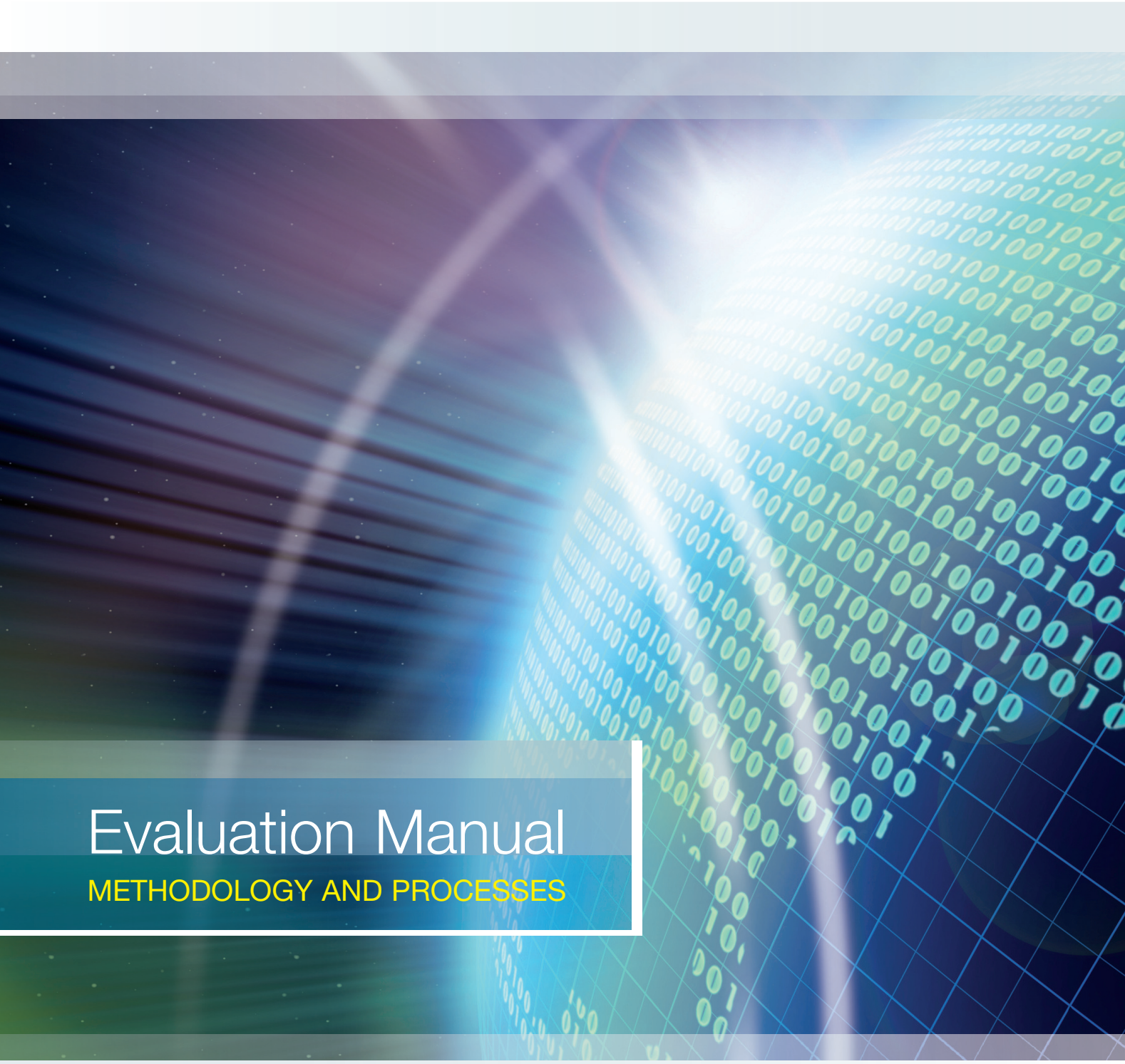

Evaluation Manual

METHODOLOGY AND PROCESSES

Office of Evaluation

IFAD

Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

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April 2009

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AAA	Accra Agenda for Action
ACP	agreement at completion point
ARRI	Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations
CBO	community-based organization
CLE	corporate-level evaluations
CLP	core learning partnership
COSOP	country strategic opportunities programme
CPE	country programme evaluation
CPM	country programme manager
CPMT	country programme management team
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of OECD
ECG	Evaluation Cooperation Group
IFIs	international financial institutions
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MTR	mid-term review
NONIE	Network of Networks on Impact Evaluation
OE	Office of Evaluation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCR	project completion reports
PMD	Programme Management Department
PRSP	poverty reduction strategy paper
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group

Evaluation Manual
Methodology and Processes

Foreword

This evaluation manual contains the core methodology that the Office of Evaluation (OE) applies in undertaking its evaluations, including project, thematic, country programme and corporate-level evaluations. The manual also presents the key processes for designing and conducting project and country programme evaluations, which currently are the type of evaluation most widely undertaken by OE.

The manual builds on international good evaluation practice as followed by the Evaluation Cooperation Group of the multilateral development banks; the Network on Development Evaluation of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD/DAC); and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). It also takes into account the latest developments in the external environment: the increased attention to joint evaluations among development agencies, the importance of using national evaluation resources, the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action, as well as the recent changes within IFAD, especially those brought about by IFAD's Action Plan for Improving its Development Effectiveness. The manual's main purpose is to ensure consistency, rigour and transparency across independent evaluations and ultimately enhance OE's effectiveness and quality of work.

The manual is primarily aimed at OE staff and consultants who support the Office in implementing its annual work programme of evaluations. However, the document is also useful for colleagues in IFAD's Programme Management Department and partners at the country level who are involved in OE evaluations, as it clarifies OE's overall approach to independent evaluations and the respective roles and responsibilities during the process.

The document was developed in a participatory manner, which entailed wide-ranging discussions among OE staff and selected experienced consultants who have collaborated with OE in conducting evaluations in the past. Moreover, several rounds of discussions were held with IFAD Management and staff. Feedback from the directors of selected IFAD-supported projects from all regions was also obtained during the manual's preparation.

OE benefited from the insightful comments and guidance of a seven-person international experts panel of senior independent advisers comprising Professor Robert Picciotto (former Director-General of the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group) as chair; Ms Cheryl Gray (Director of the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group); Mr Shiva Kumar (Visiting Professor, Indian School of Business, Hyderabad); Mr Hans Lundgren (Head of Section, Evaluation, OECD); Ms Saraswathi Menon (Director, Evaluation Office, United Nations Development Programme and Chairperson of UNEG); Ms Zenda Ofir (Evaluation Specialist, South Africa); and Mr Rob D. Van den Berg (Director of Evaluation, Global Environment Facility). Last but not least, the manual was also discussed at an informal seminar of the Evaluation Committee of IFAD's Executive Board before finalization.

The manual has been translated into Arabic, French and Spanish to facilitate its use in all geographic regions covered by IFAD operations. It is available in electronic format in all four languages on the evaluation section of the Fund's corporate website.

Luciano Lavizzari
Director, Office of Evaluation

1 Background

The challenge of rural poverty reduction. The commitment made by the development community at the Millennium Summit to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and suffering from hunger between 1990 and 2015 has generated mixed results. On the one hand, the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day has dropped from 28 per cent to 19 per cent in developing countries. But far less progress has been achieved in reducing hunger and malnutrition, and there remain enormous regional differences. Impressive progress in South and East Asia contrasts with slow progress or even retrogression elsewhere.[1] Income inequality has risen and the share of the ultra-poor living in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America has grown.[2]

The changing dynamics of poverty reflect an increase in the proportion of poor people living in urban areas, but poverty and especially *ultra-poverty* continue to be a rural phenomenon that will remain so for several decades yet to come.[3] Most of the rural poor depend directly or indirectly on agriculture, and agricultural growth is therefore more beneficial in terms of poverty reduction than growth in any other sector.[4] Equally, food security is critical to equitable and sustainable development at a time of unprecedented turmoil in global commodity markets. Rural areas exposed to the ravages of climate change require particular attention.

Agriculture and aid in the global development agenda. After decades of inadequate and declining investment in agriculture by governments, the private sector and development agencies, there is a growing recognition of the fact that agriculture is central to development. The World Bank's 2008 *World Development Report: Agriculture for Development* highlights the role of agriculture as a driver of growth for the wider economy, as a livelihood for the majority of people living on less than a dollar a day and as a provider of environmental services. It estimates that GDP growth in agriculture is at least twice as effective in reducing extreme poverty as GDP growth originating in other sectors.

Yet despite widespread agreement on the importance of agriculture for growth and poverty reduction, support for the sector remains abysmally low, and protectionism hinders agricultural growth and innovation. Underinvestment by governments has been aggravated by trends in official development assistance for agriculture, which declined from US$8 billion in 1984 to around US$3 billion in 2006. Nor is it clear that the new aid funding sources that have emerged (private foundations, large middle-income countries, etc.) will help to rectify the balance.

The role of IFAD. Given the above, IFAD's mission is more relevant than ever. IFAD functions as an international financial institution (IFI) and as a specialized agency of the United Nations system. Its mandate is to contribute towards rural poverty reduction by supporting agriculture and rural development activities in developing countries. Its main instruments for delivery are loan-funded projects and programmes, although it does have a small grant-financing window as well.[5] The Fund is also increasingly involved in non-lending activities, such as policy dialogue, partnership-building and knowledge management.

Given its relatively small size, IFAD focuses on targeting the rural poor and promoting pro-poor innovations[6] that can be replicated and scaled up by other partners such as governments, donor agencies and the private sector. It has a global

1. See UNDP (2006), The Millennium Development Goal Report.

2. See IFPRI (2007), Focus on the World's Poorest and Hungry People.

3. See Ravaillon et al. (2007), New Evidence on the Urbanisation of Global Poverty. Washington DC, World Bank.

4. Datt and Ravallion (1996) show that rural-sector growth in India reduced poverty in both rural and urban areas, whereas economic growth in urban areas did little to reduce rural poverty. Warr (2001) provides evidence that growth in agriculture in a number of South-East Asian countries significantly reduced poverty, but this was not matched by growth in manufacturing. Gallup et al. (1997) show that every increase of 1 per cent in per capita agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) led to growth of 1.61 per cent in the incomes of the poorest 20 per cent of the population, which is a much greater effect than the impact of similar increases in the manufacturing or service sectors.

5. The Fund's programme of work for 2008 has a financing level of US$650 million, of which 10 per cent has been reserved in the form of grant financing.

mandate, works in five geographic regions[7] and is fully committed to the Millennium Development Goals.[8] As a signatory of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), it endorses the principles of country ownership, harmonization, partnership, alignment and accountability for results reaffirmed in the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA).

IFAD's overarching goal, which is set forth in its Strategic Framework 2007-2010, is to empower poor rural women and men in developing countries to achieve greater income and food security. The Strategic Framework specifies six main objectives, which are to ensure that poor rural men and women have better and sustainable access to: (i) natural resources, (ii) improved agricultural technology, (iii) rural financial services, (iv) input and output markets, (v) opportunities for rural off-farm employment and enterprise development, and (vi) local and national policy programming processes.

Evaluation in IFAD. The Fund's independent evaluation methodology and processes are guided by the principles outlined in the Evaluation Policy[9] approved by the Executive Board in April 2003. They are also informed by the methodological framework for project evaluations reviewed by the Evaluation Committee[10] at its thirty-fourth session in 2002/03. Country programme evaluations (CPEs) are carried out based on a methodology developed in consultation with the Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank in 2005. This manual seeks to refine, update and consolidate current guidelines in order to achieve high quality standards in IFAD evaluations within the framework of the agreed Evaluation Policy.

This policy is built on the four principles of accountability, learning, independence and partnership. These principles govern the undertaking of each evaluation by the Office of Evaluation (OE), and the methods and processes adopted by OE must therefore support the furtherance of these principles. This requires careful management, as the promotion of one principle may have an impact on the others. For example, OE is committed to ensuring participation throughout the evaluation process to promote inclusiveness and ownership in evaluation findings and recommendations. However, in observance of the principle of independence, participation and ownership should not be allowed to lead to the capture of the evaluative process. Equally, the learning principle should not undercut the accountability principle, since behavioural independence calls for the regular production of rigorous evaluative documents.

The independence of IFAD's evaluation function is of special importance. It is reflected in a number of provisions of the Evaluation Policy, which, inter alia, stipulate that: (i) the OE Director reports to the Executive Board rather than to the IFAD President; (ii) the OE work programme and budget are prepared independently of IFAD Management and presented directly to the Board and Governing Council for approval; (iii) the President has delegated his authority to make all human resource decisions related to OE to its Director; and (iv) the OE Director is authorized to issue evaluation reports to IFAD Management, the Fund's governing bodies and the public at large without seeking the clearance of any official outside OE.

OE undertakes various types of evaluations, including project, country programme, thematic and corporate-level evaluations (CLEs). At the project level, it conducts both interim and completion evaluations. The former are mandatory under the Evaluation Policy. Interim evaluations are conducted at the end of the project implementation period, before IFAD and the borrowing country embark on the design of a subsequent phase of the same operation. Project completion evaluations are done after project closure.

The evaluation manual. The development of this manual is an effort by OE to further harmonize its methodologies with good practices within the international development evaluation community. It thus constitutes a step towards the implementation of the Paris Declaration. The preparation of this consolidated, up-to-date evaluation manual was undertaken in response to the perceived need for greater rigour, consistency and fairness in evaluation activities. The manual also seeks to fulfil the imperative of transparency associated with evaluation excellence.

6. These innovations may be in the fields of, for example, technology, institutional arrangements and social engineering.

7. Asia and the Pacific, Eastern and Southern Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Near East and North Africa, and Western and Central Africa.

8. In particular, Millennium Development Goals 1, 3 and 7.

9. See document EB 2003/78/R.17/Rev.1, IFAD Evaluation Policy.

10. See document EC 2003/34/W.P.3, A Methodological Framework for Project Evaluation: Main Criteria and Key Questions for Project Evaluation.

The evaluation manual is meant primarily as a guideline for OE staff and consultants engaged in evaluation work. The manual takes account of recent changes triggered by IFAD's Action Plan for Improving its Development Effectiveness, including the Strategic Framework 2007-2010, the innovation and knowledge management strategies, the targeting policy, the advent of IFAD's new operating model (including direct supervision and implementation support and enhanced country presence), the new quality enhancement and quality assurance mechanisms, self-evaluation activities (including the introduction of a corporate results measurement framework) and the introduction of the results-based country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP).

The manual focuses on project and country programme evaluations, as they make up the majority of evaluations undertaken by OE. Pending the preparation of additional guidance material targeting thematic evaluations and CLEs, these types of assessments are also expected to follow the broad provisions contained in this manual. Tailored methodologies and processes will be defined on a case-by-case basis depending on the nature and coverage of such evaluations. Moreover, evaluators are encouraged to supplement the provisions in the manual with guidance available from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)[11] when undertaking a project evaluation or CPE in nations that are in conflict or post-conflict phases.

While the manual seeks to instil a degree of consistency across OE evaluations, it leaves ample space for creativity, innovation and flexibility. For example, in chapter 2, it provides a list of good-practice techniques and methods for data collection, but leaves the choice of the approach and its ultimate application up to evaluators based on the specific circumstances and context of the evaluation in question.

The development and implementation of this manual should facilitate OE's participation in joint evaluations with other development organizations. Joint evaluations are coming into greater use as instruments for lowering transaction costs for partner countries, expanding the scope of evaluations to include all major development partners in the programmes being evaluated, and enabling wider exchanges of knowledge and experience. Joint evaluations are also expected to observe the principle of mutual accountability enshrined in the Paris Declaration and reaffirmed in the 2008 AAA.

This manual was prepared on a participatory basis through interaction with OE staff and consultants as well as colleagues in the Programme Management Department (PMD) and partners in the field.[12] In order to take advantage of recent advances in development evaluation methodologies and practices in other organizations, OE staff also engaged with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) formed by multilateral development banks, the Network of Networks on Impact Evaluation (NONIE) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)/DAC Network on Evaluation. The manual draws on UNEG norms and standards, the pertinent good-practice standards of ECG, and the key OCED/DAC Principles for Evaluation.

In preparing the manual, OE took into consideration the comments of the International Experts Panel of senior independent advisers.[13] The Panel's main role was to provide guidance and inputs to OE and to provide confirmation to IFAD governing bodies that the manual is in line with good-practice standards in international development evaluation. The Panel included representatives from IFIs, the United Nations, OECD/DAC and developing-country experts in evaluation. Finally, consultations were held with the Evaluation Committee of IFAD's Executive Board prior to the finalization of the document.

This manual is organized as follows. Chapter 2 provides an overview of methodological fundamentals. Chapter 3 includes details of the project evaluation methodology, while chapter 4 does the same for CPEs. The annexes include, among other things, examples of good practices in terms of the evaluation framework, approach papers, evaluation forewords, executive summaries, agreements at completion point, etc.

11. See Encouraging Effective Evaluation of Conflict Prevention and Peace-Building Activities: Towards DAC Guidance, OECD, September 2007.

12. Including selected project directors.

13. This panel consisted of Professor Robert Picciotto (former Director General of the World Bank Independent Evaluation Group), Ms Cheryl Grey (Director of the World Bank Independent Evaluation Group), Mr. Shiva Kumar (Visiting Professor at the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad, India), Mr Hans Lundgren (Secretary of the Network on Development Evaluation of the Development Assistance Committee of OECD), Ms. Saraswathi Menon (Director of the UNDP Evaluation Office and Chairperson of UNEG), Ms. Zenda Ofir (former Chairperson of the African Evaluation Association) and Mr Robert van den Berg, Director of the Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility.

2 Methodological fundamentals

A. Evaluation criteria
B. Impact assessment
C. Rating system
D. Aggregation
E. The "why" question
F. Inter-evaluator variability
G. Evidence trail
H. Attribution and counterfactuals
I. Evaluation and hindsight
J. Learning accountability
K. Techniques and instruments
L. Benchmarking
M. Joint evaluations
N. Transparency

This chapter sketches out methodological fundamentals that OE uses in project evaluations and CPEs. Awareness of these approaches among evaluators helps to reduce variations in approaches and in reporting formats across evaluators and evaluations.

A. Evaluation criteria

Evaluation criteria applied to project evaluations and CPEs are consistent with international good practice and ensure the harmonization of IFAD's evaluation methodology across donor agencies. They are in line with the practices set out in the OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management.[14] They elicit generic questions[15] that reflect the Methodological Framework for Project Evaluation discussed with the Evaluation Committee in September 2003 and take account of experience gained in the implementation of the Framework, the introduction of the IFAD Strategic Framework 2007-2010, key changes implemented under the Action Plan, and efforts to harmonize the self-evaluation and independent evaluation systems at IFAD.

The main evaluation criteria used by OE to assess project performance and the impact of IFAD operations and their definitions are shown in table 1. The three core evaluation criteria are relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. OE also uses a specific criterion to gauge the rural poverty impact, which is broken down into five impact domains: household incomes and assets; human and social capital and empowerment; food security and agricultural productivity; natural resources and the environment; and institutions and policies. The other criteria include sustainability, innovations and performance of partners.

OE defines "impact" as the changes that have occurred - as perceived at the time of evaluation - in the lives of the rural poor (whether positive or negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended) as a result of IFAD interventions. This definition also includes an assessment of the anticipated effects of IFAD-supported interventions, as appropriate. OE project completion evaluations and CPEs[16] give emphasis to the long-term effects (i.e. impact) associated with an operation. However, in interim evaluations, which are usually done around the time of project closure in order to meet accountability and lesson-learning requirements, OE's assessment focuses on the likely effects, in addition to the short- and medium-term effects already achieved. The sustainability of benefits generated by IFAD-financed operations beyond the phase of external financial support is also rated.

14. See the document entitled "Evaluation and Aid Effectiveness" (2002) issued by the OECD/DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation (now known as the Network on Evaluation) and produced in collaboration with other IFIs and selected United Nations organizations.

15. The key questions related to project evaluations are contained in chapter 3; those related to CPEs are discussed in chapter 4 of the manual.

16. CPEs also assess and rate individual projects funded by IFAD.

This requires assessing the extent to which development results are exposed to risks which may affect the longer-term continuation of benefits.

IFAD devotes priority attention to promoting, replicating and scaling up pro-poor innovation. This focus is an explicit feature of IFAD's mandate, which is why the replication of development solutions tested by IFAD operations as well as their potential for being scaled up by governments, donors, the private sector and other stakeholders take pride of place in IFAD's evaluation criteria.

OE's evaluation methodology also includes an assessment of the performance of key partners, including IFAD and the government concerned. This is important for accountability purposes as well as for learning and transparency, since partnerships are defined not only by shared objectives but also by distinct accountabilities and reciprocal obligations in the achievement of desired results.

Three remarks regarding table 1 are in order. First, the performance of a project is a composite of its relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. Second, project performance is not always aligned with IFAD performance, since other influences (in particular the performance of partner governments as well as exogenous factors) also contribute to project performance. Third, the promotion of gender equity and poverty targeting are not assessed or rated individually. Instead, they are considered as integral dimensions within the various evaluation criteria adopted by OE.

TABLE 1: Definition of the evaluation criteria used by the Office of Evaluation

CRITERIA	DEFINITION[a]
Project performance	
• Relevance	The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, institutional priorities and partner and donor policies. It also entails an assessment of project coherence in achieving its objectives.
• Effectiveness	The extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.
• Efficiency	A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results.
Rural poverty impact	
	Impact is defined as the changes that have occurred or are expected to occur in the lives of the rural poor (whether positive or negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended) as a result of development interventions.
• Household income and assets	Household income provides a means of assessing the flow of economic benefits accruing to an individual or group, whereas assets relate to a stock of accumulated items of economic value.

TABLE 1 (continued): Definition of the evaluation criteria used by the Office of Evaluation

CRITERIA	DEFINITION[a]
• Human and social capital and empowerment	Human and social capital and empowerment include an assessment of the changes that have occurred in the empowerment of individuals, the quality of grassroots organizations and institutions, and the poor's individual and collective capacity.
• Food security and agricultural productivity	Changes in food security relate to availability, access to food and stability of access, whereas changes in agricultural productivity are measured in terms of yields.
• Natural resources and the environment	The focus on natural resources and the environment involves assessing the extent to which a project contributes to changes in the protection, rehabilitation or depletion of natural resources and the environment.
• Institutions and policies	The criterion relating to institutions and policies is designed to assess changes in the quality and performance of institutions, policies and the regulatory framework that influence the lives of the poor.
Other performance criteria	
• Sustainability	The likely continuation of net benefits from a development intervention beyond the phase of external funding support. It also includes an assessment of the likelihood that actual and anticipated results will be resilient to risks beyond the project's life.
• Promotion of pro-poor innovation, replication and scaling up	The extent to which IFAD development interventions have: (i) introduced innovative approaches to rural poverty reduction; and (ii) the extent to which these interventions have been (or are likely to be) replicated and scaled up by government authorities, donor organizations, the private sector and others agencies.
Overall project achievement	This provides an overarching assessment of the project, drawing upon the analysis made under the various evaluation criteria cited above.
Performance of partners	
• IFAD • Government • Cooperating institution • NGO/CBO	This criterion assesses the contribution of partners to project design, execution, monitoring and reporting, supervision and implementation support, and evaluation. The performance of each partner will be assessed on an individual basis with a view to the partner's expected role and responsibility in the project life cycle.

[a] These definitions have been taken from the OECD/DAC *Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management* and from the Methodological Framework for Project Evaluation as agreed upon with the Evaluation Committee in September 2003.

B. Assessing impact

The international development evaluation community has long debated the issue of impact. The DAC Network on Development Evaluation, ECG, UNEG and the European Evaluation Society have discussed appropriate ways and means to address the impact of development interventions. However, in recent times, the debate has intensified further.

In response, evaluation networks and associations such as NONIE and the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation have recently been formed to focus on impact evaluation. In an effort to carry out more rigorous impact evaluations, research and discussions are being conducted across the academic community (e.g. the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology). Private foundations and international development organizations are also contributing to the debate surrounding the potentials and limitations of experimental methods in the assessment of development interventions.

