



Investing in rural people

Engagement with smallholder farmers' organizations in IFAD operations

IMPACTS AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA REGION

**Sustainable Production, Markets and Institutions Division
East and Southern Africa Region**

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Abbreviations and acronyms

4Ps	public-private-producer partnerships
ACE	area cooperative enterprise
AROPA	Support to Farmers' Professional Organizations and Agricultural Services Project
ASDP-L	Agricultural Sector Development Programme–Livestock
CBFO	community-based financial organization
COSOP	country strategic opportunities programme
EAFF	Eastern African Farmers Federation
e-Granary	e-Granary Innovative Mobile Platform to Deliver Economic Services to Farmers in East Africa
ESA	East and Southern Africa
E-SLIP	Enhanced Smallholder Livestock Programme
FARMSE	Financial Access for Rural Markets, Smallholders and Enterprise Programme
FO4ACP	Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific
FReMP	Fisheries Resources Management Programme
IADP	Integrated Agriculture Development Project
IRFITCO	Improving Rural Financial Inclusion Through Cooperatives
KCEP-CRAL	Kenya Cereal Enhancement Programme Climate Resilient Agricultural Livelihoods Window
KIIWP	Kayonza Irrigation and Integrated Watershed Management Project
LNWMGA	Lesotho National Wool and Mohair Growers Association
MIVARF	Marketing Infrastructure, Value Addition and Rural Finance Support Programme
MVIWATA	Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania (National Network of Small-Scale Farmers Groups in Tanzania)
NAP	National Agriculture Project (Eritrea)
NFO	national farmer organization
O&M	operation and maintenance
NSO	non-sovereign operations
PAIVA-B	Agricultural Intensification and Value-enhancing Support Project
PASIDP II	Participatory Small-Scale Irrigation Development Programme – Phase II
PASP	Climate-Resilient Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project
PRELNOR	Restoration of Livelihoods in the Northern Region
PRICE	Project for Rural Income through Exports
PRIDE	Programme for Rural Irrigation Development
PRODEFI II	Value Chain Development Programme Phase II
PROFIT	Programme for Rural Outreach of Financial Innovations and Technologies
PROMR	Rural Recovery and Development Programme
PropESCA	Artisanal Fisheries Promotion Project

PROSUL	Pro-poor Value Chain Development Project in the Maputo and Limpopo Corridors
RDDP	Rwanda Dairy Development Project
RLEEP	Rural Livelihoods and Economic Enhancement Programme
RFO	regional farmer organization
RUFEP	Rural Finance Expansion Programme
RUFIP	Rural Financial Intermediation Programme
RUSACCO	rural savings and credit cooperative
S3P	Smallholder Productivity Promotion Programme
SACAU	Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions
SACCO	savings and credit cooperative
SAMAP	Smallholder Agriculture Development and Commercialization Project
SAPP	Sustainable Agricultural Production Programme
SDCP	Smallholder Dairy Commercialization Programme
SFO	smallholder farmers' organization
SFOAP	Support to Farmers Organizations in Africa Programme
SHoMAP	Smallholder Horticulture Marketing Programme
SMLP	Smallholder Market-led Project
SREP	Smallholder Resilience Enhancement Project
SIRP	Smallholder Irrigation Revitalization Project
SYAF	Scaling Up Rural Youth Access to Inclusive Financial Services for Entrepreneurship and Employment
UCA	Uganda Cooperative Alliance
UTaNRMP	Upper Tana Catchment Natural Resource Management Project
VODP2	Vegetable Oil Development Project – Phase 2
WAMPP	Wool and Mohair Promotion Project
WRUA	water-resource users' association
WUA	water user association



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Executive summary

Background. Smallholder farmers' organizations (SFOs) are autonomous membership-based organizations of smallholder producers within a specific geographic area. They are entities structured at different levels – community, subregional, regional, national and global level. SFOs are central to IFAD's work to "increase poor rural people's benefits from market participation", and are one of the thematic areas of IFAD's Strategic Framework 2016-2025.¹ They play an important role in supporting smallholder farmers to secure markets, access finance, knowledge and advisory services, protect natural resources, improve advocacy and influence policies.

A significant share of IFAD's investments has incorporated diverse interventions that support or engage SFOs to enable them to contribute effectively to sustainable and inclusive growth that supports the livelihoods and welfare of smallholder farmers. Fostering the organizational structures and operational capacities of SFOs has become a fundamental part of IFAD's programme of loans and grants. The underlying aim is to transform SFOs into well-functioning professional organizations by giving them opportunities to expand and strengthen the services they provide to their members (such as access to market and financial services) and effectively undertake collective actions to influence policy and processes of change, while also enabling them to manage public goods (such as natural resources and infrastructure).

Integrating SFOs as beneficiaries or partners into the delivery of IFAD's programmes requires effectiveness and impacts in key operational elements:

1 <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/publication/asset/39369820>

(i) targeting operations to reach and benefit a range of target groups, including youth, women and rural poor people; (ii) enhancing relevance of projects; (iii) increasing impacts of interventions; (iv) policy engagement and empowerment; (v) business partnerships along the value chains; (vi) sustainability of interventions, and (vii) fast project start-up for greater outreach and impacts.

Objectives and approach. This study was conducted to document lessons and impacts deriving from engagement with SFOs in IFAD operations in the East and Southern Africa (ESA) region. It aims to develop a general understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with integrating SFOs into IFAD-financed projects in the region. Specifically, the study presents typology of SFOs, describes approaches and models that have been adopted to facilitate the engagement of SFOs in ESA projects, documents impacts and lessons from ongoing and completed projects, and identifies project design gaps and opportunities to build on to ensure effective support to SFOs through IFAD operations. It concludes by recommending ways to improve the design of IFAD operations with a view to achieving sustainable transformation of smallholder farmers through their organizations. The study draws on information gathered through a desk review of IFAD projects in the ESA region, complemented by a field survey that covered 27 projects (23 ongoing and 4 completed projects) in 13 countries in the region. The desk review assessed information from project design reports, supervision reports, midterm reviews and project completion reports from 32 projects, covering the 2005-2016 period. The selection of projects reviewed includes various types of SFO participation (as beneficiary, partner, or both), projects with adequate implementation duration and satisfactory documentation of lessons and impacts, and projects with different operational/administrative levels of SFO engagement (community, national or regional).

Limitations. The key operational project documents reviewed (supervision reports, midterm reviews and completion reports) had insufficient information to support informed assessment of the level of SFO participation in projects, impacts achieved and lessons learned. The main reason for this is that SFO interventions in most projects are embedded in subcomponents without specific indicators to track them; hence they do not receive attention when results are reported at component level.

The report includes seven sections, which present: (i) an introduction to the background and objectives of the study; (ii) an overview of the typology of SFOs involved in IFAD projects in ESA, with examples from selected projects ranging from community-based farmer groups and associations to apex organizations at both national and regional levels; (iii) engagement with SFOs in IFAD projects, presenting types of interventions supporting SFOs with specific focus on strengthening empowerment and sustainability, followed by presentation of three SFOs engagement models: SFOs as actors in value chains, SFOs as advisory service providers, and SFOs as project partners and cofinancers through apex organizations; (iv) impacts and benefits of SFO engagement in IFAD projects; (v) lessons learned, outlining challenges, gaps and constraints that limit the performance and transformation of SFOs and key lessons drawn from the desk review and survey findings; (vi) issues and gaps in project design, pointing to what needs to be done differently to strengthen impacts from projects supporting SFOs, and (vii) conclusions and recommendations, highlighting key findings and areas that will need attention in the future.

Main findings. The survey established that the SFOs commonly engaged in IFAD operations are farmer/producer groups/associations, youth/women-based groups, farmer field schools and primary cooperative societies. Natural resources management groups, village saving and loans groups and community-based seed producers may also be involved. The project operational reports reveal substantial focus on interventions to strengthen the empowerment and sustainability of SFOs in the region. The use of participatory approaches in the identification and implementation of project interventions, and access to finance, are indicated as the most important drivers of SFO empowerment. A number of projects have also included interventions to strengthen the sustainability of SFOs through institutional development and capacity-building on governance, improving business planning and management skills, building sustainable financing mechanisms and lobbying for legal status.

Diverse engagement models have been deployed to support SFOs through operations in ESA using various approaches. The model commonly deployed by several projects integrates smallholder farmers into commodity supply chains to improve their access to markets and other support services, such as access to finance, technologies and skills. Other models include engagement of SFOs to provide advisory services through learning groups such as farmer field schools to introduce and disseminate improved farming practices. The national farmer organizations (NFOs) and regional farmer organizations (RFOs), also known as apex organizations, are also integrated into IFAD projects as implementing partners or co-financiers to aid the forming of partnerships between IFAD and farmers' organizations, while supporting them to build their institutional capacity and their ability to deliver economic services and benefits to smallholder producers.

The study also pointed out some key benefits and impacts attributed to SFO engagement and support through IFAD operations. The key impacts identified are: improved productivity; improved governance structure; increased volume of sales and profitability; increased incomes of SFO members; improved economic services to smallholder farmers; and increased access to affordable finances.

The study highlights some gaps in the activities of SFOs and constraints to their transformation to professional, business-oriented institutions in a position to offer viable economic services to smallholder farmers in a sustainable manner. These include inadequate finance, insufficient business skills, limited economies of scale and limited integration of SFOs as active actors in value chains. In addition, the study draws lessons from ongoing and completed projects in ESA, focusing on key parameters linked to the sustainability of SFOs, their socio-economic empowerment, strategic partnerships (for example with the private sector) and access to markets and finance.

The report provides some ideas to shape the design of IFAD country strategies and projects in order to enhance their impacts on the transformation of smallholder farmers. These include: (i) involving SFOs in the formulation of country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) and in project design to increase their influence on the relevance of country programmes; (ii) conducting institutional analysis as part of project design to identify institutional gaps that need to be addressed to strengthen SFOs; (iii) applying tools that ensure proper



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targeting of the most vulnerable groups; (iv) addressing the socio-economic factors that reduce social inclusion in projects involving SFOs; (v) putting more emphasis on interventions to strengthen partnerships between SFOs and the private sector in value chain projects; (vi) establishing sustainable funding mechanisms for SFOs to augment their capacity to serve the targeted project beneficiaries more effectively and in a sustainable manner, and (vii) integrating coaching and mentoring by business service providers into project design as an integral part of project interventions to strengthen SFO agribusiness skills.

Conclusions and recommendations. The study draws the following conclusions and recommendations:

- **IFAD-financed projects integrate an array of SFOs in the ESA region** at different operational levels. This is a clear confirmation of IFAD's commitment to leverage the potential and opportunities presented by SFOs to deliver more to smallholder farmers, through their organizations, in line with its 2016-2025 strategic framework.
- **IFAD projects in the region implement a range of interventions to empower SFOs in the delivery of economic services.** For all types of SFO, substantial investment has gone to interventions aimed at strengthening their capacity for advocacy and lobbying, policy engagement and dialogue; developing organizational and governance systems; facilitating processes to acquire legal status; and building sustainable financing mechanisms. Agribusiness development and finance for commercialization have received limited attention. Future support to SFOs should focus on enhancing the quality of agribusiness services and target SFOs (especially commodity-based apex organizations) that present potential for accessing finance under IFAD's new private sector funding programme to strengthen their business capacity and outreach to smallholder farmers. For example, the preliminary lessons from ongoing non-sovereign operations (NSOs) in the region should be used to identify potential opportunities for including SFOs in the NSOs pipeline. Scope for integrating SFOs at retail level for the Green Climate Fund, and



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participation in the Agribusiness Capital (ABC) Fund and Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP+) financing spaces should also be explored.

