Managing for Impact in Rural Development

A Guide for Project M&E
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The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and its partners in developing countries share the challenging mission of enabling the rural poor to overcome their poverty. A partnership which takes shape primarily through hundreds of rural development projects and programmes at grass-roots level, often in the poorest and most remote regions of the world.

Although the performance of these projects has improved in many aspects over the years, external evaluations continue to report weaknesses in their monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, in particular in the way impact M&E is carried out and used at project management and policy level. The need for support is also evident from the numerous requests that IFAD receives each year from its partners for assistance in M&E system design and operation.

In line with the IFAD Action Plan 2000-2002, which seeks to “improve impact assessment”, this new practical guide was developed through a yearlong consultative process with its potential users: project M&E officers, managers, designers and supervisors. Its purpose is to facilitate the development and use of effective and participatory M&E systems as tools for impact-oriented management, shared learning processes and accountability.

As such, it is an integral part of our global effort to improve the performance and monitor the results of our common initiatives to strengthen the capacity of the rural poor and their organisations, improve equitable access to productive resources and increase access to financial services and markets.

Lennart Båge

President
International Fund for Agricultural Development
After a long consultation process and much work by a variety of M&E specialists from all regions of IFAD operations, I am pleased to present the IFAD Practical Guide for Monitoring and Evaluation of Rural Development Projects.

The process began in 2000 when the Fund’s Office of Evaluation and Studies conducted a stocktaking exercise, which covered a decade of IFAD experience with M&E at project level. After which, a comparative review was undertaken of the strategies and approaches to M&E systems at project level of several major development agencies. While the stocktaking exercise observed a general weakness in most M&E systems, the comparative review concluded that there is substantial material on M&E concepts and theories, although there remains a lack of practical resource kits on the methodologies and processes at operational level.

As such, the overriding goal of the guide is to improve the impact of IFAD-funded projects, through the introduction of effective M&E systems. It focuses on a learning approach to management that uses achievements and problems to improve decision-making and accountability. This requires creating an M&E system that helps primary stakeholders, implementing partners and project staff to learn together in order to improve their development interventions on a continual basis. As the ultimate objective is to ensure the maximum possible benefit for the rural poor, they are the ones best placed to assess project impact and must therefore be considered full partners in any future M&E. The guide also suggests ideas for implementing this and other forms of participatory M&E.

The primary target audience is composed of staff from project management units, in particular project directors and M&E officers, together with their implementation partners, such as, public services, NGOs and CBOs. The guide is also aimed at technical consultants and supervisors from co-operating institutions. Because the effectiveness of M&E systems also depends on the decisions taken during project design, specific sections of the guide provide advice to project designers, including IFAD staff and their consultants.

This guide presents a number of original features that I believe could contribute to its success and usefulness:

- It has been developed together with its potential users through a consultative process lasting over a year. It addresses their practical problems, starting from their current M&E practices, however rudimentary, and whenever possible uses examples of good practices from IFAD-funded and other rural development projects.

- The guide is geared to the specific context, procedures and partnerships of IFAD supported operations. It emphasises participatory processes throughout, and proposes options that can be adapted to the requirements of project managements in different regional and national contexts.

- The guide is organised in eight stand-alone modules that are tailored to the needs of different categories of users with specific yet differing monitoring responsibilities and tasks.

- The guide is also available to the public in a user-friendly, electronic format on the IFAD web page (www.ifad.org/evaluation).
Furthermore, the guide is not a stand-alone initiative. In fact, it forms part of broader spectrum of activities which include, more specifically, improvement of the logical framework approaches in project design and supervision, training, translation of the guide into local languages and the development of regional M&E support networks which take stock of IFAD’s experience with the PREVAL (Programme for Strengthening the M&E Capacity of IFAD-funded Projects in Latin America and the Caribbean). This regional customisation should further adapt the contents of the guide to the needs of its users and their feedback will be incorporated in future versions.

I trust that the guide will be a valuable tool and contribution to the enhancement of impact assessment and achievement in IFAD-supported projects.