At this stage, no consensus has emerged regarding agreed methodologies for rigorously attributing the impact of development projects and programmes on society to specific factors or causes. On the one hand, some researchers call for a rigorous assessment of causality through quantitative measures of impact. They advocate the use of randomized control trials and other experimental and quasi-experimental approaches (e.g. using propensity score matching methods)[17] as the "gold standard" of impact evaluation. On the other hand, a vast amount of the literature has demonstrated that these approaches have severe limitations in complex and volatile development environments. The literature also raises difficult ethical issues, since these activities are skills intensive and costly, as well as requiring a vast amount of data. A significant amount of time and effort is needed to produce useful results. Accordingly, other specialists argue that the analysis of impact is best grounded in participatory and qualitative methodologies. These methodologies allow impact to be measured against qualitative indicators, such as changes in empowerment, dignity, status and well-being, or against changes in the level of community participation.

There is little doubt that this ongoing debate needs to be carefully tracked by IFAD in view of the special importance that its Executive Board attributes to impact assessment. Impact is one of the core indicators in the results measurement framework for management reporting on progress achieved in terms of the IFAD Strategic Framework 2007-2010 approved by the Board. It is assessed by IFAD Management both during implementation (i.e. projected impact) and at the completion of a project, drawing upon existing processes and their corresponding deliverables (e.g. mid-term reviews (MTR), project completion reports, project status reports produced by country programme managers (CPMs) during implementation, etc). The indicators (including those designed to gauge impact) in the results measurement framework have been selected because IFAD can match them with relevant data within a relatively short period of time without having to set up an array of complex and costly data collection systems.

The challenge for OE is to adopt a rigorous and credible approach towards assessing impact that uses a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods and that is commensurate with the level of available resources. OE is also committed to ensuring that results are made available in a timely manner so that they can be fed into corporate processes related to strategy and policy formulation as well as project design and implementation. As a rule, OE's approach to assessing impact will be based on a combination of counterfactual analysis (e.g. using control groups), "before and after" techniques, and triangulation methods. Random sampling will be used to select beneficiaries for one-on-one and focus-group discussions, as well as to identify project sites to visit for direct observation purposes. The use of such techniques will lay the groundwork for the surveys and case studies

17. Propensity score matching methods are often used to control for bias when randomization is not possible. These methods were developed to ensure comparability between the treatment and the comparison group in terms of propensity to participate in the development programme. The first step involves estimating the likelihood (the propensity score) that a person/household would have received the treatment or intervention given certain characteristics. After estimating the propensity scores, the scores are used to group observations that are close to each other. Comparisons of development results can then be applied to different groups of observations which have the same propensity to participate, hence ensuring comparability (see Ravallion, M., 1999. "The Mystery of the Vanishing Benefits: Ms. Speedy Analyst's Introduction to Evaluation". Working Paper No. 2153. Washington, D.C., World Bank).

which will then be commissioned in order to collect primary data, especially in cases where the dearth of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data acts as a constraint on efforts to arrive at an in-depth appraisal of project impact.

Through its continued active participation in ECG, NONIE, UNEG and other development evaluation platforms, OE will remain engaged in the international debate and research initiatives related to impact evaluations. It will be open-minded and internalize new methods and approaches as they are developed and validated for use within the IFAD context.

Is there a need to assess the effectiveness criterion separately from the rural poverty impact? On the one hand, it stands to reason that a project cannot be considered to have performed if it has not generated a beneficial impact in terms of rural poverty. On the other hand, the effectiveness criterion is goal-based and focuses principally on intended effects, i.e. whether the intervention has met (or is expected to meet) its objectives. By contrast, the rural poverty impact criteria take on board all effects, intended or unintended, direct or indirect, positive or negative, and thus require careful examination if they are to be used to shed light on IFAD's role as an incubating agent of rural change.

The two sets of criteria, while distinct, are closely linked. The risk of duplication is mitigated by focusing the effectiveness criterion on the achievement of the immediate objectives of the project and on the initial effects which this has, whereas all side effects and longer-term effects are captured by the impact criteria. The use of these criteria thus lead to a deeper understanding of the forward and backward linkages of an IFAD-funded operation. As a result, they help guide efforts to scale up such operations and to orient the design of future IFAD projects.

Moreover, increasingly, the objectives of IFAD-funded projects are more focused and realistic than in the past and are positioned at the "purpose" level in the results chain of a project's logical framework matrix. Thus, when assessing effectiveness, evaluations ought to capture the extent to which a project has achieved or is expected to achieve its objectives, whereas the evaluation of impact should assess the achievements of a project at the "goal" level in the results chain.

There is one more reason for including the rural poverty impact criteria alongside performance criteria. It is a strategic imperative: the five selected domains enable OE to explicitly relate the rural poverty impact of each project evaluated to the overarching thematic priorities of the Fund and its governing bodies.

Furthermore, the introduction of these five domains under the rural poverty impact criteria is intended to facilitate the aggregation of ratings and learning themes in the production of the Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations (ARRI), thereby permitting the identification of systemic issues and lessons learned and helping to enhance IFAD's development effectiveness at large, rather than merely on a project-by-project basis.

C. Rating system

OE introduced a four-point rating system in 2002 for the evaluation criteria with the aim of quantifying the qualitative judgement of evaluators, identifying good and poor development financing practices and facilitating aggregation within and across projects. Starting in 2005, in line with the practice adopted in other IFIs, OE moved to a six-point rating system[18] that allows for a more nuanced assessment of project results. In particular, this system may help to overcome the reluctance of evaluators to attribute the best (4) or worst score (1) to interventions, which tends to result in a clustering of ratings in the mid-range scores (2 and 3).

In addition to reporting on performance based on the six-point rating scale, in 2007 OE introduced the broad categories of "satisfactory" and "unsatisfactory" for reporting on

18. With 6 representing the best and 1 the worst score.

performance across the various evaluation criteria (see table 2). This approach involves aggregating the percentage of project ratings falling into the three higher ratings (4-6) under the "satisfactory" heading and the three lower ratings (1-3) under "unsatisfactory". The introduction of these two broad categories[19] allows better tracking of performance trends.

TABLE 2: Rating system

SCORE	ASSESSMENT	CATEGORY
6	Highly satisfactory	
5	Satisfactory	SATISFACTORY
4	Moderately satisfactory	
3	Moderately unsatisfactory	
2	Unsatisfactory	UNSATISFACTORY
1	Highly unsatisfactory	

D. Aggregation

In some cases, ratings of various criteria need to be aggregated in order to generate overall ratings. In project evaluations, this is applicable when calculating project performance and rural poverty impact and when determining overall project achievement. Project performance is calculated as an arithmetic average of the ratings for relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, and the final rating may therefore include a decimal point. The rating for rural poverty impact is based on the informed and objective judgement of the evaluators, who take into account the individual ratings attributed to the various domains in the rural poverty impact criteria. Overall project achievement is calculated in a similar manner using the ratings for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, rural poverty impact, sustainability and innovation. Both for rural poverty impact and overall project achievement, evaluators assign a whole-number rating without any decimal points.

Aggregation of ratings is also required in CPEs in determining the performance of the overall project portfolio, the aggregate rating for non-lending activities, COSOP performance in terms of relevance and effectiveness and, finally, in generating an overall achievement rating for the IFAD-government partnership. Chapter 4 provides guidance for the aggregation of ratings within CPEs.

The introduction of weights would enhance the complexity of the evaluation methodology. In other multilateral banks weighting is sometimes used to account for the size of loans and credits. However, in the case of IFAD, because of the focus on innovation, financial allocations have limited significance.[20]

E. The "why" question

While ensuring that independent evaluations serve as instruments for strengthening accountability, concerted efforts need to be made to understand the proximate causes of good performance or to identify areas of IFAD operations that need further improvement and attention. Hence, evaluation reports should devote adequate coverage and attention to the "why" question and ensure that the numeric rating attributed to each evaluation criteria analysis is consistent with the evidence secured by the evaluation. In addition to reporting on "what" the performance was, evaluations should provide a deeper understanding of "why" the performance was as it was. This in turn facilitates the identification

19. The Annual Review of Development Effectiveness produced by the Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank uses a similar system of categorization.

20. The Independent Evaluation Group does not use weights in its evaluation methodologies.

and consolidation of lessons to be considered in country strategy formulation, as well as project design and implementation.

F. Inter-evaluator variability

The term "inter-evaluator variability" refers to differences in assessments and judgements related to performance which primarily stem from differences in the understanding and application of evaluation methodology by OE staff and consultants. This is a legitimate cause for concern – not only within a given evaluation but also across evaluations – as inter-evaluator variability limits the degree of reliability obtained when aggregating results as well as in comparing results between evaluations.

In addition to providing guidance for the use of numerical ratings, specific efforts are being deployed by OE to minimize such variability. These include holding a mandatory briefing session for all consultants team leaders and selected team members on the evaluation methodology and the process to follow; undertaking systematic internal peer reviews within OE of major deliverables[21] produced during evaluations; requesting each evaluation team member to comment on the ratings and draft final evaluation report; and conducting periodic workshops in OE to provide guidance to staff and evaluation consultants on the methodologies to be followed and their application.

G. Evidence trail

The credibility and quality of each evaluation are based on the robustness of its analysis; one consideration in this regard is the importance of ensuring a clear evidence trail. For example, the findings and conclusions of a particular evaluation should be coherently anchored in the analysis and documented in evaluation reports. Each recommendation should find its genesis in the conclusions contained in the evaluation. Moreover, in order to delineate the evidence trail, evaluation reports should contain cross-references to the pertinent sections and paragraphs in the document to help readers easily identify the findings that led to a particular recommendation and the analysis that led to a particular conclusion.

H. Attribution and counterfactuals

The issue of impact attribution calls for careful consideration. First, IFAD-supported activities involve many partners. Second, they are exposed to external factors that influence results. In particular, donor countries' policies, beneficiary countries' domestic policies, other development programmes, socio-economic fluctuations, structural changes and climatic phenomena can affect the results. Therefore, attributing the results achieved on the ground to a particular project or programme, let alone to IFAD's own performance, is challenging. However, meeting this challenge is critical to the validity of evaluation findings.

The "before and after" technique can be employed to attribute effects to a particular intervention. This type of analysis is often hindered by the lack of baseline data and inadequate M&E systems. However, specific techniques (e.g. memory recall, wealth ranking, community mapping) can shed light on the situation before the project/programme/policy is introduced, thus facilitating the "before and after" assessment.

Tackling impact attribution on an even more comprehensive basis calls for the definition of a plausible counterfactual, which is the situation or scenario that would hypothetically prevail were there no development intervention. The use of plausible counterfactuals is needed to ascertain the development contribution of an intervention (i.e. the extent to which observed development results can be attributed to a specific operation). Hence, taking into account the overall budget allocations and time frames for evaluation, OE seeks to examine the results of its interventions relative to those of relevant control groups.

This approach is also known as a "with or without" analysis. It can be used to help to acquire an understanding of the impact of IFAD-supported operations on livelihoods

21. Mainly the evaluation approach paper and the draft final report.

(e.g. in terms of income, nutritional status, access to resources, etc.) by assessing the results of interventions on target groups and by comparing them with the situation of populations outside the target group in similarly situated regions. The selection of control groups and their treatment should be specified at the beginning of the evaluation. To ensure the reliability of the analysis, the control group should be as similar as possible to the group covered by the project being evaluated and should be selected within areas with similar agro-ecological conditions, social services, infrastructure provisions, access to markets, etc.

I. Evaluation and hindsight

There are three other evaluation dilemmas that evaluators need to address:

- How to evaluate performance of a strategy or operation if the context has changed in terms of, for example, the country's policy framework or institutional arrangements?
- How to evaluate performance if development understandings have changed since the beginning of a strategy or operation?
- How to evaluate performance if IFAD policies, processes or features of its operating model have changed during implementation?

Common sense might appear to suggest that the evaluation of past performance should be measured by yesterday's metric and the advantages of hindsight disregarded. However, it also stands to reason that results should be judged based on up-to-date information regarding actual achievements and policy standards. Performance cannot be rated as if project and programme designs were immutable and immune to adjustment in the course of implementation. Given the learning dimension of IFAD operations, the adaptability of its instruments and practices should be an important aspect of its performance evaluations. At the same time, revisions of project and programme designs are not cost-free and require the concurrence of partners, in particular the borrowers. Hence, a sound assessment of adjustment feasibility should be carried out by evaluators to ensure fairness in performance ratings.

In other words, learning should be distinguished from accountability. Learning is maximized when it is evaluated against today's standards. But to hold managers strictly accountable for failing to achieve today's standards before they were known may be unfair. For example, to judge the relevance and quality of project designs without reference to the limits of the knowledge available at the time would be unfair. Equally, one cannot expect a rural finance project that is scheduled to close at the end 2008 to be retrofitted to meet the provisions of a new rural finance policy introduced by the Fund in 2007. In cases where standards or policies have changed late in the life of a project – too late for retrofitting – managerial performance must thus be evaluated without the benefit of hindsight.

Account must also be taken of the costs of retrofitting that such adaptability may entail in the case of, for example, projects or components that cannot be readily changed without prohibitive consequences (e.g. irrigation systems or rural roads). On the other hand, in cases where project and programme designs could have been adjusted economically and in a timely fashion so as to remain relevant as time passed and circumstances changed, performance evaluation with the benefit of hindsight is both legitimate and fair. To sum up, the judicious use of a current evaluative lens allows project performance and impact to be assessed against current standards.

Experience shows that the overall development context (political, agro-ecological, policy, institutional and other factors) in a given country and project area has a significant effect on results. This means that project design teams ought to factor in context issues up front and that project strategy should be fine-tuned as required during implementation to respond to changes in the implementation environment. Evaluation teams should therefore ascertain the

nature of the development context at the design stage as well as tracking its evolution and determining the adequacy and feasibility of adjustments in the course of implementation.

J. Learning accountability

Given IFAD's learning mandate, OE's performance assessment should include an evaluation of the Fund's quality assurance mechanisms and risk management systems, as well as of the adaptability of its instruments and practices. In particular, OE evaluations should analyse the extent to which recommendations from past evaluations, project completion reports (PCRs), MTRs and supervision and implementation support missions were reflected in the project/programme/policy under consideration. Evaluations should review whether the advice generated through IFAD's quality enhancement and quality assurance processes[22] was internalized by PMD in the subsequent phases of project/programme/strategy/policy development.

K. Techniques and instruments

Evaluators must select specific techniques and instruments for collecting data that will enable them to respond to the questions contained in the evaluation framework. These tools will vary according to the type of evaluation, availability of data, local context, resources and time available, and other variables. Table 3 provides a short description of various methods used for data collection.[23] The instruments that OE uses in the collection and analysis of data include: case studies (e.g. in a thematic evaluation covering various countries in a particular geographic region), statistical surveys for performance and impact assessments, semi-structured questionnaires to collect feedback, direct observations of project activities (e.g. to assess the quality of infrastructure developed), focus group discussions with community-based organizations (CBOs), informal discussions with key informants, wealth ranking (to determine household income and status), rapid rural appraisals and so on.

TABLE 3: Examples of data collection methods

	TYPICAL METHODS	SHORT DESCRIPTION	REMARKS
Qualitative – semi-structured	Direct observations	Observations of sites, practices, living conditions, physical constructions (e.g. grain warehouses) according to a pre-agreed checklist (can be combined with rating).	Necessary in most evaluations; can be a source of unexpected findings. Generalization of findings can be an issue.
	Trained observer ratings	Systematic grading of physical outputs (e.g. quality of water points or health centres) or organizational features (e.g. extension sessions, microfinance institutions) based on preset parameters and grading scales.	Practical for interventions that are standardized (e.g. potable water, irrigation schemes, training centres). Requires careful preparation of rating guidelines.
	Key informant individual interviews with semi-open questionnaires or checklists	Individual interviews on a number of selected topics according to a pre-agreed checklist. The majority of questions are open-ended and meant to stimulate discussion rather than elicit one-word or one-sentence responses.	Useful, inter alia, for discussing sensitive issues that would not normally be discussed in public. Generalization of findings can be an issue. Requires careful preparation of instruments.
	Photos/images	Land, aerial or satellite pictures showing an event (e.g. a fire) or process (e.g. reduction in a lake's water level or deforestation).	Particularly useful for phenomena that heavily affect the territory (widespread settlement, deforestation, surface water depletion).

22. These are new processes introduced under IFAD's Action Plan to improve quality at entry. The quality enhancement process is the responsibility of PMD, whereas the quality assurance process is undertaken at arm's length from PMD under the responsibility of the Office of the Vice-President.

23. See Annex D in the IFAD Practical Guide for Monitoring and Evaluation at the Project Level (2002).

TABLE 3 (continued): Examples of data collection methods

	TYPICAL METHODS	SHORT DESCRIPTION	REMARKS
Qualitative – semi-structured	Focus groups	Interaction of a relatively small group of people (normally 6-12) on a limited set of topics, facilitated by a moderator. Beneficiaries agree on a number of preferences, conclusions, beliefs, attitudes, etc.	Valuable for understanding interactions and areas of dis/agreement. Generalization of findings can be an issue.
	Memory recall	Entails interviews with beneficiaries and other stakeholders, individually or in groups, who reconstruct their situation before the project.	Necessary generally in all evaluations, especially when baseline surveys are not available.
	Participatory techniques: wealth ranking, problem ranking, community mapping, historical transects	Participants are requested to come up with their own criteria and indicators to assess a situation, a process or a distribution of resources and how it has changed over time.	Indicators and parameters are elicited from people rather than pre-selected by researchers. Generalization of findings can be an issue.
	Historical narration/ most significant change technique	Collection of significant change stories from the field and selection of the most significant of these stories by panels of designated stakeholders or staff. Once changes have been captured, selected people read the stories aloud and have regular in-depth discussions about the value of the reported changes.	Content is likely to be rich in insight but may be subjective, especially if the selection of significant changes is done by external agents. Cross-checking of results with other techniques is recommended. Generalization of findings can be an issue.
	Case studies	In-depth assessment of a very limited number of observations (e.g. some microfinance organizations, community development projects or farms). The techniques to be adopted may overlap with those presented above.	The criteria for the selection of cases matters. Options include selecting best cases, worst cases or a mix of good-, medium- and low- performing cases.
Quantitative – structured	Mini-surveys (typically samples of 100-200 respondents, including project and control observations)	A sample of the programme population (and possibly of a control group) is extracted. Interviews are conducted by enumerators on the basis of a pre-written and pre-coded questionnaire. Entries are recorded on electronic support media and analysed using computer software on the basis of standard descriptive, inferential and econometric techniques.	The sampling procedure should try to capture the "true averages" in the population. This technique is feasible in the context of a project or country programme evaluation. Trained specialists are required for survey design planning and data analysis.
	Larger surveys (over 400 households)		Large samples allow for more refined analysis and are representative of more subcategories of the population (subregion, province, etc.) but can be costly and time-consuming to implement.

Note: This table does not provide an exhaustive repertoire of available methods. Evaluation teams are invited to examine the specialized literature. Annex 2 provides a list of references that can be consulted for further reading on alternative techniques for data collection.

Relevant data for evaluation may be drawn from existing reports compiled by project authorities or IFAD operations staff. A variety of other sources may also be consulted, including government statistical or administrative offices, national censuses, world development indicators from the World Bank and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), etc. Therefore, during the preparatory mission, it is important to assess the availability and quality of secondary data. This enables OE to target efforts towards the collection of additional data. In particular, it is important to ascertain whether a baseline survey was undertaken and, if so, to determine its quality. Where baseline surveys have not been undertaken or are not of the required quality, the approach paper should identify how data collection ought to proceed in order to secure a plausible proxy for the assessment of initial conditions.

For instance, evaluators may conduct in-depth interviews with project beneficiaries and have them reconstruct – using memory recall, structured interviews and/or focus groups discussions – the logical chain of behavioural, productive or organizational changes generated or supported by the project. Evaluators should exercise caution and triangulate the information secured from diverse sources (see below). This is done before deciding on a set of variables deemed to represent initial conditions and those resulting from project interventions; this is particularly important in the case of income and cost indicators, which may be subject to measurement errors in recall methods.[24]

When primary data collection is necessary, a combination of (mixed) methods should normally be used to ensure data accuracy and facilitate its interpretation. Thus, quantitative data about agricultural production patterns, incomes and livelihoods can be secured through surveys, while insights about the performance of development partners (e.g. government responsiveness to community needs, availability of privately supplied inputs or usefulness of IFAD's involvement) may be dealt with through focus group discussions. A judicious approach should be taken to the sequencing of data collection. For example, interpretation of quantitative survey results secured before the main mission can usefully be checked or probed through participant interviews during the main mission.

In choosing the beneficiaries and a control group to represent the project population and ascertain project impacts, care should be taken to avoid systematic biases. For example, biases may result from collecting data mostly from better-off or worse-off project beneficiaries. To obtain a representative sample, random sampling should be used to select project sites and households. Three major sampling options are available:

(i) Simple random sampling. A sample is extracted from the entire population by using random numbers or equivalent procedures.
(ii) Stratified random sampling. The population is first divided into internally homogenous strata (e.g. large-/medium-/small-scale landholders and the landless) and observations are selected by simple random sampling in each stratum.
(iii) Cluster sampling. The population is divided into internally heterogeneous groups (e.g. according to gender, income status, economic activity) and observations are extracted through simple random sampling in each group.[25]

Security restraints on mobility, ethical considerations or efficiency concerns may constrain the systematic adoption of random techniques. Nevertheless, there are practical ways to minimize potential biases, for example: (i) selection of project sites so as to cover different agro-ecological zones; (ii) surveys of beneficiaries at varying distances from a main road to ensure that the direct and indirect impacts on communities are accurately captured; (iii) examination of results in sites where project activities are at different maturity stages; (iv) targeting of communities and

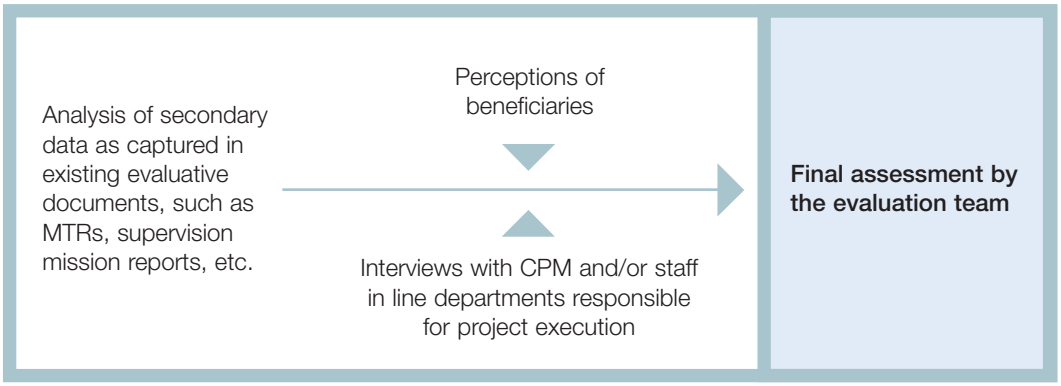
24. Typical problems with recall methods include: (i) incorrect recollection and (ii) telescoping, i.e. projecting an event backward or forward. For example, the purchase of a durable good which took place seven years ago (before the project started) might be projected to a point in time just four years ago, during project implementation.

25. See G. T. Henry (1990), *Practical Sampling*.

organizations endowed with diverse capacities (e.g. a mix of rural credit cooperatives combining high-, moderate- and low-repayment records); (v) interviews of large- and small-scale landholders, sharecroppers and landless labourers; and (vi) surveys focused on older and younger women and men.

The collection of data and other types of information from different sources and methods[26] allows the evaluation team to formulate well-founded assessments regarding important dimensions of project impact (e.g. did a particular project's intervention help to promote better access to markets?). An important related technique is the triangulation of the information and data collected. According to OECD/DAC, triangulation entails the use of three or more theories, sources or types of information, or types of analysis to verify and substantiate an assessment. This allows evaluators to overcome the bias that comes from single informants, single methods or single observations and thus helps to ensure the robustness and reliability of evaluation findings.