- **The value chain approach is one of several instruments that are widely used to support integration of SFOs through IFAD investments in ESA.** The value chain approach, used in conjunction with the public-private-producer partnership (4Ps) model, tends to generate significant impacts and offer sustainability prospects. Together, they have helped to forge business relationships between SFO members and other value chain actors, such as input suppliers, commodity traders, food processors, financial institutions and service providers. ESA will need to position itself to build on these efforts by investing in innovative business models that offer transformative commercial opportunities for smallholders through their organizations. Important elements such as agribusiness skills, economies of scale and a conducive business environment would need to be developed further as part of the SFO capacity development agenda.
- **SFOs serve as advisory service providers, whereby farmer groups, associations and cooperatives facilitate smallholder farmers' access to productivity-enhancing farming technologies and practices.** The farmer field schools approach is commonly used to introduce and disseminate improved farming practices, innovations and business skills. To enhance the efficiency, outreach and impacts of farmer field schools, ESA could benefit from investing in the digitalization of field school processes, building on lessons drawn from the Rural Poor Stimulus Facility experience in digitalizing extension services in response to movement restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **National farmer organizations (NFOs) and regional farmer organizations (RFOs) have played a significant role as project partners.** Some of the apex organizations have cofinanced and managed project implementation, contributing to increased ownership and sustainability of projects. The actual

capacity of NFOs/RFOs to manage and implement projects is, however, in some cases overestimated, especially on fiduciary and specialized technical topics. To minimize risk, IFAD should provide continuous tailor-made, hands-on, implementation support to NFO/RFO partners throughout the project period to build capacity where skill gaps have been identified. Furthermore, engagement with apex organizations as partners in project execution in the ESA region (and elsewhere) will need deeper assessment so that lessons can be drawn to inform IFAD's strategic approach in the future.

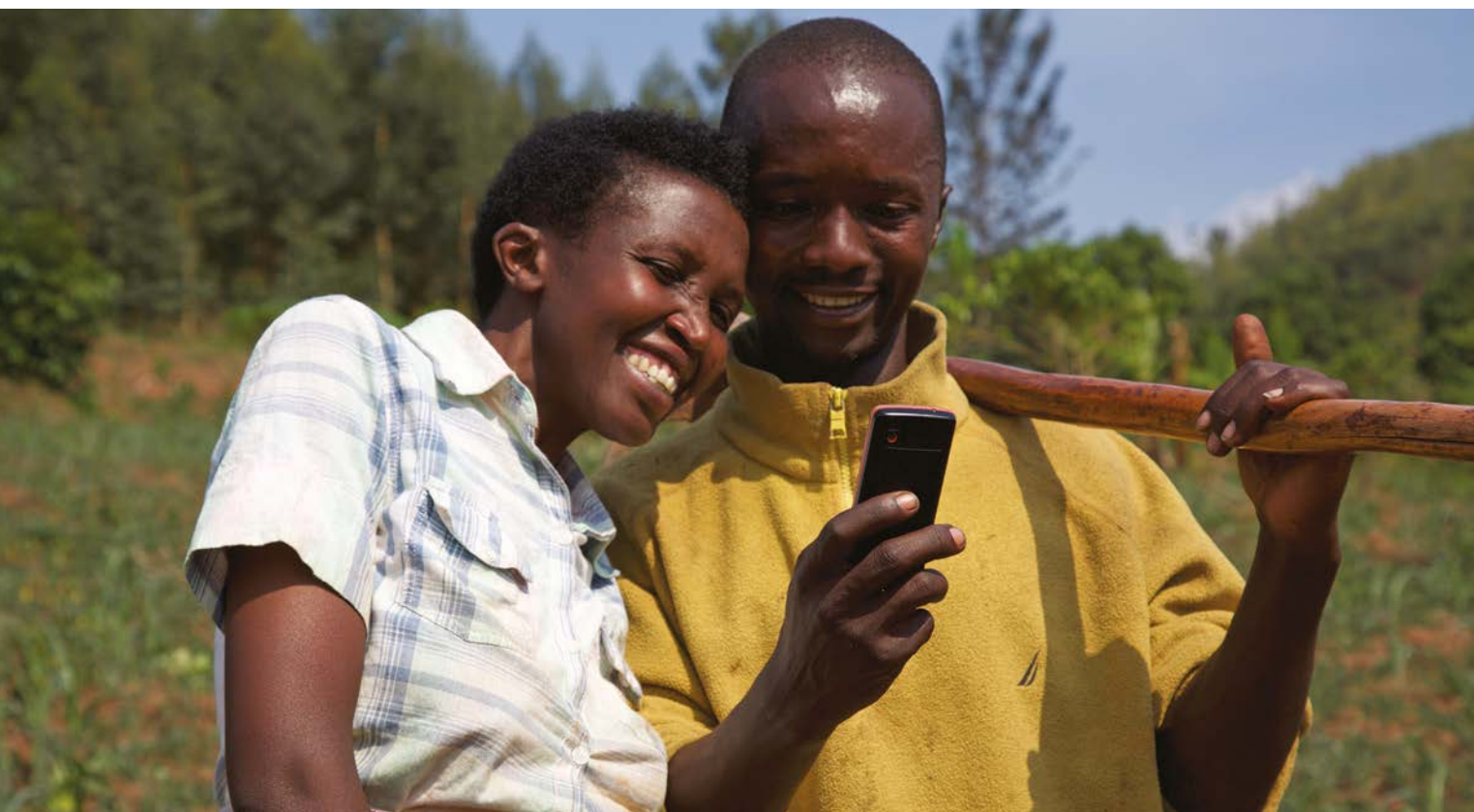
- **SFO operations are constrained by limitations in access to finance, business skills and economies of scale, and by limited integration of SFOs in selected value chains.** The lack of agribusiness skills and access to sustainable finance hampers the ability of SFOs to provide quality services to their members and to build sustainable partnerships with other value chain actors. In addition, inadequate allocation of resources for empowerment interventions, failure to identify empowerment interventions at the design stage and short project duration all contribute to reducing empowerment outcomes. In future, the design of solutions to accelerate the transformation of SFOs should place greater attention on overcoming these obstacles, particularly by building capacity to deliver agribusiness services to smallholder farmers in a professional and efficient manner. More emphasis also needs to be placed on interventions that support SFOs to address context-specific gaps, while offering coaching and mentoring by specialized business service providers, including services from agri-agency partners already working with IFAD; and expanding the engagement of apex commodity SFOs to increase smallholders' trade volumes.
- **Significant impacts have been generated by projects supporting SFOs in ESA.** Some of the projects have recorded impacts such as improved productivity, improved governance structure, increased volume of sales, profitability and income of SFO members, improved economic services to smallholder farmers and increased access to affordable finance. Other impacts



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identified are improved SFO engagement in policy dialogue, expanded investments in small enterprises, and improved social inclusion and quality of life for SFO members. In order to achieve significant results and greater impacts, the next generation of projects should build strategically on these achievements. The points of engagement with specific SFOs should be clearly defined, based on the observed capacity, organizational and operational structure, level of maturity in terms of readiness to deliver business services, and ability to forge relevant commercial partnerships with other private sector entities.

- **Building sustainable SFOs requires institutional development, through the establishment of robust organizational and governance structures.** It is important to conduct institutional analysis as part of project design, firstly to identify priority intervention areas and capacity gaps and how to address them, and secondly to assess the level of readiness to deliver relevant agribusiness services. Institutional development should be an integral part of the project monitoring and evaluation framework, with specific indicators for tracking progress towards achieving desired organizational systems and structures that will facilitate SFOs in delivering on their mandates, effectively and efficiently.
- **Involvement of SFOs in the formulation of COSOPs and in project design is still inadequate.** Targeted consultations with SFOs and their active participation in the formulation of COSOPs and in project design is of paramount importance both to increase their influence on IFAD's strategic agenda at country level and to ensure that the priorities of food producers inform the country's five-year investment vision. SFO participation in project design as partners is equally important to ensure that the proposed project target groups and interventions respond well to the constraints, challenges and investment priorities associated with the transformation of all categories of smallholder producers.
- **Project designs need to integrate SFOs as drivers of resilient, inclusive and equitable rural development.** The project design framework, proposed theory of change and subsequent interventions should all embrace innovative business models that support the capacity of SFOs at local and apex levels to deliver or facilitate agribusiness services to a critical mass of smallholder farmers. At the same time, project design models should aim at increasing the responsiveness of producer organizations to market demands for quality, delivery volumes and timeliness. Financial cooperatives, such as savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs) should be supported to build their financial base and take a leap to provide innovative financial services in partnership with commercial financial institutions and community financial service providers, such as microfinance institutions. In addition, projects should put in place systems to manage and sustain services offered to project beneficiaries by community-based organizations.



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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Smallholder farmers' organizations (SFOs) are autonomous membership-based organizations of smallholder producers within a specific geographic area. They are structured entities at different levels – grass roots/community, subregional, regional, national and global. National and regional farmers' organizations may also be referred to as apex organizations. In most cases, SFOs are organized either on the basis of a commodity/enterprise, such as commodity producer associations/organizations/groups, or on a functional basis, such as water user associations (WUAs), natural resources management groups, saving and loans groups, primary cooperatives and their unions and federations (IFAD 2016).²

SFOs (also referred to as rural institutions) are central to IFAD's work to "increase poor rural people's benefits from market participation". They form one of the four thematic areas of the second strategic objective (SO2) of the IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025.³ SFOs are recognized for their ability to enable IFAD's target groups to secure access to production, markets and natural resources services, and to build skills and knowledge. They are also important vehicles to achieve economies of scale, take advantage of economic opportunities and raise smallholder farmers' voices to increase their influence on policy and important national, regional and global debates and processes. A significant share of IFAD's investments have incorporated interventions that engage and support SFOs to enable them to contribute effectively to sustainable

2 Adapted from IFAD Toolkit: Engaging with farmers' organizations for more effective smallholder development.

3 <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/publication/asset/39369820>

and inclusive growth that impacts on the livelihoods of smallholder farmers. IFAD support to SFOs recognizes that smallholder organizations: (i) are effective and sustainable instruments for the delivery of project goods and services that target poor smallholder producers; (ii) support the achievement of project outreach targets, attain social inclusion and sustainable rural transformation outcomes through mobilization of smallholders for joint actions in project interventions; and (iii) offer space and means for economic transformation to poor and marginalized smallholder farmers by providing inclusive opportunities for SFO members to access economic services in rural areas. Fostering the organizational structures and operational capacities of SFOs has become a fundamental part of IFAD's programme of loans and grants. The aim is to transform the SFOs into well-functioning professional organizations by providing them with opportunities for (i) expanding and strengthening their services to members, such as access to market and financial services; (ii) effectively undertaking collective actions to influence policy and processes of change; and (iii) enabling them to manage public goods, such as natural resources and infrastructures.

