

Smallholder institutions and organizations

Scaling up note



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Kenya - Smallholder Horticulture Marketing Programme

Scaling up results by supporting smallholder organizations

IFAD's comparative advantage lies in its experience in working at the grass-roots level, its understanding of the constraints facing rural poor people, including the most vulnerable, and its capacity to envisage inclusive approaches for socio-economic development. A key element of IFAD's approach to development is providing support to rural smallholder organizations as a strategy for empowering the rural poor. Strong inclusive smallholder organizations with large membership are important partners for governments, NGOs, donors and private-sector actors seeking new markets. Smallholder organizations represent an entry point for providing small-scale producers with an array of services that enhance their access to natural resources, input and output markets, information and knowledge; improve their management of natural resources; and facilitate their participation in policymaking.¹ Scaling up smallholder organizations has the potential to generate socio-economic benefits for large numbers of poor people relatively rapidly.

To operate on a larger scale, smallholder organizations need to strengthen their mandates, strategies, rules, procedures, legal frameworks (e.g. constitutions), human skills and physical infrastructure. These are the resources they need to expand their smallholder membership base and provide sustainable, quality service delivery. IFAD can support the scaling up of grass-roots organizations by increasing the size and range of their operations; facilitating the restructuring of their internal organization; enhancing "horizontal bridges" among organizations, enabling them to achieve greater "vertical" aggregation; and giving them the capability to foster linkages with public- and private-sector players upstream.

¹ IFAD and FAO. 2012. *Good practices in building innovative rural institutions to increase food security*. Rome. http://www.ifad.org/pub/institutions/IB_ES_e.pdf

What is to be scaled up?

The initial step in scaling up smallholder organizations is to clarify and examine the elements that work best and decide which of these to scale up. The elements to be considered include the organizational components embedded in projects related to capacity-building, such as the managerial and technical skills and governance systems that enable organizations to fulfil their core functions and achieve their missions more effectively.

Scaling up of grass-roots organizations can bring about lasting and inclusive rural transformation and enable smallholders to overcome their isolation from centres of power and influence. These outcomes can be achieved by supporting grass-roots organizations in taking advantage of economies of scale, which in turn provide opportunities for development actors to reach out to poor and community members.

Key **interventions** for supporting the scaling up of smallholder organizations include capacity-building of

new and established organizations to facilitate bonding among their smallholder members; capacity-building to create bridges among smallholder organizations for establishing apex organizations; and brokering of linkages between smallholder apex organizations and upstream players in the public and private sectors. The ultimate goal of these interventions is to improve the overall performance of smallholder organizations and their ability to increase their membership and adapt to changing contexts.

The **process** of strengthening smallholder organizations illustrated in Figure 1 has been found to be successful in scaling up results. When organizations are brought to scale, they can play major roles in setting the rural development agenda, mobilizing resources, attracting the private sector, exercising convening power and creating consensus for change. They can become institutions that provide services on a large scale. The process begins when individual farmers/entrepreneurs who have common interests form local organizations, which then graduate into business-oriented apex associations/cooperatives. When apex organizations grow large and strong enough, they may either deliver services to their members/shareholders or establish sustainable linkages with input suppliers, output buyers, specialized agro-technology service providers, microfinancers and banks; and they are able to make their voice heard in policymaking processes. Smallholder organizations become the main vehicles for scaling up and IFAD's strategy is to facilitate them in expanding their own operations.

Scaling up pathways

IFAD's accumulated experience indicates that where there is clear evidence that an approach or tool has worked, it is easy to secure commitment for replication on a larger scale from local and national supporters and policymakers. This type of capacity development can be slow and complex and usually requires long-term efforts and in-depth reflection on an organization's culture, values and vision. IFAD can help grass-roots organizations to achieve results beyond the direct impacts of IFAD-financed projects by advocating for the introduction of enabling policies; brokering knowledge and leveraging wider investment resources from other development partners (public/private) and smallholders themselves; and mainstreaming analysis of successful tools into the programme/project design and implementation process.



Figure 1: The scaling-up process for grass-roots organizations

Policy engagement

Understanding the policy and legal frameworks within which grass-roots organizations operate helps ensure realistic targets regarding the momentum of and scope for expanding the organizations' operational capacities. Some elements of the enabling environment, such as cultural factors and triggers that motivate local people's willingness to organize themselves and cooperate with each other, depend on the geographical context. It is also important to understand the extent to which policies are effectively implemented on the ground, far from the capital.