FIGURE 1: Example of triangulation



Triangulation entails looking at the views and perceptions of: (i) project beneficiaries (using, for example, a combination of survey work and participatory techniques); (ii) the CPM for the relevant country and/or staff in line departments responsible for project execution (captured using a semi-structured questionnaire); and (iii) secondary sources as documented in project-related self-evaluation reports, such as periodic progress reports, MTRs and PCRs (see figure 1 for an example of triangulation).

L. Benchmarking

Benchmarking involves the use of a reference point or standard against which performance or achievements can be assessed.[27] Benchmarking is conducted internally with IFAD operations and externally with other relevant institutions. Efforts must be made to compare like with like. Internally, the results of project evaluations and CPEs will be benchmarked against the data contained in the ARRI,[28] but also against the data for the specific IFAD geographic region in which the project evaluation or CPE was undertaken. Evaluations will also – to the extent possible - benchmark results against the indicators and targets contained in the results measurement matrix of the Fund's Strategic Framework. Externally, as far as CPEs are concerned, efforts should be made to collect data and compare IFAD's performance with the results of other IFIs (in particular the World Bank and the appropriate regional development banks) and other international institutions, including the United Nations organizations working in agriculture and rural development, preferably in the same country.

There are several ways in which IFAD's size and its specialist mandate and operational approaches distinguish it from other development agencies. However, there are also many similarities between IFAD, IFIs, United Nations

26. See A. Tashakkori and C. Teddlie (1998), *Mixed Methodology: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*.

27. See Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management, OECD/DAC.

28. The ARRI is produced every year and contains the aggregate performance assessment of all evaluations conducted in a given year. It normally covers all five IFAD geographic regions.

organizations and other multilateral development organizations, not least of which is the need to demonstrate results, manage risks and work in alignment with country-led development frameworks. IFIs also use similar development instruments (e.g. loans, grants, policy dialogue, etc.) and, like IFAD, they seek to demonstrate creativity and innovation. On the other hand, evaluation policies and methodologies differ to some extent among organizations, and the results of benchmarking must therefore be interpreted with caution.

M. Joint evaluations

Joint evaluations minimize this risk, since they offer the opportunity to harmonize evaluation approaches among different donor agencies and/or partners. Joint evaluations[29] can contribute to progress towards implementation of the provisions contained in the Paris Declaration which are aimed at promoting aid effectiveness and can help overcome attribution problems in assessing the effectiveness of programmes and strategies, the complementarity of partners' contributions, the quality of aid coordination, etc. Of course, there are various degrees of "jointness", depending on the extent to which individual partners cooperate in the evaluation process, merge their evaluation resources and combine their evaluation reporting.

Joint evaluations permit the pooling of resources to undertake more effective desk and country fieldwork that will almost certainly add enormously to the coverage, quality and credibility of the evaluation. They also provide an opportunity to draw together the substantial volume of evaluative evidence, experience and knowledge accumulated by more than one organization. Properly managed, they may also help to reduce the transactions costs which the country or countries covered by the evaluation have to shoulder. On the other hand, joint evaluations are more risky than single-owner studies because there is increased scope for disagreement on methods, priorities, findings or resource management and because of sensitivities about reputational risk. Similarly, the coordination of joint work can be complex and has often increased the cost and duration of the evaluation exercise as a result of the coordination costs incurred in terms of staff time and travel, lengthy management processes and other delays.[30]

This having been said, the number of joint evaluations is likely to increase given the emphasis placed by donors on working together more closely in development cooperation initiatives (through, for example, the financing of projects taking a sector-wide approach, the preparation of joint country assistance strategies, etc.). Hence, this is an area in which OE must take care to ensure that it participates selectively in joint evaluations of importance to IFAD and that it is contributing to the ongoing debate on joint evaluations taking place within the framework of UNEG, ECG and the DAC Network on Development Evaluation.

N. Transparency

To demonstrate transparency, evaluation processes and methodology should be discussed with key evaluation partners,[31] while evaluation reports should include data and information that adequately support the conclusions as well as relevant descriptions of the evaluation process, the literature consulted and the working papers generated to support report findings and recommendations. The entire evaluation report and supporting working papers are disclosed.

29. OE has worked on a major joint evaluation with the African Development Bank (AfDB) on agriculture and rural development in Africa in 2007-2008. A specific section on the joint evaluation may be found in the Office of Evaluation website on the IFAD portal (www.ifad.org).

30. For a more comprehensive discussion of these matters, see *Guidance for Managing Joint Evaluations,* DAC Evaluation Series, OECD, Paris 2006.

31. Key partners may include, for example, IFAD Management, government authorities and project staff, who are the main users of evaluation results.

3 The project evaluation methodology

A. Key processes
B. Project evaluation reports: contents, definitions and examples

Projects are still the main instrument used by IFAD to reduce rural poverty. Accordingly, this chapter provides detailed guidance on project evaluations. They are of two types: (i) completion evaluations, which are conducted after the end of a project when no subsequent IFAD phase is envisaged; and (ii) interim evaluations, which are carried out at the completion of a phase and prior to the design and implementation of a new phase of the same IFAD-funded operation. OE also undertakes evaluations of ongoing and closed projects as building blocks for country programme, thematic or CLEs.

A. Key processes

This section covers the main project evaluation processes. They are divided into six key phases: (i) designing the evaluation; (ii) country work; (iii) report-writing; (iv) gathering comments; (v) concluding the agreement at completion point (ACP);[32] and (vi) communicating the evaluation findings and recommendations. Depending on the circumstances, OE Management may consider making specific refinements in any particular process to ensure an orderly and timely implementation of the evaluation.

Designing the evaluation[33]

For the design phase, the designated OE lead evaluation officer prepares an **approach paper**, which includes an evaluation framework, lists the key evaluation questions, charts out the time frames, describes the core learning partnership (CLP) (see relevant paragraph below), identifies the skills needed, and proposes communication and learning activities. The approach paper is a crucial component of an evaluation because it is the master reference document for the evaluation throughout the process. It is also the stage at which key evaluation partners are identified and the specific evaluation methods and techniques for data collection are defined.

An indicative table of contents for a project evaluation approach paper is presented in table 4. The approach paper should be about 6-7 pages long, excluding annexes. A helpful example of an approach paper is provided in annex 3.

TABLE 4: Table of contents for project evaluation approach papers

I.	Rationale
II.	Country and project background
III.	Evaluation objectives, methodology (including the evaluation framework) and process
IV.	Collecting data and evidence
V.	The core learning partnership
VI.	The consultant team
VII.	Communication and dissemination
VIII.	Proposed schedule
IX.	References

32. Under the IFAD Evaluation Policy, each evaluation ends with an agreement at completion point (ACP), which includes the agreement of IFAD Management and the government to the main evaluation findings and their commitment to adopt and implement the evaluation recommendations within specified time frames.

33. This stage is preceded by the process of selecting the projects (and the country programmes) to be evaluated. This is done within the context of the development of OE's work programme and budget.

Four aspects of the approach paper require specific consideration: (i) the evaluation framework; (ii) the CLP; (iii) the self-assessments prepared by the corresponding IFAD operations division and the government concerned; and (iv) a timetable. **The evaluation framework** provides the justification for the selected methodologies and processes. It takes the form of a matrix that displays the linkages among the project evaluation objectives, the evaluation criteria, the overarching and subsidiary issues that need to be addressed to achieve the evaluation objectives, and the instruments and sources of data collection that OE will deploy and use to answer the questions contained in the evaluation framework. Examples may be found in annex 3.

In accordance with the Evaluation Policy,[34] OE establishes a **CLP** for each evaluation. Members of the CLP consist of the main users of the evaluation.[35] In order to define the members of the CLP, a stakeholder analysis may be undertaken to allow the lead evaluator to select the institutions and persons that can contribute to and benefit most from the evaluation. The CLP helps flag issues and information sources, and it provides comments at key stages of the process (including the draft approach paper and draft final evaluation report). CLP members also take part in the final learning workshop organized for each evaluation by OE. Lastly, once the independent evaluation report is complete, the CLP debates its findings and discusses the recommendations with a view to laying the groundwork for development of an ACP.

CLPs for projects evaluations normally include: (i) the CPM; (ii) the project director/coordinator; (iii) a senior government official (from the coordinating Ministry working with IFAD); (iv) a senior provincial/state-level government official (from the technical ministry/department concerned); (v) representatives of cofinancing organizations and cooperating institutions (if any); (vi) the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) associated with project implementation (if any) and a representative of CBOs; and (vi) the OE lead evaluator. These are general guidelines to be used flexibly, taking account of the special circumstances of individual projects and the views of the relevant regional division and government authorities.

Self-assessments allow all those involved in project design and implementation to convey their knowledge and perceptions about operational results and performance. The scope of self-assessments is reflected and their time frames captured in the approach paper.[36]

For project evaluations, self-assessments are prepared by the CPM and appropriate project authorities. They are guided by OE with regard to the methodology, approach and expected deliverables of the self-assessment. Self-assessments are usually conducted between the preparatory mission for the evaluation and the main evaluation mission. The preparatory mission can be used as an opportunity to brief project authorities about the objectives, time-frames and overall approach to the self-assessment.

Normally, a self-assessment by operational staff is available by the time the main evaluation mission arrives in the country concerned. The evaluation framework is used as a basis for the self-assessments, including the rating scale and the criteria adopted by OE in assessing performance and impact. This helps to ensure that the self-assessments are focused and useful for the OE evaluation. In particular, those undertaking the self-assessments should be invited to provide answers to the questions contained in the evaluation framework. It is usually desirable to organize a country-level discussion on the self-assessments, with full participation by key project evaluation stakeholders. It should be made clear on this occasion that the results are only one input in the subsequent OE evaluation and do not affect its independence.

Where available, the PCR should cover the requirements of the self-assessment. In such cases, a separate report need not be

34. See paragraph 33 of the Evaluation Policy.

35. For example, for a project evaluation, members might include the IFAD CPM for the corresponding country, a representative of government authorities at both federal and lower administrative levels involved in project execution, representatives of civil society organizations participating in the project (e.g. NGOs or CBOs). Academics, representatives of advocacy groups and think tanks, as well as parliamentarians, may also be included in the CLP, as they can provide alternative perspectives of use to the evaluation process. For further information, see paragraph 33 of the Evaluation Policy.

36. The Evaluation Policy requires the undertaking of such self-assessments as an input for each independent evaluation by OE.

produced, and OE should request the entity responsible for the self-assessment to limit its inputs to two aspects: (i) its ratings for each of the evaluation criteria; and (ii) its answers to questions in the evaluation framework not addressed by the PCR.

The approach paper is expected to include a specific **timetable for the project evaluation** process. This should cover all essential steps, together with proposed dates, including those of the main evaluation mission, the submission of a draft evaluation report, the deadline for comments by PMD staff and country-level partners, and the wrap-up meeting. This provides a means of ensuring that a clear road map is agreed upon by all evaluation partners once the approach paper is finalized.

A **desk review note** summarizing the results of a literature review, examination of internal documents and interactions with the IFAD CPM and other operational staff will be prepared after the approach paper is developed. The desk review note will also contain an analysis of the performance and impact of the project, including ratings, as well as issues and hypotheses that merit deeper enquiry during the main evaluation mission. It also contains a short account of the evaluability of the project under consideration. Desk review notes are prepared based on available evaluative documents such as supervision mission reports, MTRs, PCRs, project status reports, the periodic progress reports produced by project authorities and others.

The review of external sources normally includes such documents as the Economist Intelligence Unit country reports, economic, social and poverty indicators available from country sources (e.g. available in the planning ministry), World Bank statistics, the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) (if available) and other relevant documents with up-to-date information on country conditions and prospects. Pertinent documents produced by donors and knowledge organizations working on agriculture and rural development topics are consulted.[37] The desk review phase helps staff and other participants to gain an appreciation of the operational context. It provides information on IFAD's performance and pinpoints cross-cutting issues and lessons learned. The findings are summarized in a desk review note that identifies overarching issues to be addressed by the evaluation. A sample outline for desk review notes is included in annex 4.

OE designates **internal peer reviewers** for each evaluation at the outset of the process. These reviewers are normally required to comment on the draft approach paper, draft final report and other selected deliverables, as appropriate.[38] Before sharing key documents with the peer reviewers, it is useful to obtain and include the comments of the consultants team leader. Following the introduction of the OE peer reviewers' and team leader's comments, the drafts are shared with the relevant IFAD regional division for its reactions, according to the protocol for communications established by OE (see annex 5). Once these reactions have been taken into account, the revised draft approach paper is transmitted to the project and country authorities for review well in advance of the preparatory mission fielded by OE.

While OE is responsible for the quality and content of all independent evaluations, the importance of the role of individual evaluators (normally consultants) cannot be overemphasized. OE conducts a rigorous process of selection, appraisal and management of all the personnel it deploys. To ensure quality, OE emphasizes effective oversight and management of **consultants** based on the advice of a divisional working group on the topic. Annex 6 outlines the conflict-of-interest provisions that OE takes into consideration when hiring evaluation consultants.

Country work

A **preparatory mission** is normally the next critical step in the evaluation process. Its main objective is to discuss the draft approach paper and seek the views and feedback of the government, project authorities and other

37. Some such information can be obtained by accessing the UNEG, ECG and DAC Network on Development Evaluation websites. The respective internet addresses are: www.uneval.org, www.ecgnet.org, and www.oecd.org.

38. The names of the peer reviewers for each project (and country programme evaluation) are to be defined at the beginning of each year.

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partners. It also allows the lead evaluator to familiarize him/herself with the project and country context.

The preparatory mission is led by the lead OE evaluator with the participation of the consultants team leader. The preparatory missions usually involve spending around one week in the concerned country, including sufficient time in the project area itself. The proposed programme for the preparatory mission is developed by the evaluation officer and discussed with OE Management ahead of the mission.

As noted above, OE should use the preparatory mission to provide clarifications and guidance for the preparation of the self-assessments. The preparatory mission provides an opportunity for the lead evaluator to brief partners about the evaluation methodology and processes, as well as to introduce them to the IFAD Evaluation Policy. Upon returning to headquarters, the lead evaluator is required to finalize the approach paper and to prepare a back-to-office report.

The preparatory mission allows the lead evaluator and the consultants team leader to identify local consultants. It further allows the lead evaluator to assess, on the basis of the existing project M&E system, the availability of data and the extent to which such data can be used during the evaluation. It is important to determine whether any additional data collection work – identified during the desk review carried out at headquarters as part of the approach paper –may need to be organized before the arrival of the main evaluation mission. Should the need arise, additional data collection (e.g. preparatory surveys) should be planned with the collaboration of qualified local institutions (e.g. consulting companies, universities, NGOs) that have a proven track record.

If surveys are conducted before the main evaluation mission, adequate time and resources should be provided to: (i) link survey design to the evaluation framework; (ii) develop and test field instruments for data collection, such as structured questionnaires implemented at the household level, community mapping, etc.; (iii) sample the population to be surveyed in terms of both project beneficiaries and control groups; (iv) train the enumerators who will be responsible for collecting primary data; (v) code and store data electronically; and (vi) analyse and interpret the data; and (vii) produce a survey report.

During the preparatory mission, it is customary for discussions to be held with the government and project authorities to develop the overall plan of meetings and itinerary for the field visits of the evaluation mission. To the extent possible and practical, random sampling should be used to determine the communities and project sites to visit. The preparatory mission is used to agree upon the criteria for selecting the communities and beneficiaries to interview, as well as the project activities to visit during the main evaluation mission.

Sufficient time (i.e. at least one month) should be allowed between the preparatory mission and the main evaluation mission. This allows consultants to prepare for the main mission, project and country authorities to make the necessary logistic arrangements for the evaluation mission, and so on.

The core objectives of the **main evaluation mission** are, inter alia, to collect data and information to build up the evaluation evidence trail, to validate and supplement the desk review, to interact with beneficiaries, government partners and stakeholders at project and country levels, and to gain first-hand insights into project and country programme activities and results on the ground.

In order to provide a multidisciplinary perspective on project results, it is recommended that project evaluation teams consist of from three to four members, including the consultants team leader. Participation of national experts and women is critical. Prior to the mission, teams should reflect upon the site selection criteria for their field visits, particularly if no

extensive data collection exercise has been conducted. Project authorities should be adequately informed and should provide feedback on the feasibility of transportation and security issues.

It is mandatory for OE to contact the local United Nations Security Officer to gain an understanding of the security situation on the ground. Security clearance from the United Nations system, where necessary, should be obtained before starting field visits.

Interactions in the capital city are usually important. The mission is required to hold meetings with the key coordinating ministry or department responsible for the government's relations with IFAD, in addition to meetings with technical ministries and other partners (such as cofinanciers (if applicable), NGOs, private-sector operators) involved in project execution.

An attempt should be made to arrange meetings with representatives of cofinancier(s), other donors and NGOs that play an important role in agriculture and rural development. Interactions with parliamentarians and representatives of civil society (e.g. advocacy groups that work towards promoting greater involvement of women in development initiatives, etc.) are a must. Beyond briefing them about the evaluation, the purpose of interviews is to obtain information and feedback that will ultimately contribute to the analysis of project performance.

Before proceeding to the field, the mission should hold consultations with government institutions at the provincial and/or district level responsible for project implementation, as well as the relevant project authorities (project director/coordinator). Thereafter, the mission should undertake **consultations with the rural poor**, both individually and in focus groups. For project evaluations, it is normal practice for an evaluation mission to spend from two to three weeks at the project level, meeting with the rural poor and their communities, holding discussions with provincial/district authorities and project staff, visiting different project sites, and interacting with NGOs and the private sector (as appropriate).

Each evaluation mission must prepare an **aide-memoire** providing a summary of the team's initial findings based on desk work and field observations (good practice examples may be found in annex 3). The preparation of the aide-memoire should not be left until the end of the mission. Writing should start early, and the document should be updated and refined as the mission unfolds. The aide-memoire should not contain ratings or recommendations. It should be kept short (maximum 10 pages), and be sent by email to the OE Director for feedback before it is finalized and circulated to PMD and partners for the wrap-up meeting. If time permits, informal feedback from the CPM should also be sought before the aide-memoire is circulated to partners at the project and country levels.

Once completed, the aide-memoire should be shared with all participants invited to the wrap-up meeting at least 24 hours before it is held. The date of and invitation to the meeting should be fixed at the outset of the evaluation mission's work in the country, with the understanding that the background document (i.e. the aide-memoire) will follow in due course. An indicative table of contents is shown in table 5.

TABLE 5: Table of contents for project evaluation aide-memoire

I.	Evaluation background, objectives and process
II.	Programme of the evaluation mission, including project areas visited and number of communities covered
III.	Country and project information
IV.	Key implementation results, by component
V.	Major issues identified
VI.	Areas for further analysis during the report-writing phase
VII.	Next steps in the evaluation process
VIII.	Appendices

The wrap-up meeting may be held at the provincial/district level or in the capital city or both, with the location being determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with government authorities during the preparatory mission. It is important for senior officials from the capital city to attend the wrap-up meeting if it is held in the province/district and vice versa. The wrap-up meeting should be chaired by a senior government official. In accordance with the established procedures for implementing the IFAD Evaluation Policy,[39] the lead evaluator and CPM are required to attend all such meetings. Normally, the lead evaluator's and consultants team leader's role in the meeting involves giving a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the main messages covered in the aide-memoire. They should provide clarifications and the information sought by participants. They also provide a synopsis of the steps remaining in the evaluation process, highlighting the main points and decisions emerging from the meeting. These are normally included in an annex to the aide-memoire and are attached to the back-to-office report.

Report-writing

To the extent possible, the consultants team leader spends the bulk of her/his time at IFAD headquarters during the report-writing phase to facilitate interactions and an exchange of views with OE as the process unfolds. Mission members prepare working papers (as per their terms of reference) at their home stations. Each working paper focuses on a subsector, thematic or policy/strategy issue; the topics that must be covered are defined in the approach paper and depend on the nature of the project or country programme being evaluated. Working papers are used to inform the preparation of the main evaluation report. They are not included as part of the main evaluation report, but are instead listed as annexes in the table of contents and made available by OE upon request.

The lead evaluator and consultants team leader review the working papers and send their comments to the evaluation mission members. To ensure consistency, the lead evaluator and the consultants team leader share their comments with each other before conveying them to mission members.

The consultants team leader is responsible for providing OE with a draft report based on revised contributions from each mission member. Before doing so, s/he will share the document with mission members to seek their comments. The lead evaluator is responsible for reviewing the first draft of the report and requesting the consultants team leader to make further enhancements, as needed. Thereafter, it is the lead evaluator's responsibility to finalize the document and ensure that the report meets OE's quality requirements prior to the peer review process within OE.

Upon request, the consultants team leader provides the OE lead evaluator with his/her own assessment of the performance of individual mission members, including the overall quality of their respective working papers. This feedback is an important input which is used by OE to decide on the release of mission members' final payments.

Comments from partners

Following completion of the OE peer review process and integration of the corresponding comments, the lead evaluator shares the revised first draft report with PMD, based on the guidelines set forth in the matrix outlining the internal communications protocol for evaluation deliverables (see annex 5). PMD should be given sufficient time (at least three weeks) to submit its comments to OE in writing. Formal and informal meetings are encouraged between OE and PMD throughout the process to discuss the comments as well as to deepen their understanding around issues raised by evaluations.

Once the written comments are received from PMD, the lead evaluator (in collaboration with the consultants team leader) incorporates revisions – as appropriate – and prepares an audit trail that tracks how the comments were taken into account in the revised document. An audit trail indicates the specific revisions (including references to corresponding paragraphs) made by

39. See IFAD President's Bulletin PB 2003/13 on the IFAD Evaluation Policy.

OE to the main evaluation report in response to the written comments submitted by partners on the draft evaluation report. Written explanations should also be provided in the audit trail in the case of comments that were not considered suitable for inclusion in the final evaluation report. Among other issues, the audit trail is expected to improve the transparency and credibility of the evaluation process.

Following clearance by the OE Director, the revised draft report and audit trail are shared with PMD. The report is then sent to the coordinating federal/central government ministry that is dealing with IFAD. That ministry is asked to share the report with other concerned authorities and is requested to send consolidated written comments to OE within one month. In parallel, the lead evaluator shares the draft report with donor agencies (the cofinanciers) and requests their comments. Here again, the lead evaluator, with support from the consultants team leader, prepares an audit trail of the comments received from the government. After incorporating the government's comments, as appropriate, the report should be finalized.

Agreement at completion point (ACP)

An ACP is included in each evaluation. Although it may seem to be synonymous with the Management response, the ACP goes one step further, as it reflects the joint response of both the government and IFAD Management to the evaluation. This is important because the government of the relevant country is ultimately responsible for the execution of the IFAD-funded operation. The process leading to the preparation of the ACP is summarized in the next two paragraphs.

After the final evaluation report is ready, a one-day learning workshop is usually held at the end of the project evaluation process. Its core objective is to deepen the relevant stakeholders' understanding around the main evaluation findings and recommendations and to lay the foundation for preparation of the evaluation's ACP. A discussion paper of approximately 2-3 pages presenting key evaluation findings and recommendations is prepared beforehand. CLP members should participate in the event, including representatives of partner organizations such as those of federal and provincial/state governments, NGOs and civil society, research institutions and universities, multilateral and bilateral organizations, the CPM, the lead evaluator and others, as appropriate.

These workshops provide useful inputs for the preparation of the ACP, which should follow the OE template for such documents (see annex 7) and is signed by a representative of IFAD Management and the government concerned. The IFAD representative is the corresponding regional division director. On behalf of the government, an official of Secretary or Director-General rank is normally requested to sign the ACP. The draft ACP is shared with PMD for its comments. Once those comments have been received and appropriately integrated, the ACP is sent to the government for clearance.

Communication

For the purposes of this manual, this section summarizes the communication activities that are undertaken by OE towards the end of the evaluation process. These activities are outlined in the approach paper, and four essential communication items are to be covered in all evaluations.