Integrating SFOs as beneficiaries or partners in the delivery of IFAD's programmes contributes to their development effectiveness and impacts, driven by the following key operational elements:⁴

- **Targeting of operations.** Working with SFOs ensures better targeting of IFAD support and more transformative impacts. They are key to ensuring that projects and programmes reach and benefit their target groups, including youth, women and other marginalized and vulnerable groups. SFOs bring together smallholders who represent rural poor people (IFAD's target group) and share a commitment to reducing rural poverty, thus enhancing ownership and sustainability of programmes.
- **Relevance of projects.** Smallholder organizations constitute a key entry point to understanding the needs of smallholders and defining their priorities in terms of rural and agricultural development in a specific area. Partnership with them is thus relevant for adapting project activities to smallholders' needs and ensuring their contextual relevance.
- **Impact of interventions.** SFOs enable smallholder farmers to increase production and productivity through increased access to improved technologies and inputs. They also enable them to create important economies of scale through aggregation and better management of their produce and to gainfully participate in markets by linking them to market opportunities on better trade terms. In addition, SFOs facilitate smallholders' control over value-addition segments of value chains, thus increasing the impacts on incomes and overall economic benefits for smallholder farmers.
- **Policy engagement and empowerment.** SFOs play a role in representing their members' interests in trade negotiations with various value chain actors, in discussing important policy issues with government authorities and other development partners at national and regional level, and in engaging in global initiatives and consultations. In so doing, they promote empowerment,

4 How To Do Note: Engaging with farmers' organizations for more effective smallholder development.

inclusiveness, better governance, policies and institutions for greater impacts in agriculture and rural development.

- **Business partnerships.** SFOs are important business partners as they can increase the volume and quality of produce, thus facilitating the smooth and efficient functioning of supply chains. In addition, SFOs enable smallholders to build business partnerships along the value chains in tandem with facilitating access to economic services, such as access to inputs, storage facilities and credit; collective marketing; and agricultural advisory services.
- **Sustainability of interventions.** SFOs are rooted in rural development and in the economic, political and social dynamics of individual countries. It is therefore essential to engage them in planning, implementing and monitoring development programmes to foster achievement of sustainability of interventions.
- **Fast project start-ups.** SFOs offer strategic opportunities for IFAD interventions to realize fast project implementation start-ups, achieve optimal project implementation duration, greater beneficiary outreach and transformatize impacts.

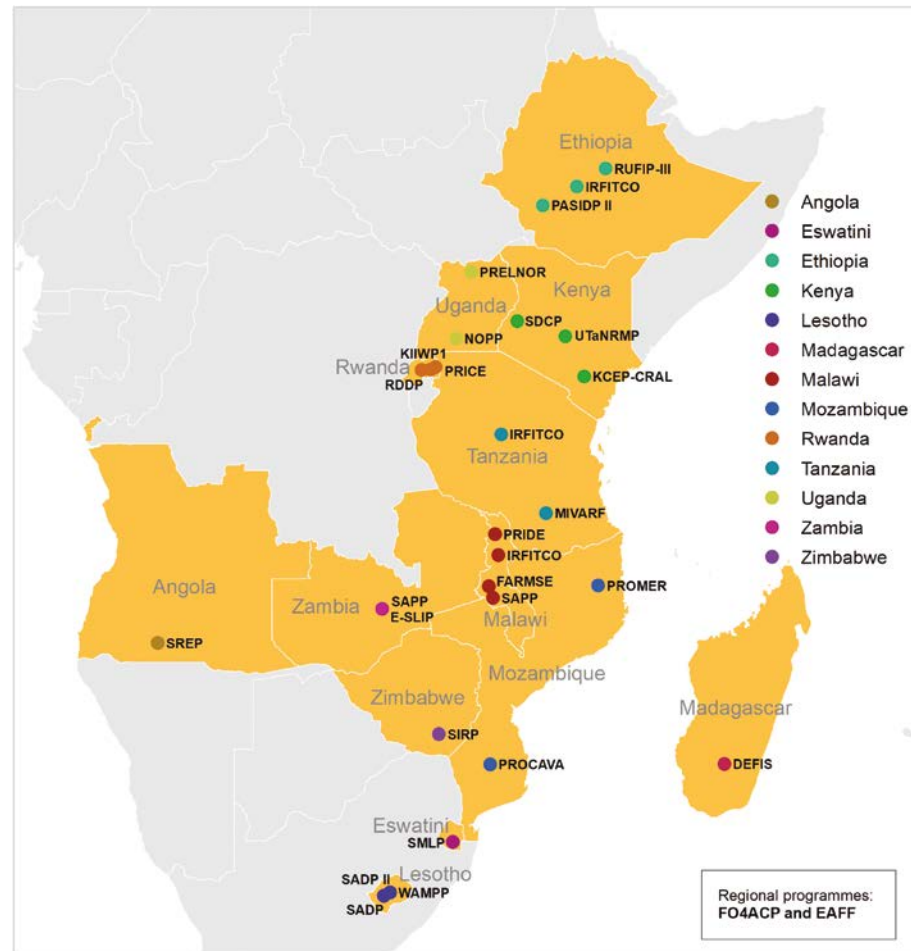
1.2 Objectives of the study and structure of the report

Objectives. The main objective of the study is to develop a general understanding of the scope, challenges and opportunities associated with integrating SFOs into IFAD-financed projects in the East and Southern Africa (ESA) region. More specifically, the aim is to: (i) describe approaches or models adopted to facilitate SFO engagement in ESA projects; (ii) document impacts and lessons from ongoing and completed projects; (iii) identify gaps and opportunities to build on to ensure effective support to SFOs through IFAD operations; and (iv) recommend ways to improve the design of IFAD operations for the sustainable transformation of smallholder farmers through their organizations.

Approach. The study is based on information gathered from projects in 13 countries in ESA (figure 1) through a desk review of 32 ongoing and completed IFAD projects in the region (annex 2), complemented by a remote survey conducted through the questionnaire to 27 project teams. The selection of projects for study ensured inclusion of: (i) projects representing different types of SFO participation (as beneficiary, partner or both); (ii) projects with adequate implementation duration and adequate documentation to capture lessons and impacts; and (iii) projects with different operational/administrative levels of SFO engagement (community, national or regional).

The desk review gathered information from project design reports, supervision reports, midterm review reports and project completion reports for the period 2005-2016. The remote survey collected additional information on various aspects of SFO engagement, particularly impacts and lessons; types of interventions and models used; sustainability and empowerment of SFOs; and partnership-building. The questionnaire used for the survey included statements for respondents to indicate their opinions and open-ended questions to address specific operational aspects of SFO engagement (annex 3).

Figure 1: Countries and projects/programmes covered by the survey



Limitations. The key operational documents reviewed (supervision reports, midterm review reports and completion reports) had insufficient information to support informed assessment of the level of SFO participation in projects and impacts achieved and lessons learned. The main reason for this is that the SFO interventions in most projects are embedded in subcomponents without specific indicators to track them and they do not receive attention when reporting results and lessons at component level.

Report structure. Section 2 of the report presents typology of SFOs highlighting different types of SFO in ESA and provides examples from selected country/projects in the region. Section 3 presents the engagement of SFOs in ESA projects, outlining types of interventions supporting SFOs and three models used for engagement with SFOs. Section 4 presents the salient impacts and benefits from SFO engagement in IFAD projects; section 5 outlines lessons learned including constraints and gaps in SFO transformation. Section 6 presents recommendations for project design, pointing to what needs to be done differently in designing projects supporting SFOs, and section 7 presents key conclusions and recommendations. Text boxes are used to present cases that illustrate specific engagement models, impacts and lessons.



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2. Typology of smallholder farmers' organizations in East and Southern Africa

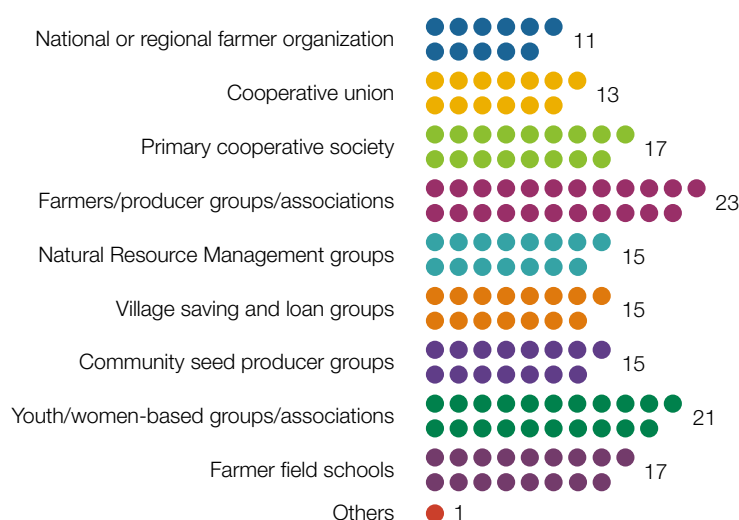
Annex 2 presents projects in ESA that integrated different types of SFOs as project beneficiaries and/or as implementation partners. The SFOs in the region range from community-based organizations to apex organizations at national and regional levels (table 1). In most cases, the organizations are formed voluntarily to enhance their economic and social empowerment and cohesion for collective actions and policy influence at different levels. Most of the national, subregional and regional SFOs are registered under the governing laws of relevant jurisdictions and operate as legal entities with their mandates and operational roles regulated and defined by a constitution.

Figure 2 presents the distribution of different types of SFOs supported by IFAD operations in ESA (n=27). Farmer/producer groups, youth/women-based groups, farmer field schools and primary cooperative societies represent the majority of SFOs, constituting 85 per cent, 77.8 per cent, 62.9 per cent and 62.9 per cent of projects, respectively. Other common SFOs include natural resources management groups, village saving and loans groups and community-based seed producers. The broad SFO typologies are discussed in the sections that follow.

Table 1: Typology of smallholder farmer organizations in ESA

SFO category	Main features	Roles
Smallholder farmer/ producer groups	Formal or informal common interest groups of 10-20 members, formed voluntarily by members or mobilized by development partners at community level to facilitate efficient delivery of services to producers	Offering advisory services on good agricultural practices, linkage with input suppliers (seeds and fertilizers), access to financial services, linkage to markets (processors and traders) and delivery of capacity-building and joint learning
Commodity producer organizations	Enterprise-based producer organizations that promote and safeguard the interests of their members for specific commodities, such as cereals, legumes, horticultural crops, coffee, tea and livestock	Facilitating integration of their members into commodity value chains. Through commodity-based organizations, smallholder farmers are able to access input and output markets, financial services, storage and processing facilities, and negotiate for better prices with commodity offtakers
Natural resources management associations	Elected community institutions responsible for overseeing management and utilization of natural resources (with legal status in some cases)	Responsible for natural resources management, such as watershed/ catchment management, or primarily formed to manage irrigation schemes and other multi-purpose water infrastructure for agriculture, livestock, fisheries and domestic purposes
Multi-purpose producer cooperatives	These are membership-based farmer cooperatives, which are registered, supervised and regulated by cooperative governing laws and policies in their respective country	Linking small producers to various services; enable collective purchase of agricultural inputs and access to produce markets, agroprocessing facilities and advisory services
Community-based financial organizations	These are formal and informal member-based grass-roots financial institutions/groups.	Enhancing access to finance by the rural communities, including poorest households, marginalized groups, such as pastoralists, women, youth and indigenous peoples

Figure 2: Types of SFOs supported by IFAD projects



2.1 Smallholder farmer/producer groups

Farmer groups⁵ are formal or informal common interest groups of 10-20 members, formed voluntarily by members or mobilized by development partners at community level to facilitate efficient delivery of services to producers. They offer advisory services on good agricultural practices, linkage with input suppliers (seeds and fertilizers), access to financial services, linkage to markets (processors and traders), and delivery of capacity-building and joint learning. Gender-based (women and youth) groups/associations are becoming increasingly common in the context of IFAD's agenda for greater social inclusion and integration of marginalized groups. They focus on addressing gender/youth-based socio-economic needs and on unlocking constraints to social inclusion through social, economic and cultural empowerment. Other groups include community environmental and natural resources management groups, which spearhead activities to protect natural resources from degradation and climate change impacts; village saving and loan groups, primary cooperative societies to enhance access to finance; and community seed producers to complement formal seed production and distribution systems.