Legal recognition of smallholders as partners of the State in policymaking is a necessary element of the process and calls for mechanisms for facilitating policy dialogue, such as consultative forums or institutionalization (e.g. through chambers of agriculture). This enables government/private-sector actors and smallholder umbrella organizations to discuss the formulation and implementation of public policy, medium- and long-term development strategies, and sector regulations. The mutual understanding that emerges from this kind of dialogue can make policy implementation easier and more effective and inclusive.

There is usually a need to strengthen the motivation of rural people through both formal and informal channels, and to identify and work with champions who will advocate for suitable policy and legal change. As collaboration with other initiatives may result in important economies of scale, the IFAD model for development of grass-roots organizations can influence policy adjustment and similar initiatives (from governments, other development partners and the private sector) for expanding the organizational capacity of rural communities (Box 1).

It is essential to anticipate changes in policy and their potential impact on smallholder organizations. For example, electoral cycles in many countries are predictable and can be taken into account in the design and implementation of IFAD-supported initiatives for developing the capacities of grass-roots organizations. The aim is to create awareness within governments so that they are willing to facilitate the development of local autonomous structures with voice and at scale rather than viewing these structures as subversive. Programme implementers will need to gauge the degree of government support during their policy discussions for building ownership/conviction in the public administration and to ensure that there is space for these legitimate member-based movements to take charge of their development aspirations.

To maximize opportunities and minimize the effects of policy constraints on the establishment of grass-roots organizations, when defining activities that support scaling up, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the policy and legal context and political system in which the grass-roots organizations operate; the effectiveness of support from development partners in complementing policy dialogue processes; the decentralization and bureaucratic structures that will facilitate the gradual integration of grass-roots

Box 1: Ethiopia – Pastoral Community Development Programme (PCDP)

IFAD partnered with other donors to support PCDP. IFAD's interventions promoted a grass-roots model that enabled pastoral groups to be represented on development platforms where policy issues are discussed and development subprojects are prioritized. Working with partners enabled IFAD to achieve greater impact for many more rural pastoralists in Ethiopia than it could have reached through a single time-bound project. The IFAD-supported interventions helped empower communities, and pastoralists' representation on stakeholder platform committees provided a crucial means for them to secure funding from other actors. Policy dialogue on the development of pastoral areas is now established practice in Ethiopia as a result of IFAD's contribution. The spin-off benefits include more efficient country operations such as joint design, planning, supervision and implementation of PCDP phases II and III.

These improvements have resulted in expansion of PCDP's geographical outreach, accelerated implementation of the disaster risk management programme and intensified capacity-building of grass-roots institutions and organizations. More than 60 per cent of pastoral and agropastoral districts are covered by the programme. PCDP phase III targets all pastoral and agropastoral districts for community development in which a central element is replication of the grass-roots organizational model tested in previous phases. Phase III will also mainstream the approach as part of decentralization initiatives to help make the programme sustainable.

Achievements						
	Phase I		Phase II		Phase III	
Funding (US\$million)	IFAD	20	IFAD	39	IFAD	85
	WB	40	WB	80	WB	100
	GoE	-	GoE	5	GoE	5
	Ben.	-	Ben.	14.7	Ben.	13.2
Coverage (no. of <i>woreda</i>)	32		55		107	
No. of pastoralists benefiting	600,000		1,900,000		4,700,000	
No. of subprojects	1,412		2,417		4,650	

Ben. = beneficiaries; GoE = Government of Ethiopia; WB = World Bank

organizations into local-level planning and implementation of development programmes; and people's needs and rights. It is also critical to take into account both informal and formal relationships, including power relations. The policy and legal environment should, therefore, be constantly observed and adjustments made according to changing circumstances. Adjustments can include:

- supporting policy dialogue – with both projects and the country programme manager playing central roles – reversing policies that constrain the evolution of grass-roots organizations and engaging with actors (such as informal and formal political associations) that support conducive policies
- bringing on board potential champions from the public, private and civil society sectors, and looking for ways of winning over the opposition
- continuing to create opportunities as organizational capacities increase
- fostering partnerships with similar interventions that may complement the expansion of grass-roots organizations.

Knowledge generation and sharing

Successful solutions will vary from country to country and among project sites within a country, and activities will often require adaptation. However, most grass-roots organizations expand their capabilities in similar ways – whether they are informal SHGs, associations of farmers, self-managed cattle markets, thriving warehouse receipt systems, water users' associations, contractual arrangements between groups of small-scale farmers and supermarkets or multistakeholder platforms. An understanding of these differences and commonalities is part of the knowledge generated by IFAD's projects and used to inform scaling-up operations.