First, the consultants team leader should be requested to prepare a profile for each project evaluation. These profiles take the form of brochures of approximately 800 words in length and contain a synthesis of the main findings and recommendations of project evaluations.

Second, the team leader should provide the lead evaluator with a draft version of a foreword – to be signed by the OE Director – for inclusion in the main evaluation report. Good-practice profiles and forewords should be obtained from the evaluation communication unit and prepared in time for the submission of the first draft report by the consultants team leader to OE.

Third, the executive summary should accompany the first draft report submitted to OE. This summary should cover the main evaluation

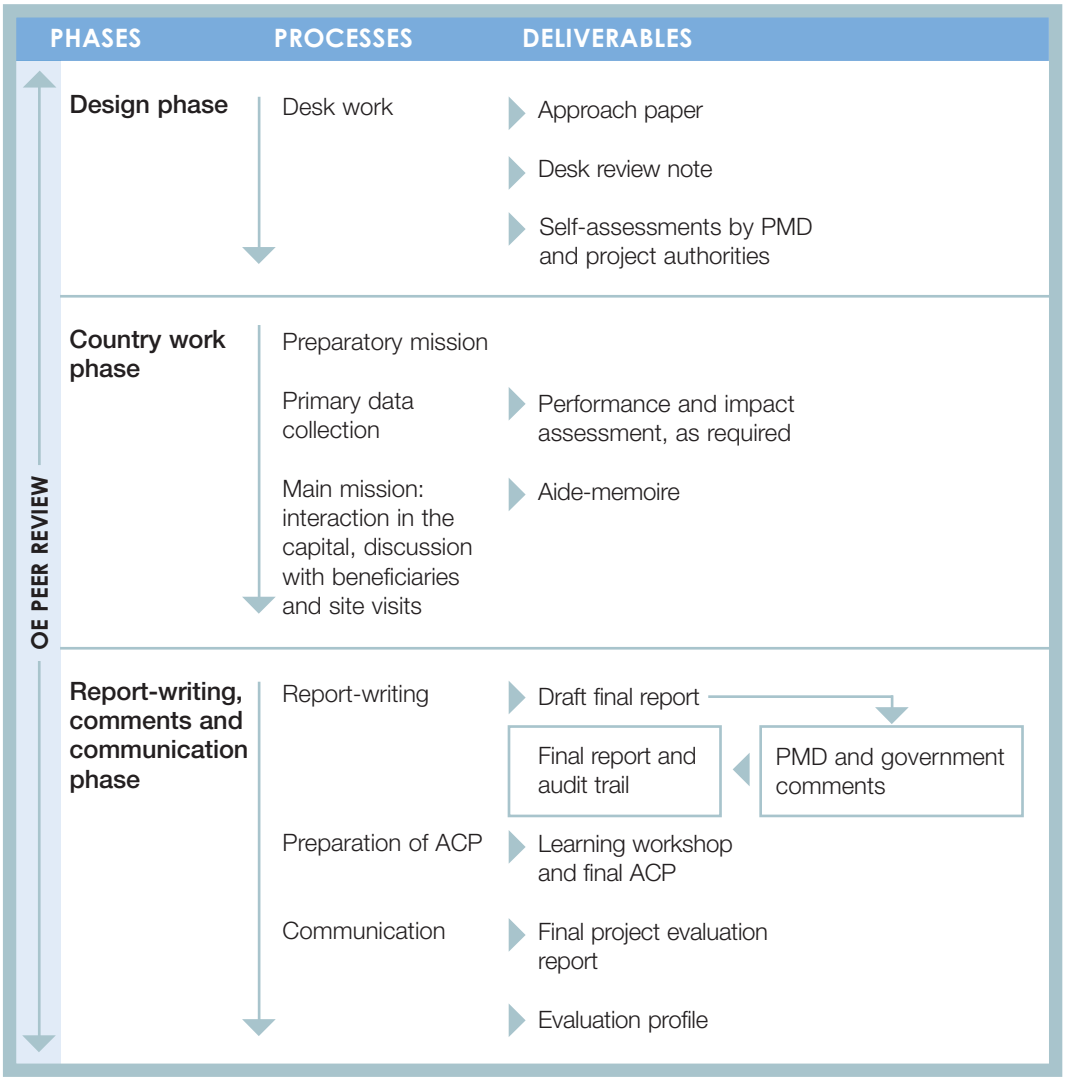
findings and should include a box on the ratings for all the criteria assessed, as well as the storyline based on the conclusions of the evaluations. It should be about 3-4 pages long and written in the same language as the main document. If the summary is in French or Spanish, the lead evaluator should ensure that it is translated into English. Both language versions of the executive summary (and forewords) should be included in the evaluation report. Profiles are issued in English and the other official IFAD language in which they were originally prepared.

Fourth, the draft evaluation report should not exceed 35-40 pages (excluding annexes but including the table of contents). Each chapter should conclude with a box outlining the key points. As mentioned earlier, working papers and desk review notes prepared by individual mission members are to be listed as annexes in the table of contents of the evaluation report and made available upon request to OE. Evaluation reports should include tables, figures and colour photographs, as appropriate, as well as a map of the project area(s).

The full evaluation report and the profile are posted on the evaluation website of the IFAD portal.

The flow chart shown below (see figure 2) provides a schematic overview of the project evaluation process.

FIGURE 2: Project evaluations phases, processes and key deliverables



B. Project evaluation reports: contents, definitions and examples

This section provides guidelines for preparing the project evaluation report. The total recommended length for the report is 35-40 pages. It includes a foreword, an executive summary (3-4 pages), the ACP and appendices.[40] Table 6 provides an indicative table of contents for project evaluation reports.

TABLE 6: Table of contents for project evaluation reports

Foreword
Executive summary
Agreement at completion point
Main evaluation report
I. Evaluation objectives, methodology and processes
II. Country and sector background
III. Project background
IV. Implementation results
V. Project performance (including relevance, effectiveness and efficiency)
VI. Rural poverty impact
VII. Sustainability and innovations
VIII. Performance of partners
IX. Conclusions and recommendations
Appendices

Foreword. The foreword is a one-page "summary of the summary" and is signed by the OE Director. It highlights the storyline[41] of the evaluation. A good-practice example is shown in annex 3.

Executive summary. The executive summary provides a synopsis of the storyline which includes the main findings and recommendations, as well as a table of ratings. Ratings should be supported by a clear explanation of the proximate causes of good or less good performance. The executive summary should be 3-4 pages in length. A good-practice example is offered in annex 3.

Evaluation objectives, methodology and process. Each report should start by outlining the main evaluation objectives: (i) to assess the performance and impact of the project; and (ii) to generate findings and recommendations useful for ongoing and future projects and programmes, whether financed by IFAD or not. The evaluation framework is then described and more detailed information is included in an appendix. Next, an overview of information sources and data collection instruments is presented, together with a section on the evaluation process. This section describes the role of the CLP, the criteria for selecting beneficiaries covered by the evaluation, the rationale for the field work carried out, the project areas and communities visited, the interviews conducted with key partners, the design of the learning workshop, the ACP process and the timeline.

Country and sector background. This section provides the reader with a picture of the country context. It normally includes: (a) an overview of the economy – GNI per capita, GDP growth, inflation and other information; (b) demographic data, such as total population and urban-rural distribution; (c) information on the share of the agricultural sector in the overall economy and general rural development issues, such as access to markets, extension and social services, migration, etc.; (d) a description of the characteristics of rural poverty, including geographical distribution, inequality (Gini coefficient), rural-urban differences, income and non-income measures of poverty (such as child malnutrition indicators), land tenure, gender issues and issues relating to other disadvantaged groups such as indigenous peoples or ethnic minorities (including information on the prevalence of HIV/AIDS if it is an issue in the concerned country); and (e) sector-specific issues of concern, for example, to the financial sector in the case of a project that will have a significant microfinance component.

The following **data sources**[42] could prove to be useful: (i) Economist Intelligence Unit

40. Annexes are the technical working papers prepared by evaluation mission members. Appendices are an integral part of the evaluation report and may include other information related to the evaluation, such as the approach paper, data tables, bibliography, mission itinerary, list of persons met and other such information.

41. The storyline captures the main messages from the evaluation about the performance and impact of a project; it does not, however, outline the project's results component-by-component or by each evaluation criteria used to assess the operation.

42. www.ifad.org/evaluation/policy/index.htm.

country profile; (ii) the World Bank country assistance strategy for the relevant country, country dataset and World Development Indicators (which may be found on the World Bank website), living standards measurement studies or other surveys;[43] (iii) International Monetary Fund Article IV consultation reports and datasets;[44] (iv) the UNDP *Human Development Report* and Human Development Index (HDI);[45] (v) the World Health Organization global dataset on child malnutrition;[46] (vi) IFAD COSOPs, country briefs and project documents; (vii) International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) working papers and studies;[47] (viii) poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs); and (ix) online search engines for scholarly papers, such as ProQuest Direct.[48]

Project background. The following background information should be included: (i) information about the context, including the agro-ecological conditions of the project area, and the local and national political and socio-economic situations at the time of design; (ii) project goals, objectives and components, including an overview of the project's M&E system; (iii) project data, including total costs, the IFAD loan, the amount of cofinancing, cooperating institutions (where applicable), lending terms, project type as classified by IFAD, key project dates (formulation, appraisal, approval, implementation and completion); (iv) arrangements for supervision and implementation support; and (v) implementation modalities and the institutions involved. In addition, a short account should be provided of the quality enhancement and quality assurance process which the project design underwent before its approval by the Fund's Executive Board.

Data sources. (i) COSOP, including its annual review(s), as available, (ii) the regional strategy, (iii) project documents and reports, including the inception, formulation and appraisal reports, the president's report, the loan agreement, the supervision and implementation support reports, the MTR, PCR and project status reports by the CPM; (iv) background documentation and minutes of the main design review processes - including the project development team (where applicable, as these teams are gradually being replaced by country programme management teams (CPMTs), quality enhancement and quality assurance processes, and the Operational Strategy and Policy Guidance Committee's review of project design;[50] (v) the IFAD Loans and Grants System and the Project Portfolio Management System; (vi) information on country performance ratings from the rural-sector development review undertaken in the context of the Performance-Based Allocation System (PBAS); and (v) key government documents, such as the PRSP, agriculture and rural development policies, etc.

Implementation results. In this section, attention should be given to quantitative and qualitative data useful in preparing the ground for the assessment of project performance in terms of: (i) outputs; (ii) budget use; and (iii) compliance with schedules and deadlines. In terms of outputs, it is important to highlight quantitative attainments, such as the kilometres of rural roads constructed, number of training sessions held for farmers, number of branches of rural banks established, hectares of forests under protection, number of health centres built, and so on. An analysis of budget use and compliance with timetables is also important in order to assess the efficiency dimension. Factors which have affected output delivery should also be highlighted, including major changes in political, socio-economic and ecological contexts in the project area or at the national level.

Data sources. (i) supervision and implementation support mission reports; (ii) MTRs; (iii) project status reports prepared by the CPM; (iv) project progress reports prepared by project authorities; (v) data from the project's M&E system; (vi) PCRs; (vii) discussions with key informants from government, cooperating institutions, selected local authorities and others; and (viii) site visits to verify the existence and quality of outputs.[51]

43. www.worldbank.org.

44. www.imf.org.

45. http://hdr.undp.org/en/.

46. www.who.int/nutgrowthdb/database/en/.

47. www.ifpri.org.

48. Within IFAD, ProQuest can be accessed on the intranet at http://intranet/irc/search/ext_ol_resources/index.htm.

49. Under the new IFAD project design process, the inception, formulation and appraisal reports will be replaced by a single project design document which will be enhanced at different stages as the design process unfolds.

50. Under the new IFAD project design system, these committee reviews are organized only for those projects which do not have a results-based COSOP.

51. Questions to this effect need to be built into field instruments.

Relevance. Relevance is assessed both in terms of: (i) alignment of project objectives with country and IFAD objectives and policies for agriculture and rural development, as well as the needs of the rural poor; and (ii) project design features geared to the achievement of project objectives. With regard to project design features, evaluations review whether appropriate project components and financial allocations were built into the project design; whether proper mechanisms and approaches for participation, targeting and gender mainstreaming were deployed; whether appropriate synergies were ensured across activities and services so as to lead to better rural livelihoods; whether implementation arrangements, including provisions for project management, supervision and implementation support, and M&E were suitable; etc.

Assessment of relevance should also cover coherence, i.e. a systematic examination of how the project fits in with the policies, programmes and projects undertaken by the government and other development partners. This assessment should, inter alia, determine whether the incentives framework provided by the government and partners' policies was appropriate and whether duplication was avoided, synergies tapped and inconsistencies removed prior to and during project implementation. The focus on coherence is implicit in IFAD's endorsement of the Paris Declaration.

BOX 1: Relevance of objectives versus relevance of approaches: an example

Projet de diversification des revenues dans la zone Sud non cotonnière in Mali (PDR-MS): This project intervention was designed during the first half of the 1990s, a period characterized by the rapid development of cotton growing in Mali. The project supported diversification of agriculture away from cotton production by promoting alternative crops and activities. In retrospect, given the cotton crisis of the late 1990s and the soil depletion in the area caused by over-cropping, project objectives were not only pertinent but also foresighted. On the other hand, major problems arose with respect to the choice of components and the design of project institutions. In particular, the project hinged on the creation of *Sociétés villageoises de développement* (SVD), village cooperatives responsible for promoting agricultural production and social services. At the time of project design, this model had already been the subject of much criticism, given its top-down and interventionist features – a reflection of the prevailing administrative culture. Very few SVD were still functional at the time of evaluation. Indeed, their activities were described as perfunctory in supervision reports. This example of unsatisfactory performance demonstrates that project relevance depends not only on selecting objectives that are relevant to IFAD's mandate but also on adapting the organization and management of the project to evolving needs and dynamics within the rural sector.

Source: CPE Mali 2006-2007

When assessing relevance, it is important to analyse the project context in two ways. First, the evaluation should consider the extent to which project design adequately took into account the prevailing specific political, institutional and socio economic context. Second, as conditions often evolve during implementation, the evaluation should ascertain the changes in context that may have taken place since the project design phase and analyse their implications for the relevance of the original design. This is needed in order to judge the adequacy and timeliness of responses by project management staff, government officials, IFAD, cofinanciers, etc. Adaptation of project designs to changing conditions is an integral part of relevance and a key performance criterion for the assessment of the performance of IFAD, its cooperating institutions and implementing partners.

Box 2 outlines key questions that evaluations should address in order to arrive at a rating and assessment of project relevance.

BOX 2: Key questions for assessing project relevance

- Are project objectives realistic and consistent with national agriculture and rural development strategies and policies, the COSOP and relevant IFAD sector and subsector policies,[52] as well as the needs of the rural poor?
- Was the project design (including synergies among activities and services, financial allocations, project management and execution, supervision and implementation support, and M&E arrangements) appropriate for achieving the project's core objectives?
- How coherent was the project in terms of how it fit in with the policies, programmes and projects undertaken by the government and other development partners?
- Was the project design participatory in the sense that it took into consideration the inputs and needs of key stakeholders, including the government, executing agencies, cofinanciers and the expected beneficiaries and their grassroots organizations?
- Did the project benefit from available knowledge (for example, the experience of other similar projects in the area or in the country) during its design and implementation?
- Did project objectives remain relevant over the period of time required for implementation? In the event of significant changes in the project context or in IFAD policies, has design been retrofitted?
- What are the main factors that contributed to a positive or less positive assessment of relevance?

Effectiveness. The achievement of quantifiable physical and financial outputs (such as the kilometres of roads constructed) is not a sufficient measure of project effectiveness. Outputs (i.e. the products, capital goods and services which result from a development intervention) contribute to the achievement of project objectives, but they are not a synonym for the attainment of the objectives per se. Nor are project objectives the same as the higher-order goals that the development intervention is intended to promote. Box 3 contains the main questions for evaluators to follow in rating and assessing project effectiveness.

BOX 3: Key questions for assessing project effectiveness

- To what extent have the objectives of the project and its components been attained both in quantitative and in qualitative terms?
- If the project is not yet complete, is it likely that so far unattained objectives may be accomplished in full/in part before its closure?
- What factors in project design and implementation account for the estimated results in terms of effectiveness?
- In particular, what changes in the overall context (e.g. policy framework, political situation, institutional set-up, economic shocks, civil unrest, etc.) have affected or are likely to affect project implementation and overall results?

52. See annex 8 for a list of all pertinent IFAD subsector policies and strategies.

Efficiency. Undertaking an efficiency analysis is challenging because it is not easy to assess the efficiency of non-physical outputs such as empowerment, capacity-building and participation. In some cases, such as infrastructure development projects or productivity-oriented interventions, it may be desirable to undertake an economic returns analysis. In particular, wherever IFAD's project design includes an internal rate of return estimate, there is a strong presumption that the evaluation should contain a comparable analysis. Where economic returns cannot be estimated, project efficiency is ascertained through cost effectiveness proxies or benchmarks. For instance, in the case of rural finance, indicators can be obtained through the Microfinance Information Exchange (MIX) initiative. For rural roads, government departments usually use standard costs, and so forth. Box 4 lists the main questions that evaluators should answer in rating and assessing project efficiency.

BOX 4: Key questions for assessing project efficiency

- What are the costs of investments to develop specific project outputs (e.g. what is the cost of constructing one kilometre of rural road)? The quality of works/supplies needs to be fully (and explicitly) recognized for such input/output comparisons.
- Is the cost ratio of inputs to outputs comparable to local, national or regional benchmarks?
- What are the loan costs per beneficiary (both at the time of appraisal and at the time of evaluation) and how do they compare to other IFAD-funded operations (or those of other donors) in the same country and/or other countries?
- How does the economic rate of return at evaluation compare with project design?
- What are the administrative costs[53] per beneficiary and how do they compare with other IFAD-funded operations (or those of other donors) in the same country or other countries?
- How much time did it take for the loan to be effective, and how does it compare with other loans in the same country and region?
- By how much was the original closing date extended, and what were the additional administrative costs that were incurred during the extension period?
- What factors help account for project efficiency performance?

Overall assessment of project performance. Based on the assessments of three core project performance criteria (relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), the report should present an overall rating for project performance. This assessment is geared to answer the following question: Is the project likely to achieve its major objectives efficiently, and, if so, will those achievements make a difference in terms of the rural poverty situation in a given country?

Rural poverty impact. Complementing the analysis of project effectiveness,[54] the rural poverty impact assessment addresses five domains on which IFAD-funded projects are likely to have an impact: household income and assets, human and social capital and empowerment, food security and agricultural productivity, natural resources and the environment, and institutions and policies. The following paragraphs outline the information to be secured for the five impact domains:

- **Household income and net assets.** Although income and assets are interrelated, they are separate concepts. Income relates to the flow of economic benefits (e.g. derived through remuneration from the production and sale of goods or services, wages/salaries, remittances) accruing to an individual or a

53. Including costs for supervision and implementation support, project management and monitoring and evaluation (which are included as part of the loan), MTR, project redesign (if applicable), and so on.

54. This type of analysis looks mainly at the accomplishment of the project's specific objectives.

group in a specific period and valued at a given economic price. Assets relate to a stock of accumulated items of a given economic value (physical assets include land, housing, livestock, tools and equipment, whereas financial assets include savings and credit) as estimated at a certain point in time. Assets may be reduced to the extent that debts have been incurred. Methodological difficulties related to the estimation of income and assets in rural areas are notorious. Assessing changes in physical assets may be a less contentious venture, but whenever solid data are available, evaluation teams should not refrain from assessing income changes. This can be facilitated, for example, by undertaking statistical surveys and/or using memory recall techniques. Factors such as access to markets should also be analysed, as access to markets can contribute to enhancing household income.

- **Human and social capital and empowerment.** Building the poor's collective (social capital) and individual (human capital) capacity is essential for poverty reduction. Strengthening local self-help organizations and related CBOs increases the poor's capacity to exploit potential economic opportunities and to develop links with markets and external partners. A strong social capital base empowers the poor (including poor women) and enables them to interact more equitably and knowledgeably with those wielding social power and to negotiate more effectively to improve their livelihoods. Strong individual capabilities also help the poor position themselves better with respect to market actors, authorities and others in society. However, it can be argued that, in the absence of social capital, investment in human and physical assets does not yield full or sustainable benefits. Under this domain, evaluations will also assess the role of NGOs in strengthening the social capital of the rural poor and in empowering them.

- **Food security and agricultural productivity.** This domain is of major importance in terms of IFAD's mandate. In an open economy, a food-secure household (or community) is one that has enough food available at all times, whether produced or purchased, to ensure a basic minimum nutritional intake by all members. Key elements of food security are availability of food, access to food (income, markets and prices) and stability of access (storage and other marketing arrangements at the household and local levels). Agricultural productivity has also been included in this domain given its centrality in the Strategic Framework and its contribution to promoting food security. Under productivity, evaluations should assess whether improved technologies have been promoted and whether adequate supporting services (such as extension services) are available to the rural poor.

- **Natural resources and the environment.** The environmental impact domain focuses on assessing the extent to which a project or programme contributes to the protection or rehabilitation of natural resources and the environment or the extent to which the project contributes to the depletion of natural resources. This domain concentrates on a project's local-level environmental impacts, as that is where IFAD projects are most likely to have environmental consequences. It is especially concerned with environmental aspects under the control of or influenced by the rural poor. Special attention should be devoted to environmental effects that extend beyond the project area, as in the case, for example, of the diversion of water into irrigation or effluent flows and climate change adaptation or mitigation.

Dealing with a "lack of intervention". No specific intervention may have been foreseen or intended with respect to one or more of the five impact domains. For example, not all IFAD-funded projects have a specific environmental protection or restoration component. The absence of a dedicated component, however, does not mean that no impact is observable in that particular domain. For example, a community development project may generate indirect positive effects on forest management even in the absence of a specific environmental component. On the other hand, a small-scale irrigation project may have a detrimental impact on soil fertility in the absence of adequate drainage provisions. It is thus recommended that evaluators determine whether significant changes are observed in any of the five standard impact domains. If changes (positive or negative) can be detected and can be attributed in whole or in part to the project, a rating should be assigned to that particular domain, regardless of whether the project had planned any specific outcome in that area.

If no changes are detected and no intervention was foreseen or intended, then no rating (or a notation of "not applicable") should be assigned to this particular domain. If no changes are observed in a particular domain, but relevant interventions or results were foreseen or intended in the project design, then the evaluation should take this into account in rating this aspect and also in assessing the relevance and effectiveness rating of the project.

- **Institutions and policies.** This domain assesses the contribution of IFAD to the strengthening of government institutions at the federal, state/provincial and other levels, as well as the involvement of the private sector and selected institutions. The analysis of this domain will include, among other issues, evaluating the support provided to enhance the capabilities of such institutions in servicing the rural poor and reorienting institutions' existing policies in favour of the poor. Sectoral and national policies, including laws, by-laws, regulations and decentralization processes which constitute the enabling environment for economic and social activities and affect the livelihoods of the rural poor, will be considered. Specific examples include land titles, credit regulations, interest rates, market regulations, cooperative laws and the effective targeting of subsidies.

Promoting gender equity and targeting the rural poor are two dominant characteristics of IFAD's approach to agricultural and rural development. These aspects need to be considered explicitly under each of the above-mentioned five impact domains, as appropriate. These assessments should be guided by questions included in the approach paper.

A series of questions are displayed in table 7 to guide evaluators in assessing impact and determining ratings for each of the five impact domains. As for all other evaluation criteria, depending on the nature and focus of the project, evaluators may also consider additional questions in assessing impact. Together, the responses to these questions will illustrate how the lives of the rural poor have been changed and whether or not these changes can be attributed to project activities. When rating the project impact in each domain, it is important to consider:

- **The number of rural poor reached by the project or programme.** This entails trying to determine and report the total approximate number of persons (women shown separately) and households that have been affected by the project being evaluated.

- **Who benefited from the project.** The evaluation should provide an analysis of the rural poor –in terms of social groups, gender, income status, net asset holdings, etc. – who have benefited from the project or programme and should identify the main reasons for the exclusion of selected groups of poor people.