Several IFAD-financed projects in the region have supported farmer groups (annex 2). The support has been directed towards strengthening existing farmer groups for the delivery of project goods and services to project beneficiaries and establishing new project-tailored farmer groups to enhance outreach, targeting, implementation effectiveness, efficiency and impacts. Other support includes building the organizational, operational and technical capacity of farmer groups (in areas such as good governance and managerial and business skills) to support their graduation into empowered grass-roots organizations providing a wide range of services to smallholder producers that contribute to achieving greater impacts

5 Farmer groups are in some cases referred to as associations.

on their livelihoods; stimulate rural transformation; and forge sustainable linkages with apex organizations to further support their growth. For example, in Tanzania community-level farmer groups are members of the MVIWATA⁶ (Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania, a Swahili name meaning National Network of Small-Scale Farmers Groups in Tanzania), the apex organization that supports and facilitates such groups in accessing finance and market outlets, and represents them in policy dialogue at national level.

2.2 Commodity producer organizations

Commodity producer organizations are enterprise-based producer organizations that promote and safeguard the interests of their members in relation to specific commodities (such as cereals, legumes, horticultural crops, coffee, tea and livestock). Enterprise/commodity-based producer organizations constitute the majority of SFOs in ESA, representing 85 per cent of the projects (23 of the 27) in the study sample. They provide a range of services to their members, including facilitating their integration into their commodity value chains. Through commodity-based organizations, smallholder farmers are able to access input and output markets, financial services, storage and processing facilities, and negotiate for better prices with commodity offtakers. For example, in Rwanda the Rwanda Dairy Development Project (RDDP) supported the establishment and strengthening of dairy farmer organizations, and facilitated their linkages to milk collectors, processors, transporters, traders and investors through public-private-producer partnerships (4Ps). In Lesotho, the Wool and Mohair Promotion Project (WAMPP) supports wool and mohair growers through their community-based shearing shed associations. In Malawi, the Rural Livelihoods and Economic Enhancement Programme (RLEEP) supported commodity-specific associations (potatoes, groundnuts, sunflower, dairy and honey) to facilitate access to inputs, technologies, finance and linkage to markets.

2.3 Natural resources management associations/groups

The natural resources management associations or groups are elected community institutions that are responsible for overseeing the management and utilization of natural resources. The field survey shows that about 56 per cent (15) of the projects support natural resources management groups, mostly water user associations (WUAs) and watershed and catchment management committees. There are cases where WUAs are also responsible for watershed/catchment management but they are primarily formed to manage irrigation schemes and other multi-purpose water infrastructure for agriculture, livestock, fisheries and domestic purposes.

2.3.1 Water user associations

WUAs are function-based community organizations, created to manage water-related infrastructure constructed by IFAD-financed projects (e.g. irrigation, boreholes, wells). To ensure their sustainability, WUAs are also responsible for

6 <https://www.mviwata.or.tz/>

distributing water to different water users, collecting and managing water user fees and coordinating maintenance of the infrastructure. In some projects, they coexist with member-based economic and service-oriented organizations, such as cooperatives for production, access to markets and access to financial services. Almost all IFAD projects that support irrigation development involve establishment of WUAs. The members of these associations are smallholder farmers in specific irrigation schemes. In some cases, they have legal status, in that they are registered and guided by constitutions or by-laws.

Examples of ESA projects supporting WUAs include the Participatory Small-scale Irrigation Development Programme II (PASIDP II) in Ethiopia; the Smallholder Market-led Project (SMLP) in Eswatini; the National Agriculture Project (NAP) in Eritrea; the Smallholder Irrigation Revitalization Project (SRIP) in Zimbabwe; the Pro-poor Value Chain Development Project in the Maputo and Limpopo Corridors (PROSUL) in Mozambique; and the Smallholder Resilience Enhancement Project (SREP) in Angola. In these projects, WUAs actively participate in the development of irrigation schemes, from site identification and construction work to the final hand-over of the infrastructure to beneficiaries. They also operate, maintain and safeguard the irrigation and water infrastructure and ensure equitable access to water by all project beneficiaries. In some cases, the WUAs are formed after the irrigation infrastructure is in place. Project interventions include capacity-building of WUAs to strengthen their sustainability and impact, with a focus on governance and managerial skills and sustainable water resources management (which can include catchment management, conservation of water sources, and operation and maintenance of infrastructure).

2.3.2 Watershed/catchment management committees

Watershed/catchment management committees are common in projects that incorporate natural resources management interventions. Some of the irrigation projects in ESA that promote climate change adaptation establish such committees in catchment areas to spearhead collective actions that minimize land and environmental degradation, enhance availability of water for irrigation and other uses, and reduce siltation of irrigation infrastructure downstream. For example, the Programme for Rural Irrigation Development (PRIDE) in Malawi, the Kayonza Irrigation and Integrated Watershed Management Project (KIIWPI) in Rwanda and PASIDP II in Ethiopia are examples of irrigation projects that include the setting up and strengthening of community-level catchment management committees in each watershed to manage and regulate the use, conservation, protection and management of water and natural resources. The committees also serve as community institutional bodies for managing and improving sub-catchment areas, and perform a central role in the planning and implementation of catchment activities for improving ecosystem services, through community participatory planning, linked to both the irrigated areas and rainfed agriculture. Projects like the Upper Tana Catchment Natural Resource Management Project (UTaNRMP) in Kenya mobilize and strengthen community involvement through participatory approaches for sustainable natural resources management (e.g. formation and capacity-building of water-resource users' associations and community forest

associations). In Eritrea, NAP and IADP (successor of NAP) support watershed management committees to coordinate joint actions, such as tree planting, terracing and other soil and water conservation interventions, at catchment level.

Natural resources management groups are also found in livestock and fisheries projects. Livestock projects include interventions to support restoration of rangelands/communal grazing land, such as WAMPP in Lesotho. In Mozambique, the Artisanal Fisheries Promotion Project (ProPESCA) strengthened the involvement of community fishing councils, and provincial and district co-management committees that focused on improving fish resource management, enhancing access to fish resources by poorer members of the community, and enabling artisanal fishing communities to map their resource use and secure their resource rights.

2.4 Multi-purpose producer cooperatives

Multi-purpose producer cooperatives are membership-based farmer organizations that are registered, supervised and regulated by governing laws and policies for specific mandates. The cooperatives play a major role in linking small producers to various services: they enable collective purchasing of agricultural inputs and access to produce markets, agroprocessing facilities and advisory services. They contribute significantly to reducing poverty, improving food security and providing employment opportunities for poor people.

Producer cooperatives offer enormous potential for delivering social and economic growth by providing economic opportunities and empowering vulnerable groups to participate in development processes. Several projects in ESA have included components or activities and operational models to support producers' cooperatives. The field survey findings show a significant number of projects that support cooperative unions (48 per cent) and cooperative societies (63 per cent). Support to cooperatives includes activities such as mapping and rapid assessment of primary and secondary cooperatives in the targeted areas; registration and strengthening/establishment of governance structures; preparation of bankable enterprise development plans to guide investments for business growth; and tailor-made capacity-building to address specific gaps in governance, managerial skills, business management and other technical areas.

2.5 Community-based financial organizations

Community-based financial organizations (CBFOs) are formal and informal grass-roots member-based institutions. In ESA, the CBFOs are instrumental in enhancing access to finance by poor people in rural areas and marginalized groups such as pastoralists, women, youth and indigenous peoples. Several projects in the region support CBFOs, particularly the savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs), village saving and loans groups, solidarity groups, and community savings and internal lending clubs, to strengthen different aspects of their financial and group management. The CBFOs encourage their members to accumulate savings, which serve as a source of finance in rural areas. Members are able to borrow for agriculture-related investments and for other micro-, small and medium-sized rural enterprises. Examples include the Financial Access for Rural Markets, Smallholders and Enterprise Programme (FARMSE) in Malawi and the Rural Finance Expansion

Programme (RUFEP) in Zambia, which support CBFOs in order to improve access to financial services for people in rural areas. The projects link CBFOs with financial institutions, such as apex SACCO unions (of which they are members) and microfinance institutions, so that they can access wholesale loans and insurance services for onlending to their members. CBFOs also serve as conversation platforms where members can discuss issues related to livelihoods development.



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3. Engagement with smallholder farmers' organizations in projects in East and Southern Africa

3.1. Overview of types of interventions supporting smallholder farmers' organizations in the region

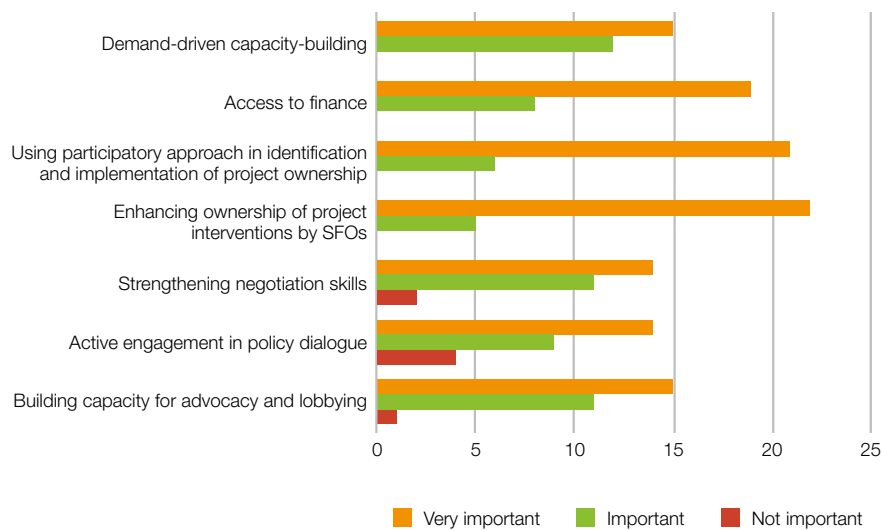
SFOs put smallholder farmers at the centre of inclusive rural transformation. They serve as entry points for several IFAD projects to support outreach to large numbers of smallholder producers involved in crop, livestock and fisheries production and natural resources management initiatives. This section highlights the scope of interventions in IFAD projects to support different types of SFO (see also section 2). IFAD projects in ESA incorporate a range of interventions to strengthen institutional and organizational capacity, empower organizations to improve their economic services to members so that they can increase production and enhance smallholder farmers' access to markets and finance.

The desk review of project documents showed substantial focus on interventions to **strengthen empowerment of SFOs**⁷ in the region. The feedback from a majority of project teams confirms that the most important drivers in achieving enhanced SFO empowerment are: a sense of ownership of project interventions among SFOs; the

⁷ Empowerment refers to the degree to which SFOs are equipped to represent the interests of their constituency, able to influence political or economic decisions or actions that have direct impacts on the well-being of their constituency, and capable of providing economic and business services to their members in an efficient and professional manner.

use of participatory approaches to identify and implement project interventions; and access to finance (figure 3). In addition, building capacity for advocacy and lobbying, active engagement in policy dialogue and strengthening negotiation skills also have a role.