To ensure that smallholder organizations are sustainable, it is important to understand the different types of relationship that support their scaling up:

- bonding within and among smallholder organizations at the grass-roots level
- aggregation of smallholder organizations to form apex organizations at the meso and national levels
- linkages among smallholder organizations, apex organizations, public and private business and service providers and policymakers.

Bonding. The existence of close and trusting relations between rural men and women can be a critical precondition for their pursuit of common goals, as demonstrated by the India case study (Box 2). Mutual trust among small-scale farmers, fishers and forest users (through SHGs, local associations and cooperatives) enables collective action. By pooling resources and labour, smallholders can enhance their self-confidence and ability to analyse problems, make informed decisions and rise out of poverty. Trust and cohesion are the glue that facilitates organizational structures and enables organizations to establish bridges with other organizations in other locations. Bonding is promoted by capacity-building in leadership and visioning; democratic processes; governance systems that are transparent and accountable both downwards and upwards; technical and managerial capabilities of organization members and office bearers in performing their assigned roles; and inclusiveness and flexibility in adjusting to change.

Aggregation. Once they have bonded, smallholder organizations can build bridges to similar organizations to form larger and more powerful apex organizations such as unions, federations and networks. Apex organizations allow economies of scale and increase their members' negotiating power in policymaking processes and markets at the local, national and regional levels. This vertical aggregation enables organizations and their members to learn from each other and to pool their assets and competencies, resulting in access to better-quality information and fostering linkages with upstream public- and private-sector players. Aggregation is supported by technical assistance to facilitate the institutionalization of federation/association mechanisms; improvement of members' skills in developing strategic and operational plans, managing relationships within the federation and negotiating with upstream players; and provision of training on how federation/association boards and management structures should function in delivering services to clients.

Upstream linkages. Established apex organizations can connect to upstream entities ("vertical links"), which are generally actors in socially, politically and economically influential positions. Strong apex organizations can create market linkages with more powerful commercial partners through contractual arrangements, helping to secure more sustainable and predictable income flows for smallholders. An important feature of apex

organizations is that their members are professional associations within a value chain rather than individuals. Apex organizations can be supported in creating upstream linkages by helping to establish or strengthening existing inter-professional associations; and by coaching them on initiating and managing contracts that link them to other economic actors in agricultural commodity value chains – both upstream and downstream.

Project financing

Projects are an effective instrument for supporting grass-roots organizations. They provide financing for the gradual introduction of demand-led service provision, often complementing or building on local institutions and organizations rather than replacing them. Projects can ensure that poorer association members remain on board, particularly because the scaling-up process typically increases the number of meetings and other demands on individuals' time and resources, with the risk of the poorest being left out. The IFAD approach promotes democratic procedures in which organization leaders are encouraged to follow agreed rules and use existing mechanisms to improve the flow of information and reduce the risk of elite capture and lack of inclusiveness.

IFAD projects help smallholders carry out their own analysis and make their own decisions regarding capacity strengthening activities that they can adopt in pursuit of organizational opportunities. To guide this approach, tools² have been developed that support institutional and organizational analysis and capacity strengthening and guide the design teams and implementers of IFAD's country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) and projects.

Focused How To Do Notes³ are also available to guide the institutional and organizational analysis and capacity strengthening of smallholder organizations and the development of specific lines of business-related entities that projects can support – community-based microfinance organizations, community-based commodity organizations or community-based natural resource management organizations.

Box 2: Scaling up of self-help groups (SHGs) in India

IFAD has used the inclusive SHG model to empower rural women in India. The IFAD country programme has replicated this model in the Tamil Nadu Women's Development Project (TNWDP) and many other projects, such as the Maharashtra Rural Credit Project (MRCP) and the Tejaswini Rural Women's Empowerment Programme. SHGs have formed federations to facilitate inter-group borrowing, exchange of ideas, sharing of costs and lobbying for women's empowerment. Federations make important linkages to government and private-sector operators, and their formal registration ensures that they are recognized by banks, enabling them to borrow larger amounts of money.