- **The magnitude of impacts.** The aim is to capture the changes induced by a project or programme. This may be expressed in quantitative terms (for example, household income has increased by 15 per cent in three years). Alternatively or additionally, a qualitative assessment may be offered; the impact on social capital can be described by explaining how local networks (mothers' groups, farmers' cooperatives, water users' associations) have been strengthened or have been enabled to represent communities and become involved in a constructive dialogue with public authorities.

TABLE 7: Key questions for assessing rural poverty impact

IMPACT DOMAINS	KEY QUESTIONS
Household income and assets	• Did the composition and level of household incomes change (more income sources, more diversification, higher income)? • What changes are apparent in intra-household incomes and assets? • Did farm households' physical assets change (farmland, water, livestock, trees, equipment, etc.)? Did other household assets change (houses, bicycles, radios, television sets, telephones, etc.)? • Did households' financial assets change (savings, debt, borrowing, insurance)? • Were the rural poor able to access financial markets more easily? • Did the rural poor have better access to input and output markets? • Do the better health and education promoted by the programme allow the rural poor to obtain higher incomes and more assets?
Human and social capital and empowerment	• Did rural people's organizations and grassroots institutions change? • Are changes in the social cohesion and local self-help capacities of rural communities visible? • To what extent did the project empower the rural poor vis-à-vis development actors and local and national public authorities? Do they play more effective roles in decision-making? • Were the rural poor empowered to gain better access to the information needed for their livelihoods? • Did the rural poor gain access to better health and education facilities?
Food security and agricultural productivity	• Did cropping intensity change? Was there an improvement in land productivity and, if so, to what extent? Did the returns to labour change? • Did children's nutritional status change (e.g. stunting, wasting, underweight)? • Did household food security change? • To what extent did the rural poor improve their access to input and output markets that could help them enhance their productivity and access to food?

TABLE 7 (continued): Key questions for assessing rural poverty impact

IMPACT DOMAINS	KEY QUESTIONS
Natural resources and the environment[a]	• Did the status of the natural resources base change (land, water, forest, pasture, fish stocks, etc.)? • Did local communities' access to natural resources change (in general and specifically for the poor)? • Has the degree of environmental vulnerability changed (e.g. exposure to pollutants, climate change effects, volatility in resources, potential natural disasters)?
Institutions and policies	• Were there any changes in rural financial institutions (e.g. in facilitating access for the rural poor)? • How did public institutions and service delivery for the rural poor change? • What improvements were discernable in local governance, including the capacity and role of government departments, NGOs, the private sector, and elected bodies and officials? • Were there any changes in national/sectoral policies affecting the rural poor? • Did the regulatory framework change insofar as its impact on the rural poor? • Did market structures and other institutional factors affecting poor producers' access to markets change?

[a] Secondary data sources such as UNEP's geographical database showing environmental degradation or changes over time may be helpful in responding to some of the questions in this domain.

Note: For each domain, the evaluation should describe the impact achieved and also the underlying reasons (i.e. the "why" factor) behind the observed or expected changes.

Ratings should be assigned for each impact domain and an overall rating for rural poverty impact should also be attributed. Evaluators should use their professional judgement and knowledge to assign and aggregate ratings. Each rating should be supported by evidence.

Sustainability. The sustainability concept focuses on assessing the likelihood that the benefit streams generated by an investment will continue after project closure. Evaluations will therefore analyse whether actual and anticipated results will be resilient to risks beyond a project's life. The key questions to be considered in evaluating prospects for sustainability are presented in box 5. Based on judicious judgement, evaluators are required to assign a single rating for project sustainability.

BOX 5: Key questions for assessing project sustainability

- Was a specific exit strategy or approach prepared and agreed upon by key partners to ensure post-project sustainability?
- What are the chances that benefits generated by the project will continue after project closure, and what factors militate in favour of or against maintaining benefits? What is the likely resilience of economic activities to shocks or progressive exposure to competition and reduction of subsidies?

BOX 5 (continued): Key questions for assessing project sustainability

- Is there a clear indication of government commitment after the loan closing date, for example, in terms of provision of funds for selected activities, human resources availability, continuity of pro-poor policies and participatory development approaches, and institutional support? Did the IFAD project design anticipate that such support would be needed after loan closure?
- Do project activities benefit from the engagement, participation and ownership of local communities, grassroots organizations, and the rural poor?
- Are adopted approaches technically viable? Do project users have access to adequate training for maintenance and to spare parts and repairs?
- Are the ecosystem and environmental resources (e.g. fresh water availability, soil fertility, vegetative cover) likely to contribute to project benefits or is there a depletion process taking place?

Pro-poor innovation, replication and scaling up. Since promoting pro-poor innovations that can be replicated and scaled up by others is at the core of IFAD's mandate, each evaluation should assess the contribution of IFAD-funded projects and programme to this end. The definition of innovation is contained in the Fund's innovation strategy (2007): "a process that adds value or solves a problem in new ways" and, to qualify as an innovation, a product, idea, or approach needs to be new to its context, useful and cost-effective in relation to a goal and able to "stick" after pilot testing". Innovations may be in the area of technology (e.g. higher yielding or risk-reducing crop varieties or livestock breeds, water-saving irrigation technologies), development approaches (e.g. participatory water management, farmers' involvement in setting research priorities), institutional arrangements (e.g. use of NGOs or the private sector in a particular context, etc.) and so on.

Because of IFAD's relatively small size, the total impact it can have on rural poverty by drawing on its own resources may be limited. Therefore, according to the Fund's Strategic Framework, it aims to increase the outreach of its activities by playing a catalytic role, seeking to influence other development partners to replicate and scale up the successful innovations promoted through IFAD operations. Hence, the assessment of the actual replication and the scaling up of such initiatives by other development partners, including the relevant government and other multilateral development organizations, which is the acid test of IFAD's ability to promote useful innovations, is an integral part of this evaluation criterion. The key questions that need to be answered in order to assess the degree to which this criterion is satisfied are outlined in box 6. The rating should be supported by evidence, and only a single rating is provided under this heading.

BOX 6: Key questions for assessing innovations, replication and scaling up

- What are the characteristics of innovation(s) promoted by the project or programme? Are the innovations consistent with the IFAD definition of this concept?
- How did the innovation originate (e.g. through the beneficiaries, government, IFAD, NGOs, research institution, etc.) and was it adapted in any particular way during project/programme design?
- Are the actions in question truly innovative or are they well-established elsewhere but new to the country or project area?

BOX 6 (continued): Key questions for assessing innovations, replication and scaling up

- Were successfully promoted innovations documented and shared? Were other specific activities (e.g. workshops, exchange visits, etc.) undertaken to disseminate the innovative experiences?
- Have these innovations been replicated and scaled up and, if so, by whom? If not, what are the realistic prospects that they can and will be replicated and scaled up by the government, other donors and/or the private sector?

Performance of partners. The performance of individual partners in project design, execution, supervision, implementation support, M&E is crucial for the achievement of development effectiveness. This criterion is therefore designed to permit an assessment of how well partners fulfilled the tasks expected of them rather than of achievements under the evaluated project.

The performance of each partner is examined and reported on separately, as each has a specific function and role to discharge. All evaluations should assess and attribute a rating to the performance of IFAD, the government, cooperating institutions (where applicable), CBOs and NGOs. A separate assessment could be made of cofinanciers and the private sector, should they be involved in the project or programme being evaluated, even though no standard questions are included in the manual for assessing their performance. These questions can be developed on a case-by-case basis and captured in the approach paper.

With regard to the performance of the relevant government, it is noted that different ministries, departments and line agencies (at the national, provincial and local levels) may be involved in project execution. As such, evaluations will need to make an assessment of the individual institutions involved and, ultimately, will have to come up with a comprehensive overall rating for the performance of the government concerned. In light of the sensitivities involved, special attention should be devoted to discussing the assessment and ratings of government performance with the main government agencies involved and to seeking, on a joint basis, ways and means to enhance government performance in the future, as may be required.

Taking into account partners' distinct roles and responsibilities, box 7 sets out the key questions to be used for assessing partners' performance. Additional questions may also be posed, depending on the mandate of each partner within the relevant project or programme.

BOX 7: Key questions for assessing the performance of partners

IFAD

- Did IFAD mobilize adequate technical expertise in the project design?
- Was the design process participatory (with national and local agencies, grassroots organizations) and did it promote ownership by the borrower?
- Were specific efforts made to incorporate the lessons and recommendations from previous independent evaluations in project design and implementation?
- Did IFAD adequately integrate comments made by its quality enhancement and quality assurance processes?

BOX 7 (continued): Key questions for assessing the performance of partners

- Did IFAD (and the government) take the initiative to suitably modify project design (if required) during implementation in response to any major changes in the context, especially during the MTR?
- What was the performance of IFAD in projects that are under direct supervision and implementation support? In the case of supervision by a cooperating institution, how effective was IFAD in working with the institution to carry out the mandated task? In both cases, has IFAD exercised its developmental and fiduciary responsibilities, including compliance with loan and grant agreements?
- Was prompt action taken to ensure the timely implementation of recommendations stemming from the supervision and implementation support missions, including the MTR?
- Did IFAD undertake the necessary follow-up to resolve any implementation bottlenecks?
- Where applicable, what is the role and performance of IFAD's country presence team (including proxy country presence arrangements)? Did IFAD headquarters provide the necessary support to its country presence team, for example, in terms of resources, follow-up and guidance, adequate delegation of authority, and so on?
- Has IFAD made proactive efforts to be engaged in policy dialogue activities at different levels in order to ensure, inter alia, the replication and scaling up of pro-poor innovations?
- Has IFAD been active in creating an effective partnership and maintaining coordination among key partners to ensure the achievement of project objectives, including the replication and scaling up of pro-poor innovations?
- Has IFAD, together with the government, contributed to planning an exit strategy?

Government

- Has the government assumed ownership and responsibility for the project? Judging by its actions and policies, has the government been fully supportive of project goals?
- Has adequate staffing and project management been assured? Have appropriate levels of counterpart funding been provided on time?
- Has project management discharged its functions adequately, and has the government provided policy guidance to project management staff when required?
- Did the government ensure suitable coordination of the various departments involved in execution?
- Has auditing been undertaken in a timely manner and have reports been submitted as required?
- Did the government (and IFAD) take the initiative to suitably modify the project design (if required) during implementation in response to any major changes in the context?
- Was prompt action taken to ensure the timely implementation of recommendations from supervision and implementation support missions, including the MTR?
- Has an effective M&E system been put in place and does it generate information on performance and impact which is useful for project managers when they are called upon to take critical decisions?
- Has the government (and IFAD) contributed to planning an exit strategy and/or making arrangements for continued funding of certain activities?
- Have loan covenants and the spirit of the loan agreement been observed?
- Has the government facilitated the participation of NGOs and civil society where appropriate?
- Have the flow of funds and procurement procedures been suitable for ensuring timely implementation?

BOX 7 (continued): Key questions for assessing the performance of partners

- Has the government engaged in a policy dialogue with IFAD concerning the promotion of pro-poor innovations?

Cooperating institution

- Has the supervision and implementation support programme been properly managed (frequency, composition, continuity)? Has the cooperating institution complied with loan covenants?
- Has the cooperating institution been effective in financial management?
- Has the cooperating institution sought to monitor project impacts and IFAD concerns (e.g. targeting, participation, empowerment of the poor and gender aspects)?
- Have implementation problems been highlighted and appropriate remedies suggested?
- Has the cooperating institution promoted or encouraged self-assessment and learning processes?
- Has the supervision process enhanced implementation and poverty impacts?
- Has the cooperating institution been responsive to requests and advice from IFAD when carrying out its supervision and project implementation responsibilities?

CBOs and NGOs

- How effectively have NGOs fulfilled their contractual service agreements?
- Have NGOs/CBOs acted to strengthen the capacities of rural poor organizations?
- Can NGOs/CBOs contribute to the sustainability of project activities?

The OE methodology does not require evaluators to come up with an overall rating for the performance of partners. Instead, a separate rating should be provided for each partner, and the rating should be supported by evidence. Table 8 provides an example of ratings for partner performance.

TABLE 8: Ratings for partner performance

PERFORMANCE OF PARTNERS	PROJECT EVALUATION RATING	LATEST ARRI
IFAD	4	3
Government	5	4
Cooperating institution	4	4
CBOs and/or NGOs	4	3

Overall project achievement, summary rating table and benchmarking. An overall project achievement rating should be developed based on the ratings of six evaluation criteria – relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, rural poverty impact, sustainability, and innovation, replication and scaling up – but not the performance of partners. Evaluators are expected to use their judgement is determining overall project achievement, rather than calculating a mathematical average.

Ratings should be round figures without any decimal points, apart from project performance, as this is a mathematical average of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. The ratings for each project evaluation should be benchmarked with the ratings included in the latest ARRI. This will provide a snapshot of how a given project has fared in comparison with other IFAD-funded projects and programmes. Table 9 gives an example of evaluation ratings for a project, including benchmarking with the ARRI.

TABLE 9: Evaluation ratings of an IFAD-funded project

EVALUATION CRITERIA	PROJECT EVALUATION RATINGS	LATEST ARRI
Core performance criteria		
Relevance	5	5
Effectiveness	4	4
Efficiency	4	3
Project performance	**4.3**	**4.0**
Rural poverty impact	**5**	**5**
Household income and assets	5	5
Human and social capital and empowerment	5	5
Food security and agricultural productivity	4	5
Natural resources and the environment	NA*	5
Institutions and policies	5	4
Other performance criteria		
Sustainability	4	3
Innovation, replication and scaling up	4	4
Overall project achievement	**4**	**4**

*Not applicable.

Conclusions and recommendations. This is the final chapter of the evaluation report. It contains two main sections on: (i) conclusions; and (ii) recommendations. The section on conclusions should include a storyline of the main evaluation conclusions related to the project's achievements and shortfalls. It is important to avoid providing a summary based on each and every evaluation criterion. The main conclusions should be cross-referenced to relevant sections of the evaluation report.

The section on recommendations should be succinct. Each evaluation should contain a few key recommendations. They should be realistic and feasible within a project context. Recommendations should indicate the institution(s) responsible for implementation. Each recommendation should be cross-referenced to the pertinent subsection in the conclusions.

4 The country programme evaluation methodology

A. Key phases of the country programme evaluation process
B. Country programme evaluation reports: contents, definitions and examples

This chapter outlines the OE methodology for CPEs. Given that projects are the main building blocks of IFAD-supported country programmes, this chapter should be read in conjunction with chapter 3, which is devoted to the methodology for project evaluations. Normally conducted before IFAD and the government concerned prepare a new results-based COSOP,[55] the CPEs are expected to provide an overarching assessment of the performance and impact of past IFAD-funded lending and non-lending activities in a given country. They are also intended to provide guidance for the preparation of future COSOPs.

The proposed methodology takes into account OE's past experience in designing and implementing CPEs.[56] It also draws upon the good practices of other bilateral and multilateral development organizations.[57] While the manual aims to promote consistency in the approach taken across CPEs, it should be viewed as a flexible guidance framework and it should challenge rather than constrain the creativity of evaluators in drawing accurate and relevant lessons from experience.

The CPE methodology builds on the definitions contained in the new format for results-based COSOPs[58] approved by the Board during its 88th session in September 2006. Since COSOPs are documents jointly owned by IFAD and the government, CPEs address their distinct accountabilities and reciprocal obligations in COSOP implementation. Some of the key definitions in the new COSOP format are outlined below:

- **Strategic objectives.** The core section of the new results-based COSOPs includes the strategic objectives pursued by IFAD and the government in a given country. According to the COSOP framework, a strategic objective is the highest-order change in behaviour that an IFAD-funded project or other activity can hope to promote directly. The selection of the strategic objectives is influenced, inter alia, by: (i) the national poverty reduction strategy (or its equivalent); (ii) IFAD competencies in the country concerned; (iii) a background poverty analysis and associated studies; and (iv) a review of donor plans to avoid overlaps and to identify partnership opportunities (page 13, new COSOP format).[59]

- **Country programme.** As IFAD's development assistance instruments have become more varied (loans, grants, policy dialogue, partnership, knowledge management) and pooled financing arrangement more popular (e.g. sector-wide approaches), country strategies have sought to capture synergies and complementarities among such instruments. Accordingly, the new COSOP format is required to contain a description of "coherent country programmes, composed of mutually reinforcing instruments and activities that

55. In fact, as per the Executive Board's decision, if a CPE has been undertaken by the Office of Evaluation, its ACP must be included as an annex to the COSOP submitted by Management for consideration by the Board. This allows the Board to assess whether the CPE findings and recommendations have been adequately included in the COSOP.

56. OE did its first country portfolio evaluation in 1992, which focused on assessing the results of IFAD-funded projects and programmes. Country programme evaluations were introduced in mid-1999 and were given the broader remit of assessing the results of both IFAD-funded projects and programmes and, albeit in less detail, non-lending activities.

57. For example, the Guidelines for the Preparation of Country Assistance Program Evaluation Reports of the Asian Development Bank (February 2006), the Country Assistance Evaluation Methodology of the World Bank, and the Good Practice Standards for Country Strategy and Programme Evaluations (2008) of ECG.

58. Results-based COSOPs, document EB 2006/88/R.4.

59. Examples of strategic objectives in recently approved COSOPs include: establishing market linkages for the rural poor (Moldova, EB/2007/92/R.17), reducing gender, ethnic and caste-related disparities (Nepal, EB 2006/89/R.14/Rev.1), and improving access to productivity-enhancing technologies and services (Tanzania, EB/2007/91/R.14).

support a limited number of key strategic objectives. The synergy between delivery instruments is expected to enhance the poverty reduction impact and effectiveness of IFAD-supported initiatives" (paragraph 12, new results-based COSOP format).

- **COSOP management.** The results management framework of the new COSOPs is expected to include explicit M&E arrangements for COSOP implementation in terms of annual reporting on selected indicators, arrangements for MTRs and completion reviews, etc.

- **Country programme management.** COSOPs also articulate how IFAD and the government concerned will manage country activities during the period covered by the COSOP, including: (i) country presence arrangements; (ii) CPMT arrangements;[60] (iii) annual country programme implementation review workshops; and (iv) supervision and implementation support arrangements.

What is the focus of the CPE? Taking account of the above features, the focus of the CPEs is on the results achieved through the COSOP's implementation and on how IFAD and the government concerned have managed their activities in order to achieve these results. This involves assessing the relevance of strategic objectives, the country programme choices (i.e. the mix of loans and grants, the partners selected, geographic coverage, the subsector focus) and the elements entailed in COSOP and country programme management. The CPEs focus closely on evaluating the performance and impact of IFAD-funded project portfolio and non-lending activities, rather than on the borrowing country's agricultural and rural development efforts at large. In other words, CPEs assess the results of the cooperation and partnership between IFAD and the government, rather than the country's overall development results in agriculture and rural development. Of course, an understanding of the latter is needed in order to appraise the contribution of the IFAD-government partnership to development effectiveness in the sector, but IFAD-funded projects represent only a small, albeit important, segment of government actions in the sector.

Given the importance of the IFAD-government partnership in the development and implementation of the COSOP, and in light of the focus of IFAD CPEs (as summarized in the previous paragraph), an appropriate nomenclature for the type of evaluation conducted by OE would be "country strategy and programme evaluations (CSPEs)". This is also part of the ECG's good practice standard for country evaluations. However, in order to avoid possible confusion and given the familiarity within IFAD governing bodies and the Fund's Management with the existing nomenclature, OE will continue to use the term "CPEs" for country evaluations.

The CPE focuses on three interrelated dimensions: (i) an evaluation of the project portfolio in the country concerned; (ii) a review of non-lending activities, including policy dialogue, knowledge management and partnership-building; and (iii) an assessment of the strategic objectives, geographic priority, subsector focus, partner institutions, targeting approaches and country programme mix and the country programme and COSOP management. These elements are analysed in three separate sections of the CPE report and inform the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation. In addition, the ratings derived by the CPE for each of the aforementioned three interrelated dimensions will be used for calculating a composite CPE rating for the contribution of the IFAD-government partnership to reducing rural poverty.

The approach to CPEs adopted by OE is consistent with the main principles contained in the good practice standards for country strategy and programme evaluation (see the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) document, 2008). The section below highlights some of the CPE features that correspond to the **core good practices** of the ECG:

(i) In terms of objectives, the CPE is

60. CPMT is a resource group of COSOP stakeholders that remain associated throughout the entire process of COSOP design and implementation. It consists of IFAD representatives (e.g. including the CPM and country presence officer and other staff from PMD, the Office of the General Counsel, the Financial Services Division and the Technical Advisory Division) and a cross-section of in-country partners (including project staff, representatives of the main line ministries involved in project execution, NGOs and others).

undertaken both for accountability and for lesson-learning purposes;

(ii) The CPE is designed to meet the information requirements of the *main target clients*, which would generally be the Executive Board, Senior Management, relevant operations staff within PMD and the government;

(iii) With regard to the **unit of analysis**, the CPEs focus on evaluating the results of IFAD-supported operations in the country. The CPE takes the country as the unit of analysis and attempts to evaluate the assistance using already prepared COSOPs as a point of reference;

(iv) Careful consideration is given to **selecting countries** for CPEs. Some countries warrant more attention than others. Faced with limited evaluation resources, those countries that will generate the most beneficial findings and lessons for both IFAD and the country will be selected. Factors such as portfolio size, country development characteristics, and the likely relevance of the evaluation findings to similar issues in other Member States are considered when making the selection;

(v) CPEs will be **timed** to permit the results, recommendations and lessons identified to feed into the preparation of the next COSOP and to be available to Management and the Executive Board when reviewing or approving the new strategy;

(vi) CPEs will cover the **full range** of IFAD's support to a country, including lending and non-lending activities;

(vii) **Previous self-evaluations and independent evaluations** will be used in CPEs undertaken by OE. Both government and operations staff will be required to carry out self-assessments in the early stages of the CPE; and

(viii) In terms of methodology, CPEs will undertake **top-down, bottom-up, and contribution assessments** to gather evidence on the extent to which strategic objectives were achieved and to test the consistency of evaluation findings. The top-down assessment will include examining the Fund's strategic selectivity and the extent to which IFAD positioning took adequate account of its comparative advantage and the role played by other partners in the agriculture and rural sectors. This is mostly covered by the analysis of the COSOP's relevance, including the assessment of the IFAD-supported portfolio and non-lending activities. The top-down analysis should, inter alia, deliver a systematic assessment of the COSOP objectives in relation to the Millennium Development Goals, the poverty reduction strategy paper, and the country's key agriculture and rural development policies. The bottom-up assessment focuses on the results of all IFAD-supported activities in the country, building on previous project evaluations and other evaluative evidence collected during the CPE. This is part of the analysis of the performance of the IFAD-supported portfolio. Finally, the contribution assessment is aimed at determining how IFAD and the other main partners – the government, the private sector, NGOs, and community-based organizations – have performed. It aims also to determine whether adequate resources were allocated to achieving the COSOP's objectives."

Period of coverage. While flexibility in setting the period of coverage is needed in light of the timing of IFAD operations, CPEs generally cover IFAD's cooperation in a particular country over the previous 10 years. The period of coverage should allow the evaluation to take account of evolving objectives and approaches to IFAD assistance, as well as to assess the results and impact of IFAD-supported operations. Thus, especially in countries with a small portfolio of loans and grants, the CPE may cover a longer period, which also permits an examination of long-term impacts.

Country and partnership context. CPEs should assess whether the risks, opportunities and threats in the country context, the weak and strong points of the IFAD-government partnership, and the assumptions underlying

the country strategy were appropriately analysed and assessed at the time of the COSOP's development. The CPE analysis should indicate whether they were adequately reflected in the formulation of both the strategic objectives and the lending and non-lending activities supported by IFAD. Moreover, CPEs should review the extent to which COSOPs were updated as appropriate during implementation and, in particular, whether they were adjusted following the MTR to adapt to changes in the project portfolio or the country context likely to have an impact on the achievement of COSOP objectives.