Figure 3: Interventions to enhance empowerment of SFOs



A number of projects have also included interventions to enhance preparedness for project exit and to **strengthen the sustainability of SFOs**. The survey findings point to several categories of project interventions that are important in strengthening the sustainability of SFOs. The important intervention areas include institutional development and capacity-building in governance; improving business planning and management skills; building sustainable financing mechanisms; and facilitating the achievement of legal status (figure 4). In ESA, SFOs have been participating in IFAD-funded projects through various operational models, depending on the focus of the project and desired outcomes. As described above, their engagement has been mostly as project beneficiaries, but in some cases SFOs have been project implementers in the delivery of goods and services to project target groups. The aim has been to build SFO capacity and empowerment, enhance project outreach and increase the sustainability of project interventions. The models of SFO engagement in ESA include: (i) as actors in value chains, (ii) as agents in the delivery of advisory services, and (iii) as project partners at national or regional level. The survey identified the approaches/models used for engagement with SFOs: these are presented in figure 5. They include 4P arrangements, formal supply contracts through out-grower schemes, integration in value chains, contract farming and others, such as commodity platforms.

Figure 4: Categories of project interventions for strengthening sustainability of SFOs

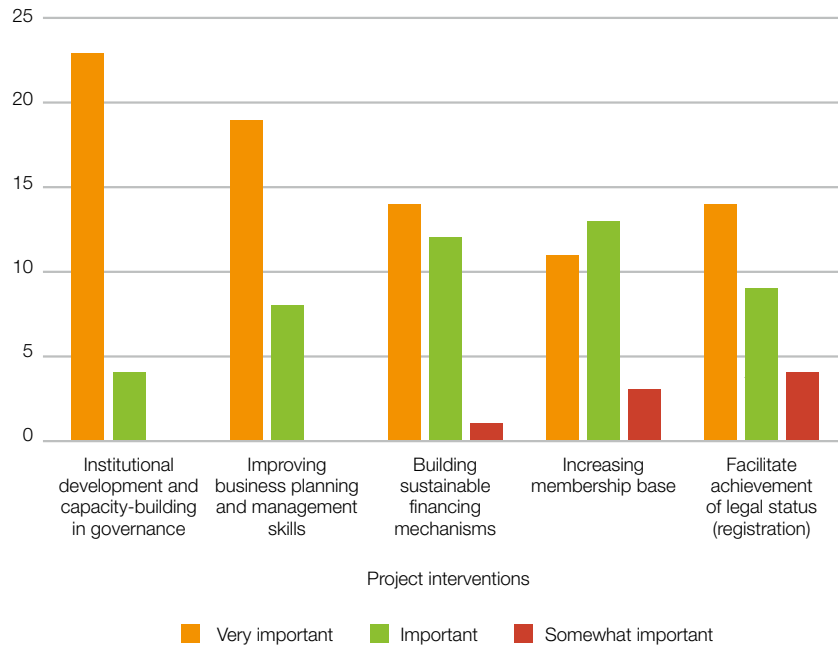
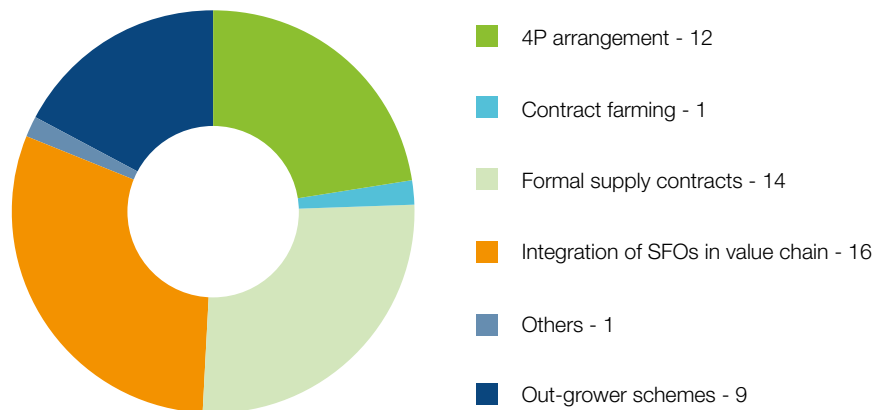


Figure 5: Models for supporting SFOs



3.2 Models of engagement with farmer organizations

Model 1: Smallholder farmers' organizations as actors in value chains

The value chain approach is widely used in IFAD-financed projects to support pro-poor market-driven investments in agriculture. IFAD has financed a significant number of commodity value chain projects where SFOs play an important role in crowding smallholder farmers into value chains as active players. Different business

models have been deployed to augment the integration and inclusion of smallholder farmers as significant actors in commodity supply chains to improve their access to markets and other support services, such as finance, technologies and skills. The smallholder farmers are active partners, and at the same time they represent their members in dialogue and decision-making forums in the value chains to ensure equitable economic and social benefits. IFAD projects in ESA have applied various pro-poor producer-driven business models, anchored by collective actions through SFOs. The aim is to enable SFOs to forge beneficial and sustainable relationships with other actors in the value chains – such as input suppliers, commodity traders (end markets) and service providers (processors, financial institutions, extension services). Buyer-driven models – such as contract farming, out-grower schemes and public-private-producer partnership (4P) arrangements – have also been supported to provide organizational input to SFOs and ensure responses to demand from buyers (e.g. processors) and wholesale commodity traders (e.g. aggregators).

In **Malawi**, RLEEP aimed to improve the incomes of poor rural households that were economically active and engaged in the production, processing and marketing of selected agricultural commodity value chains by integrating rural households into the emerging commercial sector for groundnuts, potatoes, sunflower, dairy, beef and honey. The programme strengthened SFO capacity for collective marketing and access to finance for legumes and dairy value chains through cooperatives and milk collection groups, respectively. In **Tanzania**, the Marketing Infrastructure, Value Addition and Rural Finance Support Programme (MIRVAF) supported the formation and strengthening of smallholder producer organizations to enhance their empowerment, market linkages and access to finance. In **Madagascar**, the Support to Farmers' Professional Organizations and Agricultural Services Project (AROPA) strengthens farmers and their organizations so that they can integrate better into the value chain. It also facilitates farmers' access to services by matching demand and supply. In **Burundi**, the Value Chain Development Programme Phase II (PRODEFI II) helps smallholder farmers and their organizations to improve the processing and marketing of their products, and to develop financial services to finance production, processing circles and storage facilities. In **Mozambique**, ProPESCA supported development of the fish value chain for higher-value fisheries by improving economic infrastructure and financial services through farmer associations/groups, community-based financial groups and collective fish marketing.

The RDDP in **Rwanda** establishes and strengthens dairy farmer cooperatives. It facilitates links between cooperatives, markets and actors in the dairy value chain, such as milk collectors, processors, transporters and traders, and between cooperatives and investors in milk quality through 4Ps. In **Kenya**, the Smallholder Horticulture Marketing Programme (SHoMAP) used the commercial villages model – a market-led commercialization process through which horticulture groups in villages were mobilized, commercialized and trained to increase their participation in value chains. The training focused on agribusiness, group dynamics and leadership skills. The aim was to enable members to bulk their produce into higher volumes to attract more profitable markets and prices or to venture into contractual farming arrangements.

Table 2: Models for engaging smallholder farmer organizations in ESA operations

Engagement model	Model description	Operational approaches	Purpose	Country project examples
SFOs as value chain actors	Smallholder farmers are integrated into value chains through their member-based SFOs, such as farmer groups, associations and cooperatives, to forge sustainable commercial partnerships with other value chain actors, such as input suppliers, commodity traders and processors; and service providers, such as financial institutions and advisory services.	Supply models such as contract farming, out-grower schemes and 4Ps have been used in IFAD projects to forge commercial partnerships between smallholder farmers, commodity traders and processors.	Improve linkages to markets and access to support services, such as finance, new technologies, innovation and skills.	Malawi (RLEEP); Tanzania (MIVARF); Madagascar (AROPA); Burundi (PRODEFI II); Mozambique (ProPESCA); Rwanda (RDDP); Kenya (SHoMAP)
SFOs as advisory services providers	Community-based farmer organizations facilitate farmers' access to farming technologies and practices through farmer-centred learning-by-doing.	Group learning through farmer field/ business schools to experiment, adapt and disseminate farming technologies, innovations and business skills to farmers.	Enhance adoption of improved technologies for increased agricultural productivity and household food and nutrition security.	Malawi (PRIDE, SAPP and RLEEP); Zambia (S3P); Zimbabwe (SIRP); Angola (SAMAP); Tanzania-Zanzibar (ASDP-L); Eritrea (NAP)
Apex farmers' organizations, as project partners	Apex organizations participate as beneficiaries of IFAD loan- and grant-financed projects and serve as cofinancers and implementation partners of projects.	National and regional farmer organizations are supported through investment projects to enhance their capacity to deliver better economic services to smallholders. They are also recipients of IFAD grants to implement, manage and cofinance projects that support smallholder farmers.	Promote service delivery to smallholder farmers in order to improve their production; forge linkages to regional and international markets; support policy engagement at national and regional level; facilitate citizen engagement; disseminate innovations and knowledge to relevant regional and national networks.	National farmer organizations (NFOs): Burundi (PRODEFI, PAIVA-B); Lesotho (WAMPPP); Uganda (VODP2); Tanzania (MVIWATA) Regional farmer organizations (RFOs) (East and Southern Africa – EAFF and SACAU; SFOAP; FO4ACP; e-Granary and SYAF)

Model 2: Smallholder farmers' organizations as advisory services providers

Extension staff and other service providers work through community-based organizations such as farmer groups and cooperatives, using farmer-centred learning-by-doing extension models to facilitate smallholder farmers' access to productivity-enhancing farming technologies and practices. In ESA, a number of projects have used the group-based farmer field schools approach to introduce and disseminate improved farming practices, which has had significant impacts on farmers' adoption of new technologies, agricultural productivity, farmer empowerment, and household food and nutrition security. For example, this approach has been used by SAMAP in Angola, NAP in Eritrea, SAPP and PRIDE in Malawi, ASDP-L in Tanzania-Zanzibar, S3P in Zambia and SIRP in Zimbabwe.

The farmer field schools aim to: (i) empower smallholder farmers with agricultural knowledge and skills and make them experts in their own fields; (ii) sharpen farmers' ability to make informed decisions; (iii) alert farmers to new ways of thinking and problem-solving; and (v) help farmers learn how to organize themselves for collective action. Groups of 15-30 smallholder farmers are created for joint learning on specific farming-related topics through field-based experimentation, observation and practical discussion covering the production cycle. In some cases, farmer field schools have transitioned to sustainable grass-roots institutions such as seed multiplication groups and farming radio listening clubs. Examples include the farmer business schools in Malawi (RLEEP) and the collective selling groups and village-based saving and credit groups in Rwanda (RDDP) and Malawi (RLEEP) (box 1), which enable members to have access not only to finance, information and collective selling schemes, but also to affiliation with higher-level farmer organizations. Community-based cooperatives have also acted as facilitators of farmer field schools, with responsibility for directing the learning process; furthering their access to the inputs and services they need to be able to adopt new technologies and innovations (improved seeds, fertilizers, improved dairy calves, fingerlings and livestock/fish feeds).

Box 1: Rwanda Dairy Development Project (RDDP): Saving and loan groups

Livestock groups participating in the Rwanda Dairy Development Project started group saving and loans schemes. Small loans enable group members to diversify their income, through both on-farm and off-farm income-generating activities. This is a good risk management strategy as it means they have additional income to support farming activities, for example to purchase drugs for their animals. During the COVID-19 lockdown, many group members used these funds as a source of emergency financing. One group (Indatwa in Rwamagana) decided to start a cashless group saving and payment system so that they could continue saving at a time when group meetings were not allowed because of the COVID-19-related lockdown. On average, groups have been able to save between RWF 5,000 and RWF 50,000, with some having as much as RWF 700,000 in their group savings account. Very short-term loans are given to group members at a monthly interest rate of 12 per cent.