The scaling up of SHGs through bonding, aggregation and upstream linkages has resulted in loans for agriculture that exceed the spending on agriculture in donor-funded programmes or the lending to agriculture by the formal financial sector. The approach has gone beyond its initial objective of channelling credit to the poor by becoming a national-level social empowerment movement for rural women. Not only has it been replicated by IFAD but it has also provided evidence that has led to wider adoption and more investment from state governments, other development actors and private-sector organizations replicating the process on a massive scale. The US\$6-billion National Rural Livelihoods Mission funded by the Indian Government and other donors is currently replicating the SHG approach nationally.

	Achievements					
	TNWDP		MRCP		Tejaswini	
Funding (US\$ million)	IFAD Gol	30.6 13.6	IFAD Gol UNDP WIF	48.3 16.6 2.0 0.5	State health departments Banks IFAD State governments NABARD	160.0 140.8 39.4 12.76 1.5
Coverage (districts)	3 – scaled up to 6 (by Gol)		12 (Maharashtra)		33 (Maharashtra), 6 MP	
No. of SHGs and federations created	SHGs 5,207		SHGs 9,000+ VLCs 1,503		SHGs 66,304 VLCs 8,647 CMRC 236	
No. of borrowers	Individuals	87,539	Individuals	155 374	SHGs 49,976	

CMRC = community-managed resource centre; Gol = Government of India; MP = Madhya Pradesh; NABARD = National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development; UNDP = United Nations Development Programme; VLC = village-level committee; WIF = Worldview International Foundation.

² IFAD. 2014a. *A field practitioner's guide: Institutional and organizational analysis and capacity strengthening*. Rome. <http://www.ifad.org/english/institutions/field.pdf>

³ IFAD. 2014b. *How To Do Note: Analyse and develop the social capital of smallholder organizations*. Rome; IFAD. 2014c. *How To Do Note: Strengthen community-based natural resource management organizations*. Rome; IFAD. 2014d. *How To Do Note: Support community-based financial organizations*. Rome; IFAD. 2014e. *How To Do Note: Strengthen commodity-based smallholder organizations*. Rome. <http://www.ifad.org/knotes/institution/index.htm>

Knowledge management is a critical aspect of the project implementation approach. An understanding of what works and what does not, and why, is a precondition for flexibility during implementation and for evidence-based policy engagement and scaling up later on. The challenge is to ensure that projects are structured in ways that make this happen.

Flexibility. When a project starts, the capacity level of the smallholder organizations involved can vary, depending on the context in which they operate. It is, therefore, important to exercise flexibility in the sequencing and timing of activities. For instance, it is first essential to build robust smallholder organizations; rural organizations that have been created by government or other development actors without establishing social cohesion and trust (bonding) have often been disbanded when projects end. In addition, putting money into the hands of weak organizations is not a sustainable and scalable solution. This strengthening can be followed by encouraging financial inclusion, initially through savings and linkages to microfinance organizations (microfinance institutions and banks), followed by actions for brokering access to assets, land, equipment, technology and – eventually – markets and private-sector actors once the organizations have achieved the necessary level of scale (aggregation). As organizations will need different types of support at different stages in this expansion process, it is important not to impose rigid overarching guidelines but instead to embrace flexibility,⁴ as described in Box 3.

Facilitation capacity. To implement capacity-building activities using the gradual approach, a variety of technical and facilitation skills are needed from service providers, along with financial inputs (e.g. from projects supported by government and public or private development actors). IFAD’s projects focus on helping service providers to be not only problem solvers and activity implementers but also facilitators of institutional and organizational improvements that build on smallholders’ strengths to enhance their problem-solving ability. This requires that organizational promoters have skills in serving as “catalysts” through a mix of methods such as coaching, mentoring, counselling, on-the-job training and advising on processes. These organizational skills complement the technical skills needed for smallholders to engage in profitable agricultural development activities.

Box 3: Expanding institutional and organizational space in Ghana

The Ghana Rural Enterprise Project (REP) illustrates how the creation of space for grass-roots organizations through a gradual and flexible approach has been the main pathway for scaling up all phases of the REP phases I, II and III. The business administration centres (BACs) are major achievements and the expansion of the BAC system into a nationwide network is a remarkable scaling-up effort that has created many jobs for rural poor people. The three phases of REP in Ghana focus on institutional and organizational strengthening.

REP phases I and II made a significant contribution by providing operational models that guide institutional and organizational changes at the local level. The main objective of REP phase III is to organize the BACs into district structures that are able to take over activities in strengthening locally organized entrepreneurs when the IFAD programme closes.

IFAD’s involvement in REP phase III is carefully articulated and numerous capacity-building measures are planned to make the project sustainable as it starts to operate on a national scale after IFAD withdraws.