A. Key phases of the country programme evaluation process

The main processes involved in project evaluations are also applicable in CPEs (see section A, chapter 3). However, there are also some aspects of CPE processes which are different. These elements are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

Evaluation framework. The evaluation framework for CPEs illustrates the link among CPE's objectives, the evaluation criteria, the key questions that need to be addressed to achieve the evaluation's objectives, and the main sources and instruments of data collection. A framework matrix is developed at the outset of the evaluation and features in the approach paper.

Self-assessments. Self-assessments by those involved in the design and implementation of the COSOP and IFAD-funded operations are an important part of OE's approach to country evaluations. Self-assessments are conducted before the main CPE mission embarks upon its country work, and a discussion on this specific topic should be organized at IFAD headquarters between OE and the relevant regional division. The consultants team leader and the lead evaluator normally participate in this discussion.

The CPM and the government concerned are responsible for preparing their respective self-assessments. Where available, COSOP completion reviews[61] are treated as self-assessment documents for CPEs. While a separate document is not required in such cases, CPMs and the relevant government authority may be invited to respond to questions in the CPE framework not covered by the completion review and to provide self-evaluation ratings as prescribed in this guidance document.

Special performance and impact assessments. Especially in those countries with no (or limited) access to independent evaluative evidence, OE should commission special performance and impact assessments of selected IFAD-funded projects and programmes. This should be done before the main CPE mission is fielded so that deliverables are available to the CPE team before it begins its country work.[62] Such assessments should follow the OE project evaluation methodology and should normally be undertaken by qualified local consultants, consulting firms, NGOs, research institutions or universities.

Quality assurance. OE quality assurance practices for CPEs include: (i) briefing the consultants team on OE evaluation methodology and process, (ii) an internal peer review within OE of key evaluation outputs, including the approach paper and draft final report, and (iii) a review of the report by a senior independent adviser, who also participates in the learning workshop.

Core learning partnership (CLP). The IFAD CPMT should be properly represented in the CLP. Normally, the following persons should be included: (i) the CPM and PMD division director, as well as the country presence officer, as applicable; (ii) directors/coordinators of projects included as part of the CPE assessment; (iii) senior government officials (from the main coordinating ministry working with IFAD and the technical ministry associated with IFAD operations); (iv) representatives of cofinancing organizations and cooperating institutions (only if applicable); (v) the main NGOs associated with IFAD operations in the country, as well as representatives of pertinent local community and advocacy groups; (vi) members of selected academic and research institutions; and

61. Prepared by IFAD in collaboration with the government.

62. For example, in the Pakistan CPE recently undertaken by the Office, a local NGO was contracted to perform such assessments for two IFAD-funded projects in the country. These activities produced primary data which proved extremely useful for the CPE team in conducting its work.

(vii) the OE Director and the CPE lead evaluator. This list is indicative. The actual CLP composition is informed through consultations with the relevant regional division, government authorities and civil society in the country concerned.

Approach paper. An indicative table of contents for CPE approach papers is provided in table 10. Normally, CPE approach papers are approximately 7-9 pages long, excluding annexes. The draft approach paper should be prepared before the preparatory mission and finalized after its completion so that the information that has been collected can be reflected in the overall design of the evaluation, which is incorporated into the approach paper.

TABLE 10: Table of contents for CPE approach papers

I.	Table of contents
II.	Rationale
III.	Country background
IV.	Overview of IFAD assistance to the country
V.	Evaluation objectives, methodology (including evaluation framework) and process
VI.	Collecting data and evidence
VII.	Core learning partnership
VIII.	Consultants team
IX.	Communication and dissemination
X.	Proposed schedule
XI.	References

Preparatory mission. During the preparatory mission, the lead evaluator collaborates with the central government in the designation of a focal point for interactions throughout the CPE on matters related to, inter alia, the mission's programme, logistic issues and communication with projects and other government partners.

The preparatory mission for CPEs provides the OE lead evaluator with an opportunity to form an assessment of the available information and to identify the knowledge gap to be filled. This contributes to an appreciation of the evaluability of the country strategy and programme. Therefore, following the preparatory mission, a decision is taken whether or not to embark on primary data collection, statistical surveys, the organization of focus groups, rapid rural appraisals, other investigative and participatory methods, etc.

Selection of a representative cross-section of partners and beneficiaries drawn from the capital city and from selected project(s) area(s) is essential. Equally, it is useful to impress upon government and project authorities the importance of using representative data regarding communities, households and project sites (e.g. through random sampling).

Desk work phase. As in the case of project evaluations, this phase follows the preparation of the draft approach paper. The main deliverable is a desk review report based on desk review notes for each project in the CPE cohort. A desk review note is also prepared for non-lending activities which covers the results that can be captured through a documentary review of the policy dialogue, partnership-building and knowledge management. The desk review notes (for the various projects and non-lending activities) inform the overall CPE desk review report, which includes a desk review of performance and impact for the portfolio of lending and non-lending activities and a list of issues and questions to be further analysed during the main CPE mission. The desk review is completed before the main CPE mission.

Main CPE mission. To provide the full range of skills needed, CPE teams normally consist of from four to six members, including the consultants team leader. The team should be staffed so as to permit competent treatment of major strategy and policy matters, subsector issues, and project design and implementation modalities. It is crucial to ensure the inclusion of local experts and women in the CPE team.

In order to allow for sufficient time for interactions with multiple stakeholders and field visits, the

CPE mission normally spends around 5-6 weeks in the country concerned. Authorities of projects to be visited are informed in advance and provide feedback on the feasibility of transportation and security issues. It is mandatory for OE to contact the local United Nations Security Officer to gain an understanding of the situation on the ground. Security clearance from the United Nations system, where necessary, should always be obtained before starting field visits.

A concise aide-memoire (under 10 pages) should be prepared by the evaluation team before the end of its mission. It should not contain ratings or recommendations. An indicative outline of its contents is provided in table 11.[63]

TABLE 11: Table of contents for CPE aide-memoire

I. Table of contents
II. Overview of IFAD's country strategy and programme
III. Evaluation background, objectives and process
IV. Programme of the evaluation mission, including main stakeholders met, project areas visited and number of communities covered
V. Key implementation results (in two distinct sections on project portfolio and non-lending activities)
VI. Major issues identified
VII. Areas for further analysis during the report-writing phase
VIII. Next steps in the CPE process
IX. Appendices

National roundtable workshop. A national roundtable workshop of one and one-half days in length is usually organized at the end of each CPE at the national level to discuss and deepen the participants' understanding around the evaluation findings and recommendations. The workshop is held following the finalization of the CPE report (which is discussed in the next section). The dates for the workshop are set in consultation with the government after taking into account the availability of the OE Director, the Assistant President of PMD and the director of the relevant regional division. Annex 9 includes good practices guidelines for organizing such workshops.

A concept note is prepared by the lead evaluator which outlines the objectives of the workshop and the main activities involved (including a field visit to an IFAD funded project), as well as providing a provisional list of participants and other relevant information. An issues paper of 3-5 pages is then prepared by the lead evaluator and circulated to all workshop participants beforehand. This paper captures the main learning themes emerging from the CPE and identifies questions that can serve as a basis for discussion. Along with CLP members, representatives of major organizations should be invited to participate, including participants from federal/central and provincial/state governments, NGOs and civil society, research institutions and universities, multilateral and bilateral donor organizations, etc.

Figure 3 provides a snapshot of the main CPE phases, processes and deliverables.

63. A list of good practice examples is included in Annex 3.

FIGURE 3: Country programme evaluations: phases, processes and key deliverables

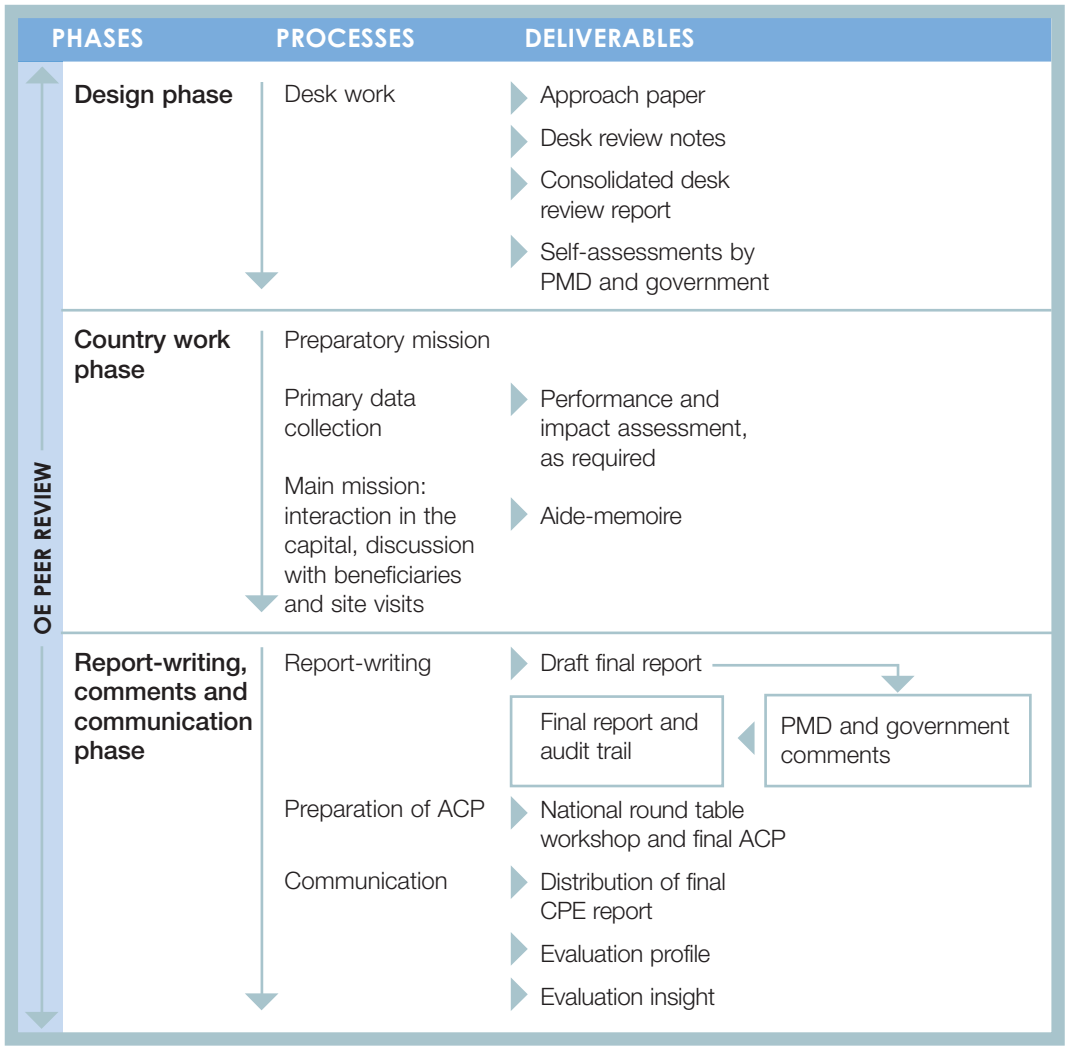


TABLE 12: Table of contents for CPE reports

B. Country programme evaluation reports: contents, definitions and examples

This section provides guidelines for preparing the main CPE report. The total recommended length of the main CPE report is about 50 pages. Table 12 contains an indicative table of contents for CPE reports which includes a foreword, executive summary (3-4 pages), ACP and the main report, as well as appendices. The technical working papers (e.g. on subsector issues, policy and strategy matters, institutional arrangements, etc.), which are included as annexes, are made available by OE upon request and are not part of the report.

Foreword
Executive summary
Agreement at completion point
Main evaluation report
I. Background and introduction, including evaluation objectives, methodology and processes
II. Country context
III. Description of the COSOP and operations
IV. Portfolio performance
V. Assessment of non-lending activities
VI. COSOP performance
VII. Conclusions and recommendations
Appendices

Foreword. The foreword is a one-page "summary of the summary" and is signed by the OE Director. It highlights the storyline of the evaluation and the main messages regarding the performance and impact of the country programme. It also draws attention to areas of strength and weakness. A good-practice example is shown in annex 3.

Executive summary. The executive summary provides the storyline as well as a synopsis of findings and recommendations and a table of consolidated ratings for: (i) the set of projects assessed by the CPE; (ii) non-lending activities; (iii) COSOP performance in terms of relevance and effectiveness; and (iv) overall achievements. A good-practice example is provided in annex 3.

Background and introduction. This chapter includes: (i) an overview of IFAD assistance; and (ii) a discussion of the CPE's objectives, methodology and processes. The first section provides an overview of IFAD assistance. It summarizes the total number of projects and programmes financed by IFAD, including the number of ongoing operations, non-project activities (policy dialogue, knowledge management and partnership-building), the aggregate amount of IFAD loans and project costs, the loan terms (including any possible changes during the evaluation period),[64] the total amount of cofinancing and counterpart funds mobilized, the cooperating institution(s) involved[65] and the number of projects under direct supervision and implementation support, the number and amount of country-specific grants (including regional or subregional grants covering the country concerned), the date of the latest COSOP, etc. This information is obtained from the Project Portfolio Management System and the Loan and Grant System and is supplemented, as appropriate, by the relevant IFAD operations division and/or PMD.

The second section is devoted to the objectives, methodology and process of the evaluation. The main CPE objectives are to: (i) assess the performance and impact of IFAD operations in the country; and (ii) generate a series of findings and recommendations for the next COSOP. The report contains references to the CPE framework (see the example shown in annex 3), which is normally included as an appendix to the main report. The evaluation criteria are outlined and the definitions for each are included. Additionally, the report contains a description of evaluation instruments and techniques deployed, such as rapid rural surveys, focus group discussions, stakeholder consultations, workshops and others (see table 3 in chapter 2). As in project evaluations, special attention should be devoted to ensuring appropriate triangulation of different sources of data and information in the overall CPE analysis.

Next, the section on methodology identifies the projects to be analysed by the CPE and outlines the rationale for their inclusion. As a general practice, CPEs cover the operations financed by IFAD in the last 10 years. Projects approved before the evaluation period with around 50 per cent of their implementation falling within the 10-year period are also covered. If older projects and programmes are included, the reasons should be specified. A section should be provided on the evaluation process, outlining the members and role of the CLP, the preparatory mission and field work accomplished, including project areas and number of communities visited, interviews conducted with key partners, the national roundtable workshop, the ACP process, the peer review process and the timeline. As for project evaluations, a rigorous internal OE peer review process will be undertaken to ensure the quality of the CPE report, before it is distributed outside OE for comments by PMD, the government and others concerned. These steps will need to be factored in by the evaluators in developing the timeline for the CPE.

Country context. This chapter includes three main sections: (i) the economic, agricultural and rural development environment; (ii) poverty characteristics; and (iii) public policies for rural poverty alleviation, including donor assistance in support of agriculture and rural development.

64. IFAD has three categories of lending terms: ordinary, intermediate and highly concessional.

65. This would be applicable only to a minority group of projects and programmes as IFAD moves towards full implementation of its new policy on direct supervision and implementation support.

The first section provides readers with broad macroeconomic information on the country and how the situation has evolved during the CPE period, including data on GDP per capita, economic growth rates, inflation and interest rates, the balance of payments, foreign reserves, etc. It also provides data on the agricultural and rural development sector (contribution of the sector to total GDP and employment, including figures for the rural poor, key policies for agriculture and rural development, the major commodities produced, etc.).

The second section includes relevant information – disaggregated by gender – about the total population and the corresponding growth rates, the number of rural poor in total, the number of smallholder farmers and rural youth, the poorest geographic states/provinces/districts, the poverty line defined by the government and the number of rural poor who live below the poverty line, the number of rural poor who live on less than a dollar a day and less than two dollars a day, major disadvantaged social groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, tribal people, indigenous people, women, etc.), social indicators such as life expectancy and literacy rates, information indicating whether the country is an agro-based, transforming or urbanized country,[66] etc.

The third section provides an overview of government policies for economic and social development, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, medium term development plan, and specific laws or reforms aimed to facilitate rural poverty reduction (e.g. land reform). This section also includes a discussion of development assistance, official development assistance for agriculture and rural development, government's own budgets for agriculture and rural development, and IFAD's contribution in terms of commitments and annual disbursements. The role and experience of bilateral and multilateral development organisations in agriculture and rural development may be discussed, if relevant.

A variety of data sources may be drawn upon to inform this chapter of the report, e.g. the *Economist Intelligence Unit* country profile, the planning (ministry) commission and/or Ministry of Finance and Agriculture reports, the World Bank country assistance strategy, country dataset and World Development Indicators, the UNDP *Human Development Report* and Human Development Index;[67] the World Health Organization global dataset on child malnutrition;[68] the IFAD COSOPs, country briefs and project documents, IFPRI working papers and studies;[69] the country's poverty reduction strategy papers; the World Bank on-line database on governance;[70] the documents produced for each country's annual development forum (formerly known as the Consultative Group meetings); statistics collected by countries and OECD in monitoring progress in the implementation of the Paris Declaration;[71] and others.

Description of the COSOP. This chapter provides a description of the main elements in the COSOP, including a short summary of the: (i) strategic objectives, (ii) geographic priority, (iii) subsector focus, (iv) main partner institutions, (v) targeting approach used, including emphasis on selected social groups, (vi) mix of instruments in the country programme (loans, grants, and non-lending activities) and (vii) the provisions for COSOP and country programme management. This section offers a concise description of its main elements that will serve to facilitate the independent assessment (see table 13).

The report also documents how the COSOP unfolded over the period of coverage set for the CPE and includes a review of projects and programmes funded by IFAD in the period, regardless of whether one or more country strategies were approved during the period. An examination of the design and implementation of projects and programmes financed by IFAD (as well as other policy and strategy documents) is undertaken which sheds light on the objectives, priorities, and overall approach of the Fund in the country concerned. The main changes over the period are summarized in a table (see table 13). Lessons learned and recommendations of previous CPEs, together with information on whether and how they were used, may also be included in a box.

66. As per the definitions in the World Bank's World Development Report (2008) on Agriculture.

67. http://hdr.undp.org/en/.

68. www.who.int/nutgrowthdb/database/en/.

69. www.ifpri.org.

70. http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/resources.htm.

71. See *2008 Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration: Making Aid More Effective by 2010*. www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/monitoring/survey.

TABLE 13: A description of the main elements of the COSOP

PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS	Before the introduction of the current COSOP	As included in the current COSOP
Strategic objectives		
Geographic priority		
Subsector focus[a]		
Main partner institutions		
Targeting approach, including emphasis on selected social groups		
Country programme mix (loans, grants and non-lending activities)		
Country programme and COSOP management (see section A on the main concepts for more information on these aspects)		

[a.] The subsector focus is basically determined by examining the components within the projects financed by IFAD in a given country.

Portfolio assessment. This chapter is particularly important, given the emphasis traditionally placed by IFAD on supporting investment projects and programmes at the country level. The performance assessment of the IFAD portfolio of projects and programmes is therefore a key pillar of the CPE. The following elements need to be considered by the CPE team:

(i) The assessment should be informed by discussions with key partners regarding the selection of projects and programmes covered in the CPE. Generally speaking, the projects completed before the start of the 10-year time frame covered by the CPEs are normally excluded from the assessment, except in cases where the number of projects to be covered would otherwise be insufficient;

(ii) The project evaluation methodology set forth in chapter 3 of the manual should be rigorously applied in evaluating projects included for assessment in the CPE. The evaluations should be undertaken based both on a desk review of documents and on field work. In some cases, OE may have carried out specific project evaluations or performance assessments as separate exercises preceding the CPE;

(iii) The project and programme ratings merit due attention. For each project evaluated in the context of a CPE, the same principles of aggregation should be applied as outlined in chapters two and three. Of course, the CPE will not include ratings across all evaluation criteria for projects and programmes that have begun in the past 2-3 years. In such cases, attention is limited to assessing the relevance of project or programme designs, taking into account the lessons learned from evaluation activities.

The CPE should also determine how satisfactorily the latest corporate policies and processes, as well as government policies, are reflected in the design of new projects and programmes. A table of ratings across all evaluation criteria for each project and/or programme should be included as an appendix;

(iv) The CPE should aggregate the evaluation ratings for individual projects and programmes and should then derive an overall rating for project portfolio achievement. However, the portfolio assessment is not simply a compilation of individual project evaluations, and synergies across operations and aggregate learning impacts should be considered. Hence, in presenting its analyses, it is not advisable to provide a project-by-project account across each evaluation criterion. Instead, the CPE should comment on the performance and impact across the portfolio at large. By the same token, it is not advisable to derive the overall rating by calculating the arithmetic average of the individual ratings for each project. Instead, evaluators should take the ratings for individual projects and then, based on their own judgement, derive one single round-number rating for the portfolio at large. The ratings should be benchmarked with the ratings contained in the ARRI report,[72] those generated by the self-assessment process, and the agriculture and rural sector portfolio of other IFIs in the country (if available). An example is given in table 14; and

(v) In reviewing the performance of the project portfolio, it is especially important to examine compliance with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), which was reaffirmed by the AAA (2008). This means that the CPE should assess progress in five broad areas identified in the Paris Declaration: ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results and mutual accountability. CPEs should use the progress indicators and the corresponding targets set out in part III of the Paris Declaration as a basis for their assessment.

TABLE 14: CPE ratings for the IFAD-funded project portfolio

EVALUATION CRITERIA	Project 1	Project 2	Project 3	Project 4	CPE portfolio assessment
Core performance criteria					
Relevance	5	5	6	4	5
Effectiveness	4	5	4	-	4
Efficiency	4	4	4	-	4
Project performance	**4.3**	**4.7**	**4.7**		**4.3**
Rural poverty impact	**4**	**5**	**4**	**-**	**4**
Household income and assets	5	4	4	-	4
Human and social capital and empowerment	5	4	4	-	4
Food security and agricultural productivity	4	4	4	-	4
Natural resources and the environment	5	5	5	-	5
Institutions and policies	5	4	5	-	5
Other performance criteria					
Sustainability	5	4	4	-	4
Innovation, replication and scaling up	4	4	5	-	4
Overall project portfolio achievement[a]	**4**	**4**	**4**	**-**	**4**
Partner performance					
IFAD	3	4	5	-	4
Government	4	4	3	-	4
Cooperating institutions	3	5	-	-	4

[a] Overall project achievement reflects the combined assessment of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, rural poverty impact, sustainability and innovation. As per OE evaluation guidelines, the performance of partners is not included in the aforementioned calculation. The overall portfolio achievement is calculated in a similar way.

72. Both with the ratings for IFAD operations globally and in the relevant geographic region.

Assessment of non-lending activities. CPEs also assess the performance and results of IFAD's and the government's performance in non-lending activities, which are policy dialogue, partnership-building and knowledge management in support of COSOP objectives. The three evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness and efficiency) used in assessing non-lending activities are outlined in the next paragraph. In assessing performance of non-lending activities, just as in the case of the portfolio assessment, CPEs also review the progress made within the framework of the main elements of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

The assessment based on the relevance criterion aims to determine if the non-lending activities are in line with the needs of the rural poor and support IFAD's and the country's overall strategic objectives for rural poverty reduction. The review of the effectiveness criterion examines whether non-lending activities have achieved or are likely to achieve their intended objectives. In particular, attention should be devoted to whether IFAD and the government have devoted due attention and resources to non-lending activities such as, for example, policy dialogue, which is a key ingredient in ensuring the replication and scaling up of innovations promoted in the context of IFAD operations. Equally, ensuring the absence of duplication and the tapping of synergies with the advisory and analytical services provided by other partners is an integral part of the assessment. Finally, testing the efficiency of non-lending services entails assessing how economically they are using the available resources.

The main questions to be addressed by CPE teams in order to assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of non-lending activities are outlined in box 8.

BOX 8: Key questions for assessing IFAD's non-lending activities

A. Relevance

- Are policy dialogue, partnership-building, and knowledge management objectives clearly outlined in the COSOP? Are they in line with the needs of the poor and are they consistent with the strategic objectives of the COSOP and lending operations, as well as with the government's priorities?
- Do the selected non-lending activities provide sufficient support for country programme objectives as per COSOP, as well as the loan portfolio in the same country?
- Were resources earmarked for non-lending activities and explicitly outlined in the COSOP (e.g. in the form of grants and/or the IFAD administrative budget)?
- Was the selected mix of policy dialogue, partnership-building and knowledge management appropriate and relevant?
- Were the advisory services delivered by other partners taken into account in selecting the focus of non-lending work?