The farmer field school approach has been in use in this region since the 1980s, with an initial focus on good agricultural/agronomic practices. It has evolved over time to include a wider range of thematic areas – such as integrated pest management, sustainable production systems and agroecology, soil and water conservation, agropastoralism, post-harvest handling, gender equality, environment, climate change adaptation, nutrition, agribusiness and life skills. For example, in RLEEP in Malawi, this approach was adapted, piloted and scaled up by the Ministry of Agriculture to introduce the concept of farming as a business through farmer groups, referred to as farmer business schools, which focus on building agribusiness skills.

Model 3: Apex organizations as project partners

Apex organizations, which include **national farmer organizations (NFOs)** and **regional farmer organizations (RFOs)**, have been supported through IFAD projects to enhance their operational and institutional capacity and their ability to deliver economic services and other benefits to smallholders producers. They have also served as project partners responsible for managing project implementation and operational processes. Apex organizations in ESA have played a key role in delivering projects aimed at increasing incomes, production, and access to markets and finance for smallholder farmers. This has been achieved through interventions that promote: (i) delivery of services to smallholder farmers to improve their production; (ii) linkages of smallholders to domestic, regional and international input and output markets; (iii) policy engagement and representation of the interests of smallholders in policy dialogue at the national and regional level; (iv) better citizen engagement, particularly through national and meso-level committees and (v) scaling up and replication of good practices and dissemination of innovations and knowledge to wide networks.

Model 3.1: Partnership with national farmer organizations

National farmer organizations (NFOs) have been instrumental in linking farmers with higher-level government institutions and other stakeholders in their respective countries. Several NFOs in ESA have participated as both implementing partners and beneficiaries of IFAD-financed projects.

The Confédération des Associations de Producteurs Agricoles pour le développement (CAPAD) in Burundi has been an IFAD partner for 15 years. It participates in the formulation of IFAD COSOPs, and in the implementation of two IFAD projects, PRODEFI and PAIVA-B, and the regional grant SFOAP in Burundi. CAPAD provides support to grass-roots farmers' organizations and social mobilization to advance dialogue with decision-makers. In addition, IFAD consults CAPAD when formulating its new projects, which helps to align project design with the needs and constraints of grass-roots producers.

The Lesotho National Wool and Mohair Growers Association (LNWMGA) represents the interests of wool and mohair growers in Lesotho at national level. LNWMGA has committed a financial contribution (US\$1.5 million) to the IFAD-supported WAMPP. The association is also responsible for implementing some of the project interventions, including the revolving fund for animal feeds and drugs, management of two breeding farms, and a culling and exchange breeding programme

(box 2). Building on the experience gained from implementing WAMPP, LNWMGA is also leading the implementation of a subsidy programme under the Rural Poor Stimulus Facility. The programme aims to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the availability of feeds during the critical sheep/goat reproduction cycle. With the support of WAMPP, LNWMGA assists its members (mainly shearing shed associations) in accessing sustainable national and international markets, and in policy engagement and advocacy with the Government of Lesotho and other sector partners and stakeholders, such as wool and mohair traders (brokers and other market intermediaries).

Box 2: The Lesotho National Wool and Mohair Growers Association

In Lesotho, IFAD has partnered with the country's largest commodity association – the Lesotho National Wool and Mohair Growers Association (LNWMGA). The growers are not only an implementing partner but also a cofinancing partner in the Wool and Mohair Promotion Project (WAMPP). Through the support of WAMPP, complemented by policy-induced reforms, the sector has undergone significant changes in terms of production, breeding and marketing. In response, IFAD has established a sectoral platform through WAMPP where growers, government directorates and other sector players meet quarterly to discuss production and marketing-related challenges and opportunities. As the secretariat, WAMPP facilitates exchanges with the growers and their management, representing nearly 40,000 smallholders at these meetings.

In Uganda, the Vegetable Oil Development Project – Phase 2 (VODP2) worked with the NFO, the Uganda Cooperative Alliance (UCA), to support the formation and strengthening of farmer organizations in the oilseeds sector in the four project hubs. With the support of UCA, 26 higher-level farmer organizations and 800 lower-level farmer organizations have been registered as members of area cooperative enterprises (ACEs) for integration into project interventions. In Tanzania, MVIWATA, an NFO that focuses on lobbying, advocacy and the economic empowerment of small-scale farmers, has played a role in various IFAD-financed investment projects. In the Marketing Infrastructure, Value Addition and Rural Finance Support Programme (MIVARF), for example, MVIWATA represented project beneficiaries in the project steering committee; while in the Agricultural Sector Development Programme – Livestock (ASDP-L) (Tanzania-Zanzibar) it promoted capacity-building of meso-level, district farmer forums responsible for supporting community-level farmer groups.

At national level, IFAD-funded regional grants, including e-Granary, SFOAP, SYAF and others are implemented in collaboration with NFOs in their respective countries, namely: Imbaraga and the National Cooperatives Confederation of Rwanda, in Rwanda; the Tanzania Federation of Cooperatives (TFC) and MVIWATA, in Tanzania; and the Uganda Co-operative Alliance (UCA) and Uganda National Farmers Federation (UNFFE), in Uganda.

Model 3.2: Partnership with regional farmer organizations

The role of regional farmer organizations (RFOs) is to represent the voices and the interests of farmers in the region, normally through their affiliation with national farmer organizations (NFOs). These organizations have played a vital role in the delivery of regional and interregional IFAD-financed projects in ESA. IFAD has established long-standing institutional and operational partnerships with two regional farmers organizations in ESA:

- The *Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF)*⁸, which is based in Kenya, represents farmers in the East Africa subregion through its affiliated NFOs. The EAFF seeks to enhance regional cohesiveness and the socio-economic status of farmers in the region by voicing their views and concerns and promoting their integration into the regional trade ecosystem.
- The *Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU)*, based in South Africa, represents national agricultural unions in the Southern African Development Community region. It promotes the functioning of producers' organizations throughout the region by providing a forum for discussion of matters of common interest and disseminating information about agriculture in Southern Africa.

The two RFOs have been important partners of IFAD in the delivery of projects aimed at strengthening the capacity of farmer organizations through large regional grants:

- The **Support to Farmers Organizations in Africa Programme (SFOAP)**⁹ closed in 2019. It was cofinanced by the European Union, IFAD, the Swiss Development Cooperation and the Agence Française de Développement to strengthen the capacity of farmers' organizations in African countries and regional and pan-African networks. In ESA, the programme was implemented by the EAFF (East Africa) and SACAU (South Africa) in collaboration with their NFOs in Burundi, Eswatini, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Tanzania and Uganda. The main purpose was to support SFOs to develop into stable, performing, accountable organizations that effectively represent their members and advise smallholder farmers. In addition to strengthening the institutional and organizational capacities of SFOs, SFOAP developed new activities to improve their entrepreneurial capacities and their participation in value chains through interventions aiming to: (i) improve the performance of small-scale farmers, as a result of better access to economic services; (ii) strengthen the capacity of farmer organizations at all levels to provide appropriate economic services to their members; and (iii) address policy-related challenges affecting the performance of farmer organizations in the selected value chains.
- **Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (FO4ACP)**.¹⁰ This is an interregional programme covering Africa, the Caribbean and the

8 <https://www.eaffu.org/>

9 https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/41910781/sfoap_completion_report.pdf/df1a0e2a-d264-ff68-8e50-4865520f52e1?t=1589285955000

10 <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/-/publication/the-fo4acp-programme>

Pacific. It is a five-year initiative that is funded by the European Union, the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) and IFAD, and became effective in 2019. In ESA, FO4ACP is implemented by the the EAFF in the East Africa subregion and by the SACAU in the Southern Africa subregion, with the involvement of NFOs across all countries. Its interventions are built on the lessons from SFOAP. The overall goal of the project is to increase the incomes and improve the livelihoods, food and nutrition security and safety of organized smallholder and family farmers in the region. The project comprises four components: (i) delivery of economic services along priority value chains, (ii) enabling the business environment, (iii) institutional development of farmer organizations, and (iv) communication and visibility.

- The e-Granary project uses the innovative mobile platform to deliver economic services to farmers in East Africa (Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda). E-Granary is implemented by the EAFF in collaboration with NFOs. Its goal is to improve the incomes and profitability, living standards and productivity of 90,000 participating smallholder farmers. The project is financed by the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) through IFAD as the designated supervisory entity. As at December 2019, an estimated 14,251 farmers have been registered in Uganda, of whom 6,062 (42.5 per cent) are women and 5,448 (38.2 per cent) youth, and in Rwanda, of the 4,792 farmers now registered, 1,651 (34.5 per cent) are women and 805 (16.8 per cent) youth.
- **Scaling up rural youth access to inclusive financial services for entrepreneurship and employment (SYAF).**¹¹ The project was implemented by the EAFF in partnership with its affiliated NFOs in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. Its main objectives were to: (i) build the capacity of poor rural youth organizations to design and deliver entrepreneurship training, mentorship, business development services and partnership services to support youth entrepreneurs in rural areas of East Africa; (ii) build the capacity of local financial institutions to provide alternative start-up and scale-up capital to develop and deliver pro-poor youth-inclusive financial tools to young people in rural areas of project countries; and (iii) consolidate, share and learn from the project through practical knowledge products, communities of practice, and events that will support the scaling-up and replication of successful pro-poor youth-led business ventures for rural youth in East Africa. In all the project countries, a total of 576 young people were directly reached through training and support provided to their enterprises. Cumulatively, the project reached an estimated 10,000 individual youths.

11 <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/-/scaling-up-rural-youth-access-to-inclusive-financial-services-for-entrepreneurship-and-employment>



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4. Salient impacts/benefits of selected project cases

The unavailability of data/information on the impacts generated by projects supporting SFOs in the reports reviewed limits the scope of quantitative analysis presented here. The survey respondents indicated some key benefits and impacts attributable to SFO engagement in IFAD projects (figure 6). This section presents some of the benefits recorded under various interventions that contribute to IFAD's goal of increasing

Figure 6: Key benefits and impact areas of engaging SFOs



incomes through the strategic impact areas of increased production (strategic objective 1), increased access to market (strategic objective 2) and greater resilience (strategic objective 3). These interventions have been grouped into four categories: (i) linking smallholder farmers with other value chain actors; (ii) boosting smallholder productivity; (iii) improved access to rural finance; and (iv) acquisition of productive assets.

As shown in figure 6, the key impacts identified by a majority of the 27 field survey respondents are: improved productivity (89 per cent of respondents); improved governance structure and increased volume of sales and profitability (85 per cent); increased incomes of SFO members (82 per cent); improved economic services to smallholder farmers; and increased access to affordable finances (63 per cent). Other impacts mentioned are improved SFO engagement in policy dialogue; expanded investments in small enterprises/businesses; and improved social inclusion and quality of life for SFO members.

4.1 Linking smallholder farmers with other value chain actors

As discussed above under SFOs engagement models (model 1), IFAD has deployed the value chain approach to integrate smallholders as active actors in the transformation of the rural sector. Below are examples of projects in ESA that have recorded benefits to smallholders as a result of sustainable business linkages.

MIVARF Tanzania. MIVARF introduced the consortium model, which links smallholder farmers with other value chain actors to support partnerships in providing equitable services. The consortium is an inclusive agribusiness development initiative that involves public-private-producer partnership (4P) arrangements in a trading platform that pulls all the actors (including smallholder farmers) in the value chain into mutually beneficial relationships and connections. The consortium generated several impacts on the production, productivity, incomes and profitability of smallholder farmers and their access to finance (box 3).