Luciano Lavizzari
Director
Office of Evaluation and Studies
### Navigating the Guide

#### Are you responsible for managing the project or a project component?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase in Project Cycle</th>
<th>Tasks You Face</th>
<th>Section Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Start-up</strong></td>
<td>Revising the project design (logical framework)</td>
<td>Section 3, Annex B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obtaining an overview of M&amp;E responsibilities</td>
<td>Section 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supervising development of the M&amp;E system</td>
<td>Section 5, Annex C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using the logical framework as a basis for developing the annual work plan and budget</td>
<td>Section 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td>Requesting and using M&amp;E information to guide project implementation and make decisions</td>
<td>Sections 2 and 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supervising the contributions and performance of staff, partners and consultants</td>
<td>Section 4, Annex E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engaging team members, primary stakeholders and partners in joint analysis, learning and decision making</td>
<td>Section 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Are you responsible for ensuring that M&E in the project as a whole or in a project component is being set up and implemented well?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase in Project Cycle</th>
<th>Tasks You Face</th>
<th>Section Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Start-up</strong></td>
<td>Developing clarity about the role of M&amp;E in project management</td>
<td>Section 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensuring that during revision of project design, the M&amp;E system and procedures are detailed enough for implementation</td>
<td>Sections 3 and 4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Guiding project implementers in agreeing what to monitor and evaluate</td>
<td>Section 5, Annex C</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Guiding project implementers in deciding how to collect and communicate information</td>
<td>Section 6, Annex D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checking that proposed resources, capacities, support and structures are sufficient for M&amp;E to be effective</td>
<td>Section 7, Annex E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td>Supporting partners and consultants in fulfilling their M&amp;E responsibilities</td>
<td>Section 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encouraging reflective use of information by implementers</td>
<td>Section 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engaging key stakeholders in joint analysis of information</td>
<td>Section 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reporting findings from M&amp;E</td>
<td>Section 6</td>
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</table>
### Are you responsible for providing external technical assistance in the areas of project design, M&E and information management for the project or a project component?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase in Project Cycle</th>
<th>Tasks You Face</th>
<th>Section Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Ensuring that the proposed project design is based on good design practice</td>
<td>Section 3, Annex B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensuring that the M&amp;E component has been designed comprehensively enough and with sufficient resources, capacities and flexibility</td>
<td>Sections 4 and 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start-up</td>
<td>Ensuring that the M&amp;E system is designed to support “managing for impact”</td>
<td>Sections 2 and 4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Supporting M&amp;E staff in developing appropriate monitoring mechanisms</td>
<td>Sections 5 and 6</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ensuring that enough and appropriate resources, capacities and support structures exist for carrying out M&amp;E responsibilities</td>
<td>Section 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Building critical reflection into M&amp;E processes</td>
<td>Section 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reviewing and updating the M&amp;E system</td>
<td>Sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8</td>
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### Are you responsible for providing guidance, supervision and support to the project?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase in Project Cycle</th>
<th>Tasks You Face</th>
<th>Section Number</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Checking that the proposed project design meets “good practice” standards</td>
<td>Section 3, Annex B</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stipulating relevant elements of learning-oriented M&amp;E in job descriptions and terms of reference</td>
<td>Annex E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensuring that the proposed project design includes sufficient resources, capacities and enabling support structures for M&amp;E</td>
<td>Section 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start-up</td>
<td>Ensuring that the project design is being revised appropriately with sufficient detail to M&amp;E</td>
<td>Section 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encouraging impact-focused monitoring</td>
<td>Section 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Ensuring that key aspects of the M&amp;E system are in place</td>
<td>Section 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognising if a project is taking a learning approach in its implementation</td>
<td>Section 8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checking reports and suggesting reporting formats</td>
<td>Sections 3 and 6</td>
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Acknowledgements