B. Effectiveness

- Describe the extent to which non-lending activities achieved their objectives if they were explicitly articulated.
- How did non-lending activities contribute to the replication and scaling up of innovation promoted by IFAD?
- Has IFAD systematically engaged in and contributed to the deliberations of donor working groups related to agriculture, food issues and rural development?
- How much progress has been made as a result of non-lending activities in furthering the application of the provisions contained in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in terms of ownership, alignment, donor coordination and harmonization, managing for results and mutual accountability?

BOX 8 (continued): Key questions for assessing IFAD's non-lending activities

- With regard to knowledge management, was the COSOP's strategic objectives and project design and implementation properly informed by IFAD experiences in the country and elsewhere?
- Were the most appropriate approaches deployed to achieve the desired results?
- What have been the roles of the IFAD country representative, where applicable, and of the main government institutions in making non-lending activities effective?

C. Efficiency

- Could alternative instruments and activities be implemented to reduce costs in non-lending activities?
- What were the costs of the different types of non-lending activities and how do they compare to IFAD benchmarks (where available)?
- Was the administrative burden on country officials minimized?

Taken together, non-lending activities are expected to help to enhance IFAD's development effectiveness in a given country. Although policy dialogue, partnership-building, and knowledge management are discrete activities, they are mutually reinforcing and help advance the strategic objectives contained in the COSOP. For example, sound knowledge management is critical to inform policy dialogue and identify opportunities for scaling up and for replication through new partnerships.

Therefore, in presenting the CPE analysis, it is advisable to provide a separate account of each non-lending activity, namely policy dialogue, knowledge management and partnership-building. A single performance rating should be provided for each non-lending service, taking into account its relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. An overall rating (as a round number) for non-lending activities which is informed by an objective judgement of the evaluators can then be assigned (see table 15).

TABLE 15: Example CPE ratings for non-lending activities

NON-LENDING ACTIVITY	RATING
Policy dialogue	5
Knowledge management	5
Partnership-building	4
Overall non-lending activities	**5**

Performance assessment of the COSOP. In this section, the CPE provides a performance assessment of the COSOP in terms of its relevance and effectiveness in relation to the seven elements listed in table 13: (i) strategic objectives, (ii) geographic priority, (iii) subsector focus, (iv) main partner institutions, (v) targeting approach used, including emphasis on selected social groups, (vi) mix of instruments in the country programme (loans, grants and non-lending activities), and (vii) the provisions for country programme and COSOP management.

The assessment of **relevance** should be undertaken both at the time of COSOP development and at the time of evaluation.

The relevance analysis includes:

- Assessing the alignment of the strategic objectives;
- Evaluating the coherence of the main elements in the COSOP in terms of the achievement of the strategic objectives, including the geographic and subsector focus, partners selected, country programme defined, targeting, synergies with other agricultural and rural development activities in the country; and
- Undertaking a review of the provisions for country programme management and COSOP management.

The assessment of alignment determines whether the main strategic objectives in the COSOP are in line with the prevailing IFAD strategic framework and relevant corporate policies and processes, as well as with key government strategies and policies for agriculture and rural development. In analysing the alignment of strategic objectives, the evaluator should also examine the coherence of IFAD activities with those pursued by other bilateral and multilateral development organizations active in agriculture and rural development. If significant differences are uncovered, the extent to which country dialogue was used to improve policy coherence should be probed.

The evaluation of the internal coherence of IFAD's use of lending and non-lending instruments should be combined with an assessment of external coherence, i.e. the consistency of IFAD's engagement in relation to the activities and policies of other development partners. Whether the COSOP was properly attuned to policy coherence for development considerations should be an important focus of CPE scrutiny.

The assessment of coherence and alignment with country needs also entails an examination of subsector priorities (e.g. irrigation, microfinance, rural infrastructure, etc.), geographic focus for IFAD operations, choice of main partners and institutions at national and local levels, targeting approaches used, including attention to specific disadvantaged social groups (e.g. women, tribal people, ethnic minorities, pastoralists, nomads, landless farmers, etc.) and the mix of instruments (loans, grants, non-lending activities) deployed to further the strategic objectives contained in the COSOP. In this context, attention is devoted to assessing the synergies of activities within and across projects, evaluating the linkages between lending and non-lending activities, and assessing the of IFAD-financed activities with those of other donors working in the agricultural and rural sectors. Table 13 serves as a useful reference point for evaluating the coherence of the COSOP.

The review of country programme management and COSOP management are crucial, as the operating model defined for the country[73] helps to determine whether the COSOP strategic objectives are met. Therefore, the CPE assesses, among other issues, whether appropriate administrative budgets were provided to the CPM for ensuring proper supervision and implementation support, the type of country presence pursued, if adequate time and resources were provided to the CPM for policy dialogue and knowledge management, any particular provisions for including local stakeholders in strategy, project and programme design, etc. The government's contribution to country programme and COSOP management will also be reviewed, since it has an important role to play in this process in such areas as the proper monitoring of COSOP implementation.

The key questions that the CPE should consider in analysing the relevance of the COSOP are listed in box 9.

73. For example, in terms of supervision and implementation support, the role of the country programme management team and country presence arrangements (if any).

BOX 9: Key questions for assessing the relevance of the COSOP

A. Assessment of the alignment of strategic objectives

- Were the objectives set out in the COSOP consistent with the overarching objectives of the prevailing IFAD strategic framework and relevant corporate policies?
- Were the strategic objectives identified in the COSOP aligned with the government's strategies and policies, such as the PRSP and sector framework, for agriculture and rural development as well as economic and social development?
- Were the strategic objectives clearly defined and suitable for achieving sustainable rural poverty reduction?
- Did the poverty analysis (economic and sector work) provide an adequate basis for the development of overall strategy, including the selection of the main elements of the COSOP as listed in table 13?
- Are the strategic objectives harmonized with the priorities of other bilateral and multilateral donors working in agriculture and rural development in the same country? If other donors pursued other priorities, should they have been convinced to harmonize with IFAD?

B. Evaluating the coherence of the main elements of the COSOP

- Did the strategy succinctly articulate IFAD's comparative advantage and competencies in the country (i.e. country positioning)[a]?
- Were the target groups clearly identified in terms of the nature of the assistance that IFAD would provide?
- Did IFAD select the most appropriate subsectors for investments?
- Were the geographic priorities defined in the strategy consistent with the definition of the target groups?
- Were the main partner institutions (e.g. for project execution, supervision and implementation support, community mobilization, cofinancing) the correct ones for meeting the country strategy objectives?
- Were specific objectives defined and resources allocated for non-lending activities, including policy dialogue, partnership-building and knowledge management?
- Were appropriate synergies foreseen within and among investment activities and between lending and non-lending activities? That is, did IFAD's overall assistance constitute a coherent country programme?
- Did IFAD assess the extent to which the global policy environment (trade, migration, etc.) and exogenous factors (e.g. climate change, exposure to natural disasters) should guide the choice of lending and non-lending instruments and the priorities for IFAD engagement through lending and non-lending activities?

C. Country programme management and COSOP management

- Did the Fund and government select appropriate supervision and implementation support arrangements?
- How did country presence, if any, support the COSOP strategic objectives? Was the most suitable country presence arrangement established in the country?
- Were lessons learned and recommendations set forth in independent evaluations properly reflected in the country strategy?
- Were sufficient administrative and human resources made available for the implementation of the country strategy by both IFAD and the government?

BOX 9 (continued): Key questions for assessing the relevance of the COSOP

- Did the CPM (and country presence officer, if any) have appropriate skills and competencies to promote the policy dialogue and partnership-building objectives identified in the COSOP?
- Was the COSOP MTR undertaken in a timely manner (for COSOPs approved after September 2006) as a measure to achieve effectiveness?
- What is the quality of the COSOP results management framework, project status reports, and aggregated RIMS reports and country programme sheets, and were Management actions in connection with this information system appropriate?
- Was the COSOP M&E performed properly? Were annual country programme reviews undertaken in a timely manner and were the corresponding recommendations implemented within the required time frames?
- As the COSOP is dynamic, was it modified to reflect changes at the country level?
- Did the CPMT concept function appropriately and make the required contribution to country programme management?

[a.] Country positioning is a measure of how well the organization responded to (or even anticipated) the evolving development challenges and priorities of the government, built on the organization's comparative advantages, and designed its country strategies and programmes in a manner that took into consideration the support available from other development partners.

With regard to **effectiveness**, the CPE should determine whether the strategic objectives articulated in the COSOP were achieved in the case of both lending and non-lending activities. The key questions that should be posed in order to assess the effectiveness of the COSOP are listed in box 10.

BOX 10: Key questions for assessing the effectiveness of the COSOP

- To what extent were the main strategic objectives included in the COSOP achieved?
- If a new COSOP is not yet foreseen, is it likely that so far unattained objectives may be achieved in full or in part?
- What changes in the context have influenced or are likely to influence the fulfilment of the strategic objectives? Was the COSOP properly adapted mid-course to reflect changes in the context?
- Did the Fund devote sufficient attention and resources to promoting effectiveness by, for example, systematically assessing the progress made in COSOP implementation on an annual basis[a] (for COSOPs approved after September 2006)?

[a.] This should include a re-examination of the relevance of the strategic objectives as viewed against the changing country background, an assessment of the effectiveness of the COSOP in achieving the stated strategic objectives, and a re-examination of the cost-effectiveness of the selected approaches for reaching the strategic objectives.

CPEs should provide individual ratings for the COSOP's relevance and effectiveness. The CPE report should include a composite rating for the COSOP's performance (based on the individual ratings for relevance and effectiveness). The composite rating should not be an arithmetic average, but rather a round number based on the available evidence and the objective judgement of the evaluators (see table 16).

TABLE 16: Example CPE ratings for COSOP performance

COSOP ASSESSMENT	RATING
Relevance	3
Effectiveness	4
Performance	**4**

Summary table of CPE ratings. The purpose of the following table is to provide readers with a snapshot of the CPE ratings for: (i) portfolio performance, (ii) non-lending activities, and (iii) COSOP performance. In addition, a composite rating should be developed for the overall IFAD-government partnership. This should not be an arithmetic average, but should instead be based on an informed and objective judgement of the evaluators. An example is shown in table 17.

TABLE 17: The CPE's overall assessment

ASSESSMENT	RATING
Portfolio performance	4
Non-lending activities	5
COSOP performance	4
Overall IFAD-government partnership	**4**

Conclusions and recommendations. This last chapter includes two subsections. The conclusions section provides a storyline that synthesizes the main findings. It should be concise and balanced, presenting a fair assessment of positive and negative aspects of COSOP design and implementation. Each conclusion should refer to key sections of the report. Similarly, recommendations should be few in number and prioritized, and should deal with strategic issues relating to IFAD's future engagement in the country. They should be clearly linked to the conclusions with appropriate references. In sum, the conclusions should be evidence-based, and the recommendations should be founded upon the conclusions of the CPE.

Excerpts of the Evaluation Committee* discussion on the Evaluation Manual

The Evaluation Committee held an informal seminar on 5 December 2008 entirely devoted to discussing OE's new Evaluation Manual. The new evaluation manual contains OE's enhanced processes and methodology for project and country programme evaluations. It also includes key methodological fundamentals that would be rigorously applied to all types of evaluations conducted by the division in the future.

All Committee members (India, Germany, Indonesia, Nigeria, Sweden, and Switzerland) except Belgium[74], Mali and Mexico attended the meeting. Observers were present from Egypt, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands and the United States.

Professor Robert Picciotto, former Director General of the Independent Evaluation Group at the World Bank and Mr. Hans Lundgren, the Secretary of the OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation also took part in the session. Professor Picciotto was the Chairperson and Mr Lundgren member of a seven person International Expert Panel of Senior Independent Advisers constituted by OE to provide guidance and inputs throughout the process leading up to the production of the new evaluation manual. The Committee was also joined by the Assistant President PMD, Director of OE and other IFAD staff.

Professor Picciotto and Mr Lundgren both expressed their broad satisfaction with the document, in terms of the process followed for its development and its contents. They underlined the usefulness of the document in enhancing the quality and effectiveness of OE's work, which is critical in further harmonising IFAD's independent evaluation function with international good practice and standards. Professor Picciotto further noted that IFAD should be particularly commended, as no other multilateral development organisation has a comprehensive and well structured evaluation manual as the one produced by OE.

The Evaluation Committee welcomed the new OE evaluation manual, which it found to be *state of the art* among international development organisations. It advised OE to ensure due attention to its roll-out and dissemination, which will require translation into IFAD official languages, as well as training of OE and PMD staff and consultants, and others. Moreover, the Committee underlined the importance of retaining flexibility in evaluation processes and methods, so that the most effective approaches can be followed depending on the country context and specific circumstances of a particular evaluation.

Finally, the Assistant President of PMD commended OE for the high quality manual, and the consultative process followed in its production.

*The Evaluation Committee is a standing sub-committee of IFAD's Executive Board.

74. Belgium provided her comments *in absentia*, which were conveyed to the Committee by the Chairperson.

Annex 1

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Annex

List of references for further reading on data collection techniques

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3
Annex

List of good practices: examples of key evaluation deliverables

A. Evaluation framework

Country programme evaluations

- Brazil
- Pakistan

Project evaluations

- China: Qinling Mountains Areas Poverty Alleviation Project
- Uganda: Vegetable Oil Development Project

B. Approach paper

Country programme evaluations

- Brazil
- India
- Pakistan

Project evaluations

- China: Qinling Mountain Areas Poverty Alleviation Project
- Peru: Development of the Puno-Cusco Corridor Project
- Philippines: Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project
- United Republic of Tanzania: Participatory Irrigation Development Programme

C. Aide-memoire

Country programme evaluations

- Brazil
- Nigeria
- Pakistan

Project evaluations

- Argentina: Rural Development Project for the North-Eastern Provinces
- China: Qinling Mountain Areas Poverty Alleviation Project

D. Foreword

Country programme evaluations

- Brazil
- Pakistan

Project evaluations

- Belize: Community-Initiated Agriculture and Resource Management Project
- Burkina Faso: Community-Based Rural Development Project
- Pakistan: Dir Area Support Project
- Philippines: Western Mindanao Community Initiatives Project
- Romania: Apuseni Development Project

E. Executive summary

Country programme evaluations

- Brazil
- Pakistan

Project evaluations

- Albania: Mountain Areas Development Programme
- Georgia: Agricultural Development Project
- Niger: Special Country Programme Phase II
- Philippines: Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project
- Tanzania: Participatory Irrigation Development Programme

F. Agreement at completion point

Country programme evaluations

- Ethiopia
- Pakistan

Project evaluations

- Albania: Mountain Areas Development Programme
- Burkina Faso: Community-based Rural Development Project

4
Annex

Project desk review note format

(Approval date: 21 November 2008)
(Indicative overall length: 5-6 pages)

I. Background and introduction (indicative length: 1- 2 pages)

Purpose. The purpose of the desk review note is to provide an informative summary of the project's performance and impact based on information collected through desk work and interviews at headquarters. It will also serve to underline specific hypotheses and issues for inclusion in the evaluation approach paper which merit further analysis during the evaluation team's country visit. Within the context of country programme evaluations, the desk review note(s) provide a consistent format for analysing the performance and impact of projects included in the evaluation.

Process. For project evaluations, the desk review note should be prepared after the approach paper has been developed and should be finalized before the main evaluation mission. The desk review note should be shared with the country programme manager (CPM) for comments. After that, the note would be shared with the government and project authorities for their feedback. The process involved in preparing desk review notes in the context of CPEs will be discussed in a separate note.

Approach and methodology. The desk review note is based on data and information collected by reviewing project documents and relevant external documentary sources available at IFAD headquarters.[75] Interviews with CPMs (and, if required, with the regional division director and other staff) should also be organized to collect additional information or simply to verify some of the initial findings from the desk review.

The analysis of data in the desk review note should be based on the latest OE methodology for project evaluations and should focus on assessing: (i) the core performance criteria of the project, measured in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency; (ii) the rural poverty reduction impact, grouped according to five impact domains (see section III below); (iii) other performance criteria (sustainability and innovation, replication and scaling up); and (iv) the performance of partners.

To the extent possible, based on the evidence available at headquarters, preliminary ratings against each evaluation criteria should be presented in the desk review note. The rating scale to be used is in line with OE's six-point rating system, with 6 being the best and 1 the worst score. The ratings contained in the desk review note should not be shared with others outside of OE. They should therefore be included in an annex to the desk review note, which then remains within OE.

Country and sector background. This section contains key information about the country, sector and project area. This includes information on the economy, social indicators, demographic data, agricultural and rural development sector issues, characteristics of rural poverty, etc. In particular, information on the specific sectors or subsectors relevant to the project, such as rural finance, irrigation, livestock and land tenure, should be provided in a separate paragraph.

75. A bibliography of the documents that have been consulted should be added in an annex.

IFAD operations in the country. This section presents in brief the information on IFAD operations in the country, including an overview of the COSOP, number of projects financed, loan amounts, total project costs and other relevant data.

Project design. This section contains a summary of project objectives, geographic area, target group, components, financing plan and main partner institutions involved in the project. It should also include a succinct summary of the project management and execution arrangements. A table with information on project cost, key project dates, and current disbursing rate should also be included in this section (see example table below).

Example table of project information

Country:	India
Project title:	Mewat Area Development Project
Project approval date:	12 April 1995
Project effectiveness date:	7 July 1995
Original closing date:	31 March 2003
Actual closing date:	31 March 2005
Total cost:	US$22.3 million
IFAD loan:	US$15 million (67 per cent of the total cost)
Lending terms:	Highly concessional
Contribution of government:	US$6.6 million (30 per cent)
Contribution of beneficiary:	US$0.7 million (3 per cent)
Cooperating institution:	United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)

II. Project performance (2 pages)

Relevance. This section summarizes and analyses key design features of the project and explains significant changes made in project design during implementation, if any. With the information and data available, in this section (as is true for the assessment of all other evaluation criteria) the evaluator should try to answer, to the extent possible, the questions related to relevance that appear in the OE evaluation manual. For each evaluation criterion, in addition to assessing performance against each evaluation criteria, the evaluators preparing the desk review note should make a concerted effort to discern the proximate causes of good or less good performance, as well as identifying hypotheses and/or issues that warrant a deeper analysis during the country work phase.

Effectiveness. This section assesses the extent to which the project has achieved its stated objectives. In addition, an annex should be added with the achievements (targets) of physical outputs, broken down by component.

Efficiency. This section evaluates how economically inputs are being converted into outputs. An annex should be added which shows the disbursements per year (from the Loan and Grant System).

III. Rural poverty impact (1 page)

The desk review should determine the project's rural poverty impact across five domains, namely: (i) household income and assets, (ii) human and social capital and

empowerment, (iii) food security and agricultural productivity, (iv) natural resources and the environment, and (v) institutions and policies. It should also include an assessment of the overall rural poverty impact of the operation. Within each domain, specific attention should be devoted to assessing the impact on gender equity and on women's empowerment and development.

As previously mentioned, the ratings should not be explicitly described in this section, but instead included in an annex (see appendix 1 for an example).

IV. Other performance criteria (1 page)

Sustainability. This section assesses the likelihood that the benefit streams generated by the investment will continue after project closure. It should also include an analysis designed to determine whether actual and anticipated results will be resilient to risks beyond the project's life.

Innovation, replication and scaling up. This section sheds light on the innovative elements of the project and looks into actual examples of replication and scaling up as well as the potential for them.

V. Performance of partners (1/2 page)

This section includes assessments of the performance of IFAD, the government and its agencies, and the cooperating institutions (where applicable).

VI. Main conclusions (1/4 page)

This section provides a concise synthesis of the main conclusions in the form of a storyline.

VII. Issues for further enquiry (1/2 page)

This section summarizes the key hypotheses and issues that merit further investigation during the evaluation team's country work phase. The issues identified here should emerge clearly from the analysis and conclusions contained in the desk review note.

Annex 4 - Appendix 1: Preliminary ratings (for OE internal use only)

A table containing the ratings for each evaluation criterion is presented in this appendix. It is important for ratings to be consistent with the analysis contained in the text of the desk review note. In addition, this section should include a summary of the ratings contained in the latest project status report/project completion report, if available.

Example table of preliminary ratings

EVALUATION CRITERIA	Project evaluation ratings (on a scale of 1 - 6)	Ratings in project completion report (on a scale of 1 - 6)
Core performance criteria		
Relevance	5	6
Effectiveness	4	4
Efficiency	4	4
Project performance	**4.3**	**4.7**
Rural poverty impact	**4**	
Household income and assets	4	5
Human and social capital and empowerment	6	6
Food security and agricultural productivity	4	4
Natural resources and the environment	4	4
Institutions and policies	4	4
Other performance criteria		
Sustainability	4	4
Innovation, replication and scaling up	4	4
Overall project achievement	**4**	**4**
Performance of partners		
IFAD	5	5
Government	4	4
Cooperating institution (UNOPS)	4	5

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Annex

Protocol of the Office of Evaluation for internal and external communication at different stages of the evaluation process

Key evaluation deliverables and internal communication modalities
(Approval date: 2 April 2007)

	E-mail to announce evaluations	Approach paper	Inception report	Mission aide-memoire
CLE	From: OE Director To: AP/PMD cc: President, PMD Directors, Senior Portfolio Manager/PMD	From: OE Director To: AP/PMD cc: President, PMD Directors, Senior Portfolio Manager/PMD	From: OE Director To: AP/PMD cc: PMD Directors, Senior Portfolio Manager/PMD	From: OE Director To: AP/PMD cc: PMD Directors, Senior Portfolio Manager/PMD
CPE	From: OE Director To: Relevant PMD Director cc: Relevant CPM, Senior Portfolio Manager/PMD	From: Lead evaluator To: CPM cc: Relevant PMD Director, OE Director and OE Deputy Director, Senior Portfolio Manager/PMD		From: Lead evaluator To: CPM cc: Relevant PMD Director, OE Director and OE Deputy Director, Senior Portfolio Manager/PMD
PE	From: OE Deputy Director To: Relevant PMD Director cc: CPM, OE Director, Senior Portfolio Manager/PMD	From: Lead evaluator To: CPM cc: OE Director and OE Deputy Director, relevant PMD Director, Senior Portfolio Manager/PMD		From: Lead evaluator To: CPM cc: OE Director and OE Deputy Director, relevant PMD Director, Senior Portfolio Manager/PMD

Draft final report	PMD comments and audit trail	Draft ACP	Final report
From: OE Director To: AP/PMD cc: President, PMD Directors, Senior Portfolio Manager/ PMD	From: OE Director To: AP/PMD cc: President, PMD Directors, Senior Portfolio Manager/ PMD	From: OE Director To: AP/PMD cc: President, PMD Directors, Senior Portfolio Manager/ PMD	To be decided
From: OE Director To: Relevant PMD Director cc: AP/PMD, CPM, OE Deputy Director, Senior Portfolio Manager/PMD	From: OE Director To: Relevant PMD Director cc: AP/PMD, CPM, OE Deputy Director, Senior Portfolio Manager/PMD	From: OE Director To: Relevant PMD Director cc: AP/PMD, CPM, OE Deputy Director, Senior Portfolio Manager/PMD	From: OE Director To: Relevant PMD Director cc: AP/PMD, CPM, OE Deputy Director, Senior Portfolio Manager/PMD
From: OE Deputy Director To: Relevant PMD Director cc: AP/PMD, CPM, OE Director, Senior Portfolio Manager/ PMD	From: OE Deputy Director To: Relevant PMD Director cc: AP/PMD, CPM, OE Director, Senior Portfolio Manager/ PMD	From: OE Director To: Relevant PMD Director cc: AP/PMD, CPM, OE Deputy Director, Senior Portfolio Manager/PMD	From: OE Director To: Relevant PMD Director cc: AP/PMD, CPM, OE Deputy Director, Senior Portfolio Manager/PMD

Key evaluation deliverables and external commmunications modalities
(Approval date: 15 September 2008)

	Official fax to announce evaluation and introduce lead OE evaluator	Draft approach paper	Mission aide-memoire[a]
Country programme evaluation	From: OE Director To: IFAD Governor (usually Minister of Agriculture or Minister of Finance) cc: Minister of Finance or Agriculture (depending on who is the Governor), Executive Board Director (if applicable), Ambassador in Rome, IFAD contact person in the country's embassy in Rome,[b] project directors and cofinancier(s), any other main implementing partner (e.g. major NGO), AP/PMD, relevant PMD Director, CPM and Regional Economist, lead evaluator and OE staff	1. From: OE Director To and cc: same as for official fax announcing evaluation AND SEPARATELY 2. From: Lead evaluator To: Development cooperation attaché or person responsible for agriculture and rural development in cofinancing organization at the country level cc: OE Director, Ambassador of cofinancing country at the country level and country Director of IFI or United Nations organization	From: Lead evaluator To: CPE focal point[c] in main ministry dealing with the CPE (i.e. IFAD desk officer, who is usually a person in the ministry of the IFAD Governor) cc: IFAD Governor, Permanent Secretary in the same ministry, and Executive Board Director (only if resident in country)
	Official fax to announce evaluation and introduce lead OE evaluator	**Draft approach paper**	**Mission aide-memoire**
Project evaluation	Same as for CPEs	1. From: Lead evaluator To: Permanent Secretary level cc: IFAD Governor, Executive Board Director (if applicable), Ambassador in Rome, IFAD contact person in the country's embassy in Rome, project directors and any other main implementing partner, AP/PMD, OE Director, relevant PMD Director and CPM **AND SEPARATELY** 2. From: Lead evaluator To: Development cooperation attaché or person responsible for agriculture and rural development in cofinancing organization at the country level cc: OE Director, Ambassador of cofinancing country at the country level and country Director of IFI or United Nations organization	Same as for CPEs

[a] The transmittal of the draft aide-memoire should be done at the country level.