VODP2 Uganda. The project delivered support to oilseed producers through the existing three-tier multi-purpose area cooperative enterprise (ACE) model. The project mobilized and supported about 25 cooperatives through the ACE (box 4) in 40 districts. The ACE offers opportunities to establish sustainable relationships between producers and a range of value chain actors, such as processors and traders, input suppliers, financial institutions and technical services providers. Some of the ACEs are providing credit services to their members through microfinance institutions and SACCOs for onlending to member groups who subsequently onlend to individual farmers in their groups at the parish level to support their farming investments. Some of the ACEs, such as P'kiwi in Eastern Hub have 2,500 or more members. In addition to having a contract with offtakers, P'kiwi owns a warehouse and small-scale processing facility for sunflower seeds that was established by the ACE with its own capital from selling virgin oil to schools and shops in the village and in Kampala, and seed cake to local livestock keepers. TAABU, a women-led ACE, was registered in 2008 in Buyaga Sub-county in Bulambuli District. It has 2,012 members, owns a warehouse with capacity of 200 metric tonnes and has a supply contract with AgriNet (a soybean processor in Soroti District). In addition, the TAABU ACE acquired a loan from a microfinance institution, which was used to finance farming investments of

Box 3: The Marketing Infrastructure, Value Addition and Rural Finance Support Programme (MIVARF) Tanzania: Impacts of the consortium model for building value chain partnerships

Increased production. In Karatu, onion farmers increased their yield from 4,429 tonnes in the 2016/17 season to 5,646 tonnes in the 2018/19 season.

Increased sales volume. Produce marketed through consortia, e.g. sales of red onions increased by 60 per cent and sales of maize increased from 17,674.04 tonnes in 2016/17 to 24,605.02 tonnes in 2018/19.

Improved profitability. Unit margins increased as a result of economies of scale and competitive access to inputs and produce markets. For example, in the paddy subsector in the southern zone, there was a decrease in the cost of production from TZS 548/kg in the 2016/17 season to TZS 349/kg in the 2018/19 season. There was an increase of more than 100 per cent in the profit margin, from TZS 252/kg in 2016/17 to TZS 528/kg in 2018/19.

Increased access to affordable finance. Financial institutions have managed to develop products suitable for the consortium partners, e.g. VisionFund Tanzania brought out a loan package for small groups of five farmers with no collateral, an arrangement that helped 68 paddy farmer groups obtain loans amounting to TZS 102,630,000 in the 2017/18 season.

its members. The Bulunguli ACE in Buyaga Sub-county in Bugweri District has 1,258 members and deals with several crops, including oilseed. It has supply contracts with offtakers for soybean and sunflower that can be sold in bulk to its members on credit, which is then recovered through deductions from sales. The ACE also operates a SACCO (formed by parish-level, farmers-group-based village saving and loans associations) that provides seasonal loans to its members.

KCEP-CRAL Kenya. The project established 250 cereal farmer associations and linked them to a structured grain trading system, which included selling to the Strategic Food Reserves through the National Cereals and Produce Board. The cereal farmer associations established are linked to 250 cereal collection centres and 137 certified warehouses for storage services.

RLEEP Malawi supported farmer associations handling specific commodities (potatoes, groundnuts, sunflower, dairy and honey) and primary cooperatives. At completion, the programme had supported 640 commodity-based organizations, 70 per cent of which were legally registered as either cooperatives or associations and successfully linked with input suppliers, CBFOs/SACCOs and buyers such as processors and traders.

ASDP-L Zanzibar supported milk producers who had organized themselves into the Dairy Farmers Organization, comprising all dairy farmers from communal cowsheds. The organization negotiated successfully with a large private milk processor, the Azam Bakhresa Group of companies, to collect milk from its members at an agreed price. This arrangement provided a sustainable solution to market challenges for the dairy farmers.¹²

12 Source: Farmer field schools stocktake in ESA, 2020.

Box 4: Uganda - the three-tier cooperative model

In Uganda there are more than 80 area cooperative enterprises (ACEs). The ACE model is unique and has offered significant opportunities for commercialization of smallholder producers. The model comprises farmer groups (25-30 members) at the parish level (Tier 1) who unite to form a cluster or primary cooperative society at sub-county level (Tier 2), which has a membership consisting of 8-20 producer or farmer groups. A number (5-20) of graduated primary cooperative societies at sub-county level merge to form an ACE at county or district level (Tier 3), also known as a high-level farmers organization. The ACEs are formal, multipurpose, registered commodity-based cooperatives with a clear governance structure and constitution. They operate as business entities that serve their members by facilitating access to market through bulking and collective selling; access to credit from financial institutions, including ACE-affiliated SACCOs; acquisition of inputs in bulk; and capacity development of farmer groups, which may take the form of training in good agricultural practices, enterprise selection skills, post-harvest handling, record-keeping, gender mainstreaming, environmental conservation technologies, business skills and value addition services.

4.2 Boosting smallholder productivity

RDDP Rwanda. The livestock-based farmer field schools recorded improvements in milk production and sales through the adoption of good agricultural practices. The majority of farmers have adopted cultivation of improved fodder (male 100 per cent; female 92 per cent), plantation of agroforestry species for fodder (male 83 per cent; female 100 per cent) and rainwater harvesting (75 per cent). Milk production data indicate that the difference between milk production in the rainy and dry seasons has been reduced, which suggests better fodder management and increased availability of fodder in the dry season. The outputs and outcome in its fourth year of implementation are presented in box 5.

Box 5: Rwanda Dairy Development Project: Outputs and outcomes from farmer field schools

- All participants increased milk production, ranging from 10 per cent to 50 per cent (male average 41 per cent; female average 32 per cent)
- Volume of total milk sold (in MT) increased by 38 per cent
- 93.3 per cent of respondents from livestock-based farmer field schools apply deworming measures on their farms
- 89.0 per cent of respondents from livestock-based farmer field schools spray acaricides to avoid tick-borne diseases in their herds
- The level of milk rejection has been reduced due to training in the prevention of mastitis

SFOAP – EAFF. In ESA, the programme was implemented through the EAFF. It trained 9,068 farmers in best agronomic practices in three commodity value chains – cassava, Irish potatoes and dairy. A total of 713 experts were trained as trainers of trainers and 269 demonstration plots were used to cascade training to farmers. The programme recorded notable impacts on the productivity of the three focal value chains in the participating countries (Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda). Examples of the interventions and associated impacts are presented in box 6.

RLEEP Malawi: RLEEP's overall goal was to help smallholder farmers improve their livelihoods through the commercialization of target value chains (groundnuts, potatoes, sunflower, dairy, honey and beef). The programme used a range of interventions to improve the productivity of target commodities and linkages to markets. For example, the impact assessment study found that 90 per cent of beneficiary dairy farmers indicated increased productivity and access to market through milk bulking centres that existed within their areas and were managed by milk bulking groups (box 7). Benefits that stemmed from these milk bulking centres included: an ability to sell milk as a group (as reported by 51 per cent of farmers); milk no longer getting spoiled (28 per cent); and better prices (11 per cent). The majority of farmers stated that the milk collection centres were in good condition and were still being utilized by farmers and continue to generate benefits to beneficiaries after project completion.¹³

Box 6: Achievements of the Support to Farmers' Organizations Programme (SFOAP) in East Africa

Implemented by the EAFF, SFOAP worked with 12 national farmer organizations whose beneficiaries were 54 sub-national farmer organizations in seven countries (Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda). The project value chains were cassava, Irish potatoes and livestock (dairy) selected on the basis of their ranking as national agriculture sector priorities and the potential to increase incomes to farmers in these countries.

In Uganda, following the training and introduction of the new cassava varieties, farmers saw their productivity increase on average by 80 per cent, going from an average of 16.8 tons/ha in 2015, to about 30.4 tons/ha in 2017. In Burundi, production increased from 7 tons/ha to 15 tons/ha, reflecting a 118 per cent change. Potato yields increased from between 10 and 15 tons/ha to between 20 and 30 tons/ha. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, potato yields increased from 12 tons/ha to 18 tons/ha. Livestock farmers in Kenya reported an average increase in daily milk yields from 4.3 litres to 5.5 litres per cow, while in Tanzania productivity doubled from 4 litres to 8 litres per cow. In 2016 project beneficiaries in Kenya exported 45 improved goats to Djibouti through their NFOs (35 females and 10 males). The first generation of cross-breeds (Kenya Alpine male and Djibouti goat female) increased to 160 goats at project completion.

¹³ Source: RLEEP impact assessment study, 2017.

Box 7: Malawi Milk Bulking Group: Improved productivity and milk marketing

Goliati Milk Bulking Group was established in 2013 with the aim of selling milk as a group. The group is located in Matapwata extension planning area in Thyolo and has been a beneficiary of the Rural Livelihoods and Economic Enhancement Programme (RLEEP) since 2014, when the programme started supporting small-scale dairy farmers in the district. Currently, the group has 230 members (75 female; 155 male).

Through the programme, the Goliati Milk Bulking Group, for example, received a range of training that improved members' productivity. These included farmer business school training, training in animal husbandry practices, group dynamics and management/supervision of infrastructure development. These improved knowledge among many farmers. Some members of the group reported that they had run parallel training sessions for members of their group to ensure sustainability of knowledge management. In addition, training in artificial insemination techniques was made available, with the sole purpose of improving local breeds.

(Source: RLEEP project completion report, 2018)

4.3 Improved access to rural finance

RLEEP in Malawi increased access to financial services by smallholder farmers through village saving and loans groups. Through RLEEP interventions, 641 such groups were formed, benefiting a total of 9,424 farmers. Of these, 13 groups were linked to formal financial institutions and two savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs) to access finance for onlending to their members.

The Rural Finance Expansion Programme (RUFEP) in Zambia supports over 100 community-based financial institutions, such as solidarity groups, savings and internal lending communities, and village savings and loan associations to promote their linkages with financial services providers. The project has built the capacity of these institutions and assisted them in registering to obtain formal status, which is a prerequisite to open an institution-based bank account.

RUFIP in Ethiopia has been focused on building the capacity of rural savings and credit cooperatives (RUSACCOs) to serve their members, including smallholder farmers. The impact study of the second phase of RUFIP in Ethiopia (RUFIP II) confirmed that access to rural finance increased household assets, income, food security and agricultural productivity. The study also revealed that the average farmer in the treatment group owned household and farm assets worth ETB 12,017. In 2011/2012 (prior to RUFIP II), the average farmer in the treatment and comparison groups owned assets worth ETB 5,243 and ETB 4,279, respectively. The growth in household income was also notable. The average household income (in nominal terms) increased eightfold, from ETB 9,133 to ETB 73,388. The average income of RUSACCO-member households was ETB 92,728, compared to ETB 57,168 for average project beneficiaries of microfinance institutions. The impact study also showed that the average income from non-farm activities was ETB 28,271 for microfinance

institution beneficiaries and ETB 52,967 for RUSACCO beneficiaries. Improved access to and use of agricultural inputs (due to higher income) contributed to improved agricultural productivity and food security of the programme beneficiaries. The proportion of households facing critical food shortages declined from 16 per cent to 14 per cent at the end of RUFIP II. The consumption score of treatment households was 2.83 points greater than the comparison group.

Improving Rural Financial Inclusion through Cooperatives (IRFITCO) is helping to strengthen and improve financial cooperatives in Ethiopia, Malawi and Tanzania. The programme countries are receiving support to enhance financial safety and soundness through improved regulation and supervision, expanding financial services to rural members through the development of central financing facilities, which is piloted in Malawi, managed by the Malawi Union of Savings and Credit Cooperatives (MUSCCO).