Project-related staff and stakeholders who shared their experiences with M&E

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- Colombia. M.O. Lizarazo, L. Isaacs, A. Rojas
- Ecuador. J. Orbe, D. Quilumbaqui
- El Salvador. M. Ponce, J.A. Torres, M. Quesada, E. Ancheta, G. Colunga, J. Santos Castillo
- Guatemala. C. Mas, M. Mérida
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### Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APR</th>
<th>annual project review</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AWPB</td>
<td>annual work plan and budget</td>
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<tr>
<td>BPL</td>
<td>below poverty line</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBA</td>
<td>cost-benefit analysis</td>
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<td>CBO</td>
<td>community-based organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCU</td>
<td>central coordination unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>CI</td>
<td>cooperating institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>COSOP</td>
<td>Country Strategic Opportunities Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPM</td>
<td>country portfolio manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>curriculum vitae (résumé)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>district council</td>
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<td>DPF</td>
<td>district project facilitator</td>
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<tr>
<td>DT</td>
<td>district team</td>
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<td>FUG</td>
<td>forestry user group</td>
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<td>GIS</td>
<td>geographic information system</td>
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<tr>
<td>GPS</td>
<td>global positioning system</td>
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<tr>
<td>HYVs</td>
<td>high-yielding varieties</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICGs</td>
<td>income-generating activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFAD</td>
<td>International Fund for Agricultural Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>LFA</td>
<td>logical framework approach</td>
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<td>MIS</td>
<td>management information system</td>
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<td>MOVs</td>
<td>means of verification</td>
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<td>MTE</td>
<td>mid-term evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MTR</td>
<td>mid-term review</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>monitoring and evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MU</td>
<td>monitoring unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>NTCU</td>
<td>national technical coordination unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCU</td>
<td>programme coordination unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>project director</td>
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<tr>
<td>PIM</td>
<td>participatory impact monitoring</td>
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<tr>
<td>PM&amp;E</td>
<td>participatory monitoring and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMU</td>
<td>project management unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNGO</td>
<td>participating NGO (i.e. implementing partner)</td>
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<td>PRA</td>
<td>participatory rural appraisal</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHG</td>
<td>self-help group</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOF</td>
<td>Special Operations Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWOT</td>
<td>strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats</td>
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<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>technical assistance</td>
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<td>TOC</td>
<td>table of contents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADIP</td>
<td>Agricultural Diversification and Intensification Project</td>
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<td>APPTDP</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh Participatory Tribal Development Project</td>
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<td>Cuchumatanes Highlands Rural Development Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDSP</td>
<td>District Development Support Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>FODESA</td>
<td>Sahelian Areas Development Fund Programme</td>
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<td>KAEMP</td>
<td>Agricultural and Environmental Management Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>LACOSREP</td>
<td>Upper East Region Land Conservation and Smallholder Rehabilitation Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>MARENASS</td>
<td>Management of Natural Resources in the Southern Highlands Project</td>
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<td>MAREP</td>
<td>Maharashtra Rural Credit Project</td>
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<td>NWFP</td>
<td>North-West Frontier Province Barani Area Development Project</td>
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<td>WUPAP</td>
<td>Nepal Western Uplands Poverty Alleviation Development Project</td>
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<td>P4K</td>
<td>Income Generating Project for Marginal Farmers and Landless</td>
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<td>PADEMER</td>
<td>Rural Micro-Enterprises Development Programme</td>
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<td>PDR-San</td>
<td>Income Diversification Programme in the Mali Sud Area</td>
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<td>PIDP</td>
<td>Participatory Irrigation Development Project</td>
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<td>PROCHALATE</td>
<td>Rehabilitation and Development Project of Areas Affected by Conflict in</td>
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<td>PRODECOP</td>
<td>Economic Development of Poor Rural Communities Project</td>
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<td>PROSALAF</td>
<td>Support Project for Small Producers in the Semi-arid Zones of Falcon and</td>
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<td>RADM</td>
<td>Raymah Area Development Project</td>
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<td>RDRS</td>
<td>Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service</td>
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<td>RTIP</td>
<td>Root and Tuber Improvement Programme</td>
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<td>SAIP</td>
<td>Smallholder Agricultural Improvement Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>SARAGURO</td>
<td>Yacuambi Rural Development Project</td>
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<td>SDPMA</td>
<td>Smallholder Development Project for Marginal Areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>SFDP</td>
<td>Smallholder Flood Plains Development Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>SISP</td>
<td>Smallholder Irrigation Support Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEPP</td>
<td>Tihama Environmental Protection Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>TROPISEC</td>
<td>Project for the Capitalization of Small Farmers in the Tropisec Area of the</td>
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<td>TNWDP</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu Women’s Development Project</td>
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