Achievements	
Funding	IFAD: US\$50,400,000 AfDB: US\$156,700,000
Coverage	79 districts
No. of functioning BACs	198
No. of people trained	280,452
No. of operational bank accounts	47,200
No. of operating SMEs	38,000
No. of operating MSEs	5,000
No. of wage jobs created	142,895

AfDB = African Development Bank.

Key spaces for scaling up

Grass-roots organizational capacity cannot be scaled up in a vacuum – rather it is driven by opportunities in one or more spaces through innovations in processes, enabling policy, technology, political leadership, and cultural and fiscal spaces.

⁴ Diversity needs to be recognized in livelihood needs (e.g. more income or food), capabilities (e.g. limited land and labour of woman-headed households), interests (youth/elderly and men/women) and levels of organizational maturity. Members will also differ with respect to the time they can dedicate to participating in community-based organizations; intra-household constraints may include husbands not allowing their wives to do so.

Political space

A major driver of the scaling up of smallholder organizations is the existence of supportive national and local policies and leadership that influence the enhancement of institutional and organizational capabilities at the grass-roots as a key ingredient in rural economic transformation. Political will is an important element in allowing the creation or strengthening of grass-roots organizations, which are seen as supportive of development rather than politically adversarial.

Institutional space

The main types of organization that are conducive to scaling up are: (i) savings and loan groups (affinity-based); (ii) commodity-based market organizations (e.g. cooperatives driven by value chains); and (iii) natural resource-based organizations (for water users, forestry, range management, etc.). Once they grow and achieve scale, these organizations crowd-in banks, large agrobusiness players, produce buyers and service providers in livestock/crop technology and insurance, which become the main drivers/champions of the scaling-up strategy. Committed civic leaders are important champions in encouraging investments in skills enhancement for poor farmers and inspiring smallholder farmers to organize themselves to benefit from development opportunities.

Technical and innovation space

Technologies and innovations also foster grass-roots organization. Innovations can take the form of mechanisms for access to input and output markets, infrastructure (roads/physical markets), pro-poor microcredit products and mobile technology, which is an excellent driver of financial inclusion and competition in agro-technology. Smallholders have incentives to take advantage of the opportunities brought by these innovations.

Financial/fiscal space

All the other spaces are reinforced by the availability of funding to support the scaling up of capacity strengthening processes for smallholder organizations, particularly when financing productive assets alongside the capacity-building. Funds can be mobilized from government, donors and/or private and civil society actors. However, most of the resources that make scaling up possible will come from rural organizations themselves and the private sector. Increasing scale at the grass-roots level will be the main driver in the mobilization of additional resources and on the pathway to sustainability.

Monitoring and evaluation

A well-structured monitoring and evaluation system is a precondition for effective knowledge management. In programmes and projects, specific quantitative indicators are monitored at the output level, while qualitative indicators relating to governance, management, leadership, capacity-building mechanism and resilience are tracked every two years at the outcome level. All these results are monitored against baselines to determine the extent to which outputs and outcomes are contributing to changes in individual attitudes/mindsets and organizational structure, and how these changes are in turn contributing to the functioning of organizational systems (decision-making, electoral processes, procurement, financial management, communication and service delivery).

Additional indicators will be needed to gauge the extent to which smallholder institutions are reaching scale and leveraging additional investments, savings, credit, inputs, services, etc. Projects will need to measure the capacity of these institutions to crowd-in partners and service providers and become tools for extending services to their own members.

Key messages

- IFAD's comparative advantage is its ability to build strong inclusive organizations for the poor, which can become important partners for governments, NGOs, donors and private-sector actors seeking new markets.
- IFAD is able to achieve impact beyond its reach through knowledge brokerage and policy dialogue; leveraging of wider investment resources from partners; and provision of tools for programme/project design and implementation.

- Legal recognition of smallholders' rights to organize and to be partners of the State in the policymaking process is an essential step in promoting ownership and implementing medium- and long-term development strategies.
- Once grass-roots organizations achieve scale, they crowd-in upstream players such as banks, agrobusiness players, produce buyers and service providers in livestock/crop technology and insurance, which are the main drivers/champions of the scaling-up strategy. Scaling up of results will need to be sustained by the beneficiaries themselves.
- Assisting grass-roots organizations in expanding their operations requires development of specific skills in serving as catalysts through a mix of methods such as coaching, mentoring, counselling, on-the-job training and advising on processes.

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