[b] This person is usually the Alternate Permanent Representative of the country to IFAD in Rome. Also note that the Ambassador or IFAD contact person may be designated as the country's Executive Board Director.

[c] It is the responsibility of the IFAD focal point to ensure the distribution of the aide-memoire to participants in the wrap-up meeting.

[d] In some countries, this is the same as the Secretary, Director General, Head of Department, etc.

Draft report to government	Draft report to cofinanciers	Draft ACP	Final report, profile and insight
From: Lead evaluator To: Permanent Secretary level[d] in the ministry of the IFAD Governor cc: IFAD Governor, Executive Board Director (if applicable), Ambassador in Rome, IFAD contact person in the country's embassy in Rome, project directors, any other main implementing partner, AP/PMD, OE Director, relevant PMD Director and CPM	From: Lead evaluator To: Development cooperation attaché in the cofinancing country's embassy at the country level, and the person responsible for agriculture and rural development in the country office of the IFI or United Nations organization. cc: OE Director, Ambassador of cofinancing country at the country level, and country Director of IFI or United Nations organization	From: OE Director To: IFAD Governor cc: Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of IFAD Governor, AP/PMD, relevant PMD Director and CPM, and lead evaluator	From: OE Director To: IFAD Governor cc: Permanent Secretary in Ministry of IFAD Governor, Executive Board Director, Ambassador in Rome, IFAD focal point in Rome and lead evaluator Reports to all other in country partners would be sent directly by lead evaluator. Dissemination to all Board Directors, UNEG, ECG and others will follow the usual practice adopted by the Evaluation Communication Unit
Draft report to government	**Draft report to cofinanciers**	**Draft ACP**	**Final report and profile**
Same as for CPEs	Same as for CPEs	From: OE Director To: Permanent Secretary in the ministry of the IFAD Governor cc: IFAD Governor, AP/PMD, relevant PMD Director and CPM, and lead evaluator	Same as for CPEs

6
Annex

Conflicts of interest of consultants and widening the pool of evaluation specialists

(Approval date: 12 June 2006)

A. Introduction and definition

With the approval of the IFAD Evaluation Policy in 2003, the conflict of interest issue, as concerns the recruitment of evaluation consultants, took on new importance for the Office of Evaluation (OE).

A conflict of interest in consultant recruitment could be defined as a situation in which, because of a person's work history or possibilities for future contracts, the consultant may find himself/herself in a position to provide a subjective analysis in order to obtain undue benefits for himself/herself or affiliates, with a potential or actual bias against the interests of the employer.

In the case of the Office of Evaluation, the most salient cases are those in which consultants could: (a) influence the analysis or recommendations so that they are consistent with findings previously stated by themselves (upstream or ex ante conflicts of interest); (b) artificially create favourable conditions for consideration in a downstream assignment (downstream or ex post conflict of interest); or (c) work simultaneously for two or more clients whose interests diverge.

Evaluation units in other international organizations, such as, for example, the Independent Evaluation Group (formerly OED) at the World Bank, have formulated general principles for avoiding conflicts of interest with staff and consultants. Similar principles are mentioned in the UNEG (Standard for Evaluation in the United Nations system). By the same token, the IFAD Evaluation Policy (paragraphs 60-64) provides some general guidelines.

B. Purpose and basic principles

The following guidelines are designed, on one hand, to provide simple and practical rules for use in identifying potential sources of conflicts of interest and, on the other, to encourage diversification in the choice of consultants and openness on the part of the Office of Evaluation to new ideas and perspectives.

(a) As a general rule, OE will not assign consultants to the evaluation of projects, country programmes, sectors or themes, regional strategies, corporate processes or policies in which they have had prior involvement in the design, implementation, decision-making or financing stages. Typical examples of prior involvement include the inception, formulation, appraisal, supervision, support mission, or any other design or support activity for projects, programmes (including, in particular, COSOPs), corporate processes or policies to be examined by the evaluation.

(b) OE also applies a ceiling to the percentage of work that a consultant can perform for IFAD in collaboration with divisions other than the Office of Evaluation. In general, OE will not recruit consultants with an IFAD (outside OE) work history that exceeds 25 per cent of their total work history. In addition to the above, when consultants are recruited through a firm (reimbursable loan) or through a non-profit institution (institutional contract), a ceiling of 35 per cent of the overall total work history will be applied to the firm or institution in question. Further restrictions apply according to the task to be performed and are explained below.

(c) Work history refers to professional experience, including consultancies, employment by IFAD as a staff member, as temporary staff or the equivalent.

(d) Some restrictions are also placed on concurrent and future employment of OE consultants: they are to have no parallel assignments within IFAD during the OE contract period, and they should agree not to work with the division or department concerned by the evaluation for a period of six months after the expiration of the OE contract.

(e) Other potential sources of conflict of interest that are not covered by the above provisions should be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the evaluation officers concerned in consultation with their supervisor.

C. Specific guidelines

(a) **Corporate-level and regional strategy evaluations.** The Office of Evaluation will not recruit consultants with an IFAD work history (OE excluded) that exceeds 15 per cent of their total work history.

(b) **Project, country programme and thematic evaluations.** The Office of Evaluation will not recruit consultants with a work history with the concerned IFAD division that exceeds 15 per cent of their total work history.

D. Means of verification

Concerning points B.a-c and C.a-b, evaluation officers will review the curricula vitae submitted by the consultants and will seek information from the Human Resources Division when necessary. Judging by the specific cases submitted to them, they will also assess other potential sources of conflict of interest (B.e). They will request consultants to submit (by email, fax or letter) a declaration that none of the above situations exists and that (as per B.d) the consultant will not seek concurrent employment with IFAD nor will (s)he work with the division or department concerned by the evaluation for a period of six months after the expiration of the OE contract.

E. Procedure for contract approval

Submit the above-mentioned consultants' declaration, together with the documentation required for the preparation of a contract (Request for Consultancy Services form, lump sum breakdown, CV, Terms of Reference, etc.).

F. Resource persons

As set forth in the IFAD Evaluation Policy (paragraph 63), consultants who do not meet the above requirements may be engaged as "resource persons" to provide information or advice to the evaluation team, but may not participate in the analytical work for the evaluation or the actual preparation of the final report.

Annex 6 - Appendix 1

Sample declaration

I, the undersigned, John Smith, declare that:

(1) I have read the Office of Evaluation's rules concerning consultants' conflicts of interest and hereby state that I have no prior involvement in the inception, formulation, appraisal, supervision, support mission or any other design or support activity for projects, programmes (including, in particular, COSOPs) or policies to be examined in the evaluation;

- *For corporate-level and regional strategy evaluations:*

  (2) My work history with IFAD does not exceed 15 per cent of my total work history;

- *For project, country programme and thematic evaluations:*

  (3) My work history with IFAD does not exceed 25 per cent of my total work history, and my work history with the concerned IFAD division does not exceed 15 per cent of my total work history; and

  (4) I will not seek concurrent employment within IFAD during my collaboration with the Office of Evaluation, nor will I work with the division or department concerned for a period of six months based on the evaluation after the expiration of my contract with the Office of Evaluation.

John Smith 23/04/2006

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Annex

Template for the agreement at completion point

(Approval date: 19 March 2007)

The core learning partnership and the users of the evaluation

This section first describes the composition of the core learning partnership (CLP). It explains the CLP selection criteria (which focuses on institutions and people that have a stake in the recommendations and/or responsibilities, together with the decision-making power to implement them). It also records how the interaction with OE took place (e.g. dates and types of meetings) from the beginning of the evaluation. It mentions the event (workshop or video-conference) where the agreement was formalized, the participants and the users of the evaluation (the main users should be encouraged to sign the agreement). It underlines the fact that OE was not one of the parties to the agreement at completion point (ACP) but that it facilitated the process leading up to the conclusion of the agreement as an action-oriented document. The objective is to define which recommendations are perceived as feasible and which recommendations are perceived as not feasible by the main users (see sections 3 and 4).

The main evaluation findings

This section (to be kept as short as possible) briefly summarizes the key evaluation findings and highlights both successful areas and those in which improvements are needed.

Recommendations agreed upon by all partners

This section presents the recommendations derived from the evaluation that have met with the partners' agreement. These recommendations are deduced logically from evaluation findings. They should be formulated clearly and should be kept focused and actionable to the extent possible. The section will contain the main users' responses indicating how they intend to act upon these recommendations, with assigned responsibilities and deadlines being specified wherever possible. Responsibility for defining the implementation modalities and schedules of the agreed-upon recommendations rests with the main users in PMD and in the borrowing countries.

The ACP will be the basis for the follow-up of the implementation of evaluation recommendations by IFAD Management. The ACP will be part of the evaluation report.

Recommendations originally formulated by OE but found to be inapplicable by some partners

The recommendations that were originally formulated by OE but that were found to be inapplicable, partially applicable or not feasible for implementation by the main users will be presented in this section. The material to be presented should include: (i) the initial recommendation, (ii) the partner(s) which expressed reservations and their justification, (iii) any alternative recommendation/counter-proposal suggested by partners, and (iv) the Office of Evaluation's final comments (if any).

Signatures (desirable) _____ Date _____

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Annex

List of pertinent IFAD subsector policies and strategies

1. Strategic Framework, 2007-2010
2. Rural Finance Policy, 2009
3. Land Policy, 2008
4. Innovation Strategy, 2007
5. Policy for Grant Financing in relation to the Debt Sustainability Framework, 2007
6. Strategy for Knowledge Management, 2007
7. Policy on Supervision and Implementation Support, 2006
8. Targeting Policy: Reaching the Rural Poor, 2006
9. Policy on Sector-wide Approaches for Agriculture and Rural Development, 2005
10. Private Sector Development and Partnership Strategy, 2005
11. Policy on Crisis Prevention and Recovery, 2005
12. Rural Enterprise Policy, 2004
13. Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in IFAD's Operations, 2003

9
Annex

Good practice guidelines for organizing workshops[76]

Background

This note refers to the organization of workshops in relation to higher plane evaluations. The objectives of such workshops normally are two fold: (a) to discuss the evaluation's overall results; and (b) to lay the foundations for the preparation of the evaluation's agreement at completion point.

Objectives of this note

Building on OE's experiences in the past few years, this note serves as a guide to ensure that the planning and organization of such workshops follow good practice. It outlines some of the key activities that need to be undertaken to ensure a smooth and effective conduct of the workshops. The note provides a guide on the following topics related to the organization of workshops: (a) preparation of the workshop concept note; (b) the undertaking of preparatory missions by OE; (c) budget formulation; (d) field visit; (e) communication and dissemination issues before, during and after the workshop; (f) workshop team members and their roles and responsibilities; (g) workshop format/design; (h) workshop issues paper; and (i) workshop secretariat office.

Workshop concept note and provisional agenda

It is fundamental to prepare such a note as early as possible, around four months before the event is to be held. The concept note would outline the objectives of the workshop, provide information on the time and venue including logistic information (such as accommodation arrangements, transportation arrangements), workshop format/design, plans for any field visit to IFAD-funded project(s), the provisional list of participants (which will be incomplete, but at least give an indication of the main institutions who would be invited to attend), as well as a road map of the key events and processes leading up to and after the workshop.

The concept note should be prepared in draft format and firstly discussed with the main counterpart within IFAD (most likely the concerned PMD regional division). After incorporating PMD's comments, the revised draft concept note should be sent officially to the key counterpart in the government for discussion during the workshop preparatory mission (see next section). The concept note should include as an attachment, the workshop's provisional agenda. It is important to underscore that the concept note is a draft, which will only be finalised after discussions both with PMD and the concerned government(s) during the preparatory mission. This is most important, as the concept note will include information on aspects that can only be firmed up following discussions with PMD and the government (e.g., venue of the workshop, project to be selected for an eventual field visit).

Preparatory mission

The preparatory mission (lasting around one week at most) should be conducted more or less two months before the workshop. It is important that the draft concept note is sent to the government and concerned project staff 15 days before the preparatory mission, together with a request for appointments with the main government institutions and others involved. The draft concept note therefore is

76. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Guidelines on Organization of IFAD-financed Workshops (dated 2008) available on the IFAD intranet.

the starting point for discussions, as it includes the various issues to be considered and a number of related decisions that need to be taken (see previous paragraph). Appointments with representatives of UN and other international organizations may be made directly by OE from Rome, although it is important to keep the government informed of any such meetings that are firmed up, so that they can be included in the overall programme for the preparatory mission being developed by the government. The draft concept note should also be sent, as background information, to other partners who are likely to be met during the preparatory mission (even though some elements of the concept note are likely to be revised after discussions with the key government counterparts). It is most important that the preparatory mission starts by holding meetings with the main government representatives.

The preparatory mission also provides the opportunity to identify synergies and specific areas of financial and in-kind contribution that the government is in a position to make for the workshop organization. Examples of in-kind contributions on the part of the government could include some or all of the following activities: hosting a reception/dinner, providing on the ground transportation (pick-up and drop-off at airport and hotels and in relation to field visit and workshop), provision of workshop facilities (e.g., conference hall, etc.) and so on. OE will decide, in close consultation with the government, on the workshop venue and related organizational arrangements. In this regard, OE may like to record the opinion of PMD before taking a final decision.

The draft concept note would be accordingly finalized after the preparatory mission, by OE following the required consultation with the Director of OE.

Budget formulation

Soon after the preparatory mission, it is recommended that a workshop budget be prepared. The budget is part of the original allocation for the evaluation. Hence, it is necessary that around US$30,000 be allocated to the workshop. This figure is approximate as circumstances vary: for example, it could be more especially in those cases where simultaneous interpretation facilities are required or for regional workshops or for workshops where members of the Evaluation Committee attend. The budget should include the costs for setting up the workshop venue (conference room plus breakout rooms and OE secretariat room), catering requirements, shipment of documents and publications from Rome, recruitment of resource persons, payment to local secretarial staff and a photographer (if hired), photocopying, ground transportation requirements, remuneration for chairperson(s), and so on. Any contribution that the government agrees to make should be taken into consideration and reflected in the budget.

Field visit

In most cases, it is useful to organize a field visit to an IFAD-funded project to provide an opportunity to IFAD staff to hold discussions with beneficiaries and see activities on the ground. It is recommended that such field visits be organized before the workshop. The field visit should be limited normally to two full days (one night stay in the project area). In this regard, it is essential that due consultations are held with PMD in identifying the project and the specific areas and activities to be visited. Moreover, attention should be given to transportation arrangements to ensure that maximum time is reserved for actual field work. Once in the project area, before commencing the field visits, it is important to organize a short briefing (could be done at the project office or in the hotel) on the project, and in particular on the activities that will be visited. The briefing should provide an explanation of how each activity that will be visited relate to the overall project objectives and implementation arrangements. It is recommended to organize some recreational activity during the field visit, without impinging on the time for visits to project sites and interactions with the local communities. This is particularly

important for field visits that include the participation of the Evaluation Committee.

It is beneficial to prepare and distribute (in advance) to IFAD staff and others visiting the project a 2-3 page project brief with a map, including the planned programme and logistic arrangements for the field visit. It is natural that this part of the event will require close interaction with the concerned project authorities.

Communication and dissemination

This section may be divided in three parts, that is, activities to be undertaken before, during and after the workshop. IFAD's Communication Division (EC) should be asked to prepare a communication plan that provides an opportunity to share the key messages about the event with internal and external audiences. It is essential that EC is informed of the amount of resources OE is able to devote to communication issues, so that a realistic plan can be prepared and implemented.

Before the workshop, it is important to share with all the participants the following documentation and information: invitation letter,[77] workshop concept note and provisional programme, field visit programme, workshop issues paper and the final unpublished evaluation report. It is essential to make clear in the concept note that while the workshop will provide an opportunity to discuss evaluation issues and findings, the evaluation report is no longer open for discussion (only factual inaccuracies highlighted will be changed after the workshop, if there are any still remaining at that stage). A clear process for interaction and opportunity for commenting on the draft evaluation report must be organized well ahead of the workshop. The aforementioned documentation should be sent to all the participants by e-mail at least two weeks (15 days) before the workshop. The government authorities may be asked to distribute the report in hard copies to government institutions, project authorities and other participants coming from the country. OE should ensure that a sufficient number of extra copies of all the documentation listed in this paragraph are printed at IFAD and dispatched to the country for distribution at the outset of the workshop. A short announcement should be made on the internal logon and intranet sites, providing links to the concept note, provisional agenda, field visit programme, issues paper and final unpublished evaluation report.

During the event, it is recommended to distribute to all the participants in hard copy the following documents: the opening statements made by the Director of OE and the PMD representative (usually the AP/PMD and/or Director of the concerned regional division), the keynote statement of the government representative (usually the concerned minister, and on occasions there could be more than one), the PowerPoint presentation on the evaluation of the lead OE evaluator as well as the workshop chairperson's closing statement. Arrangements should be made with the support of EC, and in coordination with the government, to ensure the presence of print and audio-visual media representatives.

Communication after the event is equally important. Firstly, it is recommended to post a brief (one paragraph) note on the workshop and its outcomes on the IFAD logon and intranet site along with all the material mentioned in the previous paragraph. This should be done within a couple of days after the event. Then, letters of thanks should be prepared within two weeks from the event to be sent to key persons (particularly the high level dignitaries from the government who attended the workshop and those who assisted in making the preparations). These letters should be signed by the Director of OE. Finally, the evaluation agreement at completion point should be sent to the concerned partners, as soon as this has been drafted and discussed with PMD.

Workshop team: roles and responsibilities

The main organizer is OE together with the government. All key decision should be taken jointly by these two parties. Moreover, it is

77. It is recommended that the Director of OE invite the international organizations, whereas the invitation to government institutions and project staff should be the responsibility of the government based on an agreed upon list of participants.

crucial for ownership and operational purposes, that the government sets up its own workshop organizing team/committee, which would interact very closely and constantly with OE in Rome and follow-up on all arrangements on the ground.

Workshop format and duration

It is recommended that such **workshops be organized for one and a half days**. The first morning would be conducted in a plenary session, during which opening remarks and statements are made by the government and IFAD representatives. In this regard, serious attention and time should be allocated in determining the order of speakers, depending on seniority, position or other considerations. For this, the country's own protocol procedures will have to be taken into account, which may differ from place to place. Moreover, during the same plenary, the lead evaluator would make an overall presentation of the evaluation, followed by an open discussion and exchange of views amongst the participants. The entire afternoon session would be normally reserved for working group discussions. Day one would be closed thereafter.

The half day remaining on day two would be in plenary session. The plenary would first have an opportunity to hear the feedback (usually in PowerPoint format) from the workshop working groups. Thereafter, sufficient time should be reserved for comments on the presentations. Following this, the lead evaluator would provide a brief overview of the next steps remaining in the finalization of the evaluation. Thereafter, the PMD regional division Director (or concerned CPM) would share his/her thoughts on how the division would build upon the evaluation, informing the participants of the next concrete steps they intend to take in internalizing the evaluation's findings and recommendations. This would be followed by the last step of the workshop, which is the delivery of the closing statement by the workshop chairperson. One key consideration in the workshop format is the role of the workshop **chairperson**. It is essential that each workshop is directed by a chairperson from the government. The chair should be identified during the workshop preparatory mission. S/he should be of the rank of a permanent secretary or higher (e.g., deputy minister or minister). It is most important the chair is briefed by OE at least a couple of days before the event on his/her role and our expectations. S/he should reserve time to read key background documents. It may be necessary for OE to provide him/her with due remuneration (equivalent to 2-3 days work) for the services provided. However, before agreeing to providing remuneration to a government official, OE needs to clear this issue with the concerned authorities to ensure that this is an acceptable procedure. For this purpose, OE may wish to seek guidance from the UNDP office and the government officials before finalising any arrangement. In sum, the chairperson would direct the discussions during the plenary sessions, ensuring that all participants have a chance to contribute to the debate. S/he may also make brief concluding remarks after each plenary session. S/he would normally deliver the workshop closing statement.

Two key aspects of the workshops are the workshop **issues paper and the function and organization of the working groups**. With regard to the former, it is a good practice to prepare a short (5-7 pages) issues paper based on the evaluation's findings, in advance of the workshop. This issues paper is usually divided into three broad topics (with an appropriate number of sub-topics) emerging from the evaluation, and include the key points and concerns raised by the evaluation. For each issue, the paper would contain a number of questions that would serve as a basis for the discussions in the working groups. Once at the workshop, participants should be asked to sign up in the morning of day one for the group they would like to take part in. Alternatively, OE (in consultation with the government) could pre-assign the participants in the (three) working groups. Each working group should be asked to focus on one issue only.

As and if required, in order to ensure a more or less equal number of participants, OE may have to shift some persons from one group to another. Before doing so, OE would consult with them and seek their concurrence. Each working group should have a chairperson, who should be identified (and informed) by OE before the groups meet. Likewise, each group would be asked to nominate a rapporteur at the outset of the discussions. An OE staff or evaluation mission consultant would be asked to make a short introduction on the topic of the working group to kick off the discussions. Finally, it is important that OE staff and evaluation mission members split up to ensure they are represented in all three working groups, and assist closely the rapporteur in preparing the group's PowerPoint (feedback) presentation after the group discussions are concluded.

One further aspect of the workshop format/design is the preparation of the **workshop closing statement**. A template for such statements in electronic format is available in OE. In sum, the lead evaluator would draft the statement in the evening of day one, drawing from his/her own notes and participation in one of the working groups. This statement will need to include the key issues and recommendations of the other working groups as well, which can be done by discussing with the OE representatives who participated in the other working groups and by referring to their PowerPoint presentations. Moreover, on day two in the morning, it is important that the statement is completed with any additional new issues that emerge during the plenary discussions. The draft statement should be first cleared by the Director of OE. Thereafter, the draft would be shared with the most senior PMD representative present for his/her comments. Then the final proposal would be cleared by the workshop chairperson before s/he is called upon to deliver the same.

Workshop secretariat office

It is essential that a small office is set up adjacent to the main plenary hall for OE staff and representatives of the government's workshop secretariat. This room should be equipped with a photocopier, two PCs with internet access and two printers. A telephone connection may also be considered.

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