PROFIT in Kenya provided tailor-made technical support to the rural SACCOs that work with smallholder farmers with potential for investments in value chain financing to help them strengthen their governance, management and business development capacity.

4.4 Acquisition of productive assets

IFAD projects in ESA have contributed to the provision of productive assets – such as improved livestock breeds, roads, water points, market places, equipment, green energy and other public goods – to smallholder farmers through their SFOs. The aim has been to support their livelihoods, transformation and integration into the value chain.

WAMPP in Lesotho has supported shearing shed associations through LNWMGA in the construction and rehabilitation of shearing sheds, water supply facilities and connections to solar electricity; construction and repair of roads; procurement of shearing equipment; breeding studs/programme to increase access to improved sheep and goats; and acquisition of wool and mohair processing facilities.

The Eritrea Fisheries Resources Management Programme (FReMP) promotes and supports the capacity-building of cooperatives, including fishing cooperatives for small pelagic fish, fish processing/marketing cooperatives, large fishing cooperatives, fish retailing cooperatives, foot fishers cooperatives and women's cooperatives for net making/mending. The project also supports a cooperative support unit, which provides asset financing and management support services and input distribution to cooperatives.

The Zambia Enhanced Smallholder Livestock Programme (E-SLIP) uses cooperatives to serve as entry points for outreach to project beneficiaries. Its livestock stocking and restocking model is anchored in cooperatives, such as Caritas Chingulala Cooperatives, Lumwana Mines Cooperatives and others, for its livestock pass-on programme. Under the pass-on programme, cooperatives receive improved calves from the project for distribution to their eligible members. They must also ensure that each recipient passes on their first female calf to another member. In addition, the cooperatives receive other livestock packages (goats and chickens) provided by the project for distribution to their targeted members.



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5. Lessons learned

This section outlines the challenges, gaps and constraints that limit the performance and the transformation of SFOs. It also highlights the key lessons drawn from the survey findings and the desk review, with examples from specific projects and different types of SFO in ESA.

5.1 Overview of constraints to smallholder farmers' organization transformation

This section provides an overview of constraints and gaps that have been identified as limiting the performance of SFOs. The field survey findings, for example, pointed to lack of access to finance, inadequate business skills, inadequate economies of scale and limited integration of SFOs in selected value chains, among others (figure 7). In addition, the review of project documentation underscored empowerment, access to output markets and finance as critical constraints/gaps in the transformation of SFOs, particularly for commodity-based producer organizations such as cooperatives.

Empowerment of SFOs.¹⁴ As noted earlier, empowering SFOs improves their overall impact and sustainability. However, according to the survey results, multiple factors can affect the achievement of full empowerment by SFOs. Inadequate resources allocated for empowerment interventions, failure to identify these interventions at the design stage, short duration of the project, and lack of operation and maintenance plans for infrastructure provided to SFOs are among the important obstacles mentioned (figure 8).

14 For the definition of "SFO empowerment" see footnote 7

Figure 7: Obstacles facing SFO

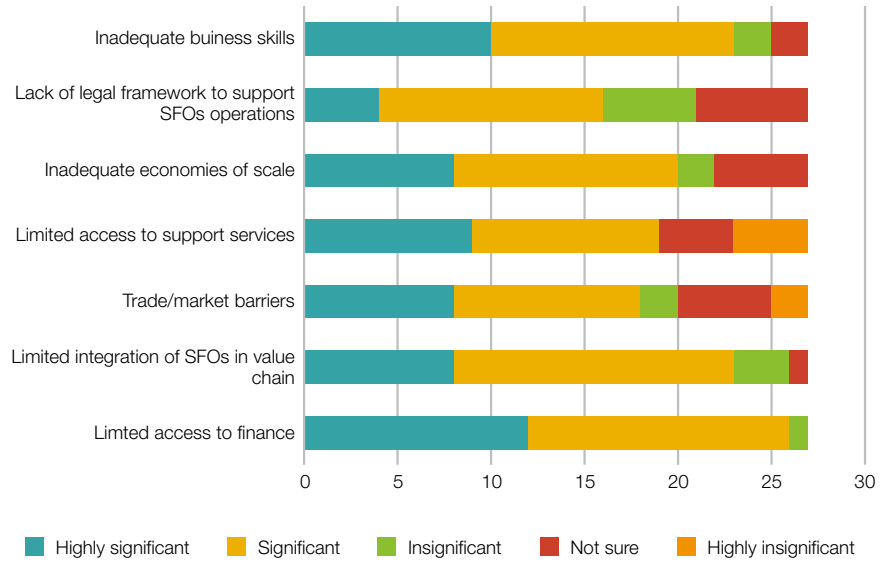
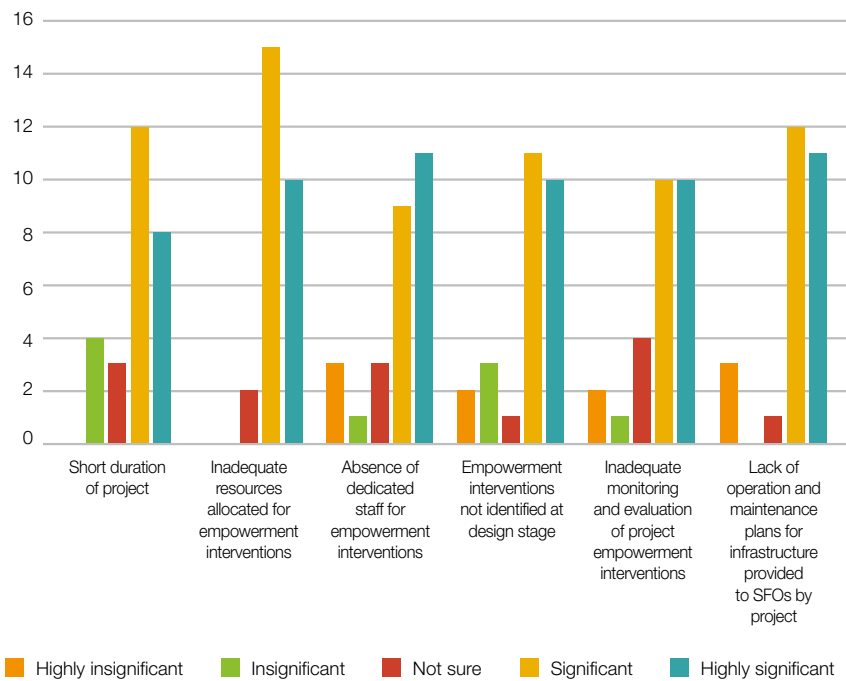
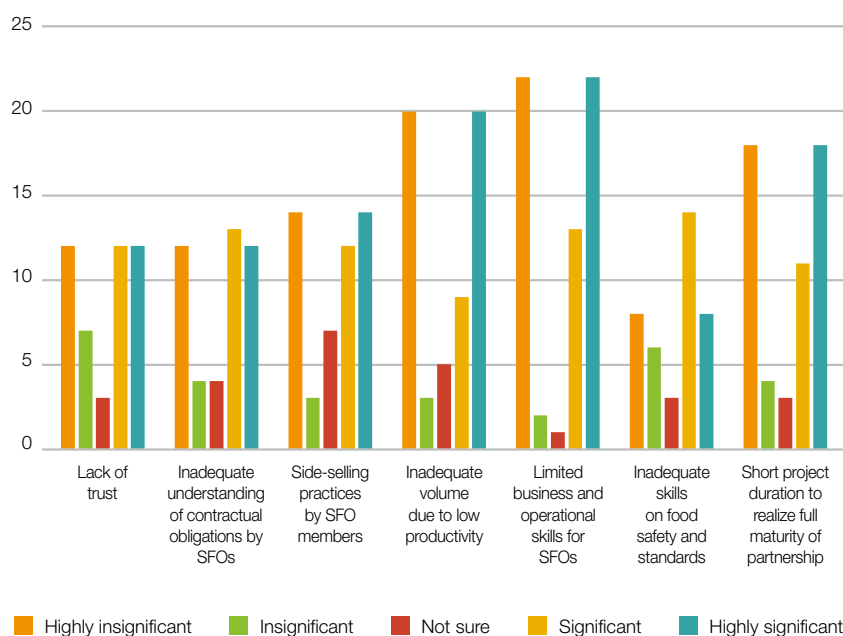


Figure 8: Obstacles to empowerment of SFOs



Access to markets and commercial partnerships. Access to produce markets is a key factor in the transformation of smallholder farmers. Expanding access to output markets for SFO members is fundamental in improving the incomes and livelihoods of rural populations. The review of project interventions shows that often SFOs aim to strengthen both inputs and output markets for different commodity enterprises. However, both external and internal factors can undermine efforts by the SFOs to establish sustainable and inclusive linkages to markets and business partnerships. The survey results point to a number of practices that prevent SFOs from being fully integrated into output markets. Limited business and operational skills, inadequate understanding of contractual obligations, limited trust, and side-selling practices by members are key constraints emerging from the survey of selected projects (figure 9).

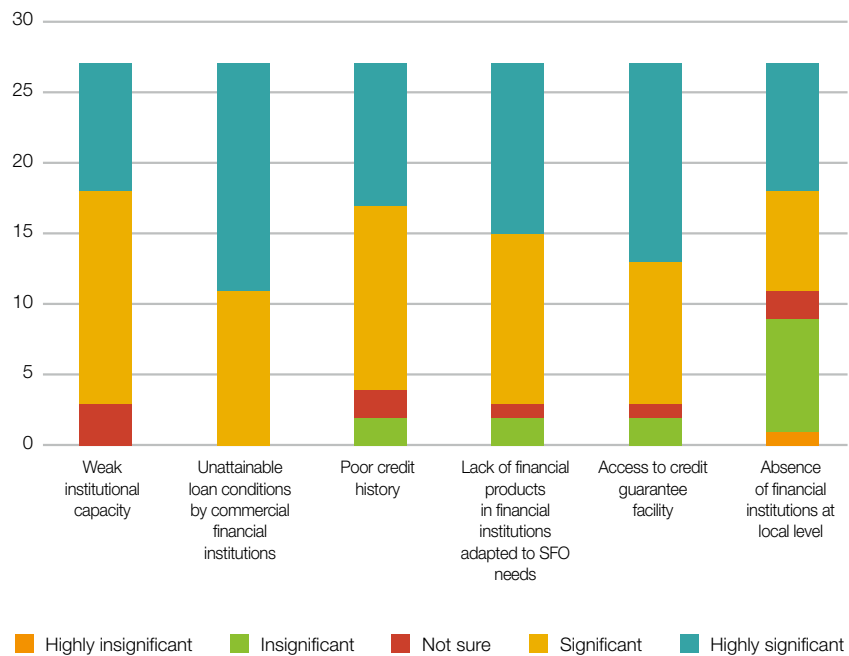
Figure 9: Constraints to effective market linkages and partnerships



Access to sustainable finance. While access to finance is critical to the success of SFOs and a great multiplier of smallholder farmer income, SFOs face multiple obstacles in accessing available finance. Survey results highlighted the significance of unattainable loan conditions proposed by commercial financial institutions and limited access to credit guarantee facilities. Other obstacles facing SFOs include a lack of suitable financial products, poor credit history and weak institutional capacity (figure 10).

Furthermore, the survey results reinforced the importance of building sustainable mechanisms for SFOs to access finance and market support; socio-economic empowerment of SFOs; integration of SFOs into value chains; and collaboration with business-driven institutions for stronger partnerships in value chain development, among others.

Figure 10: Obstacles to SFOs' access to finance



5.2 Lessons from selected project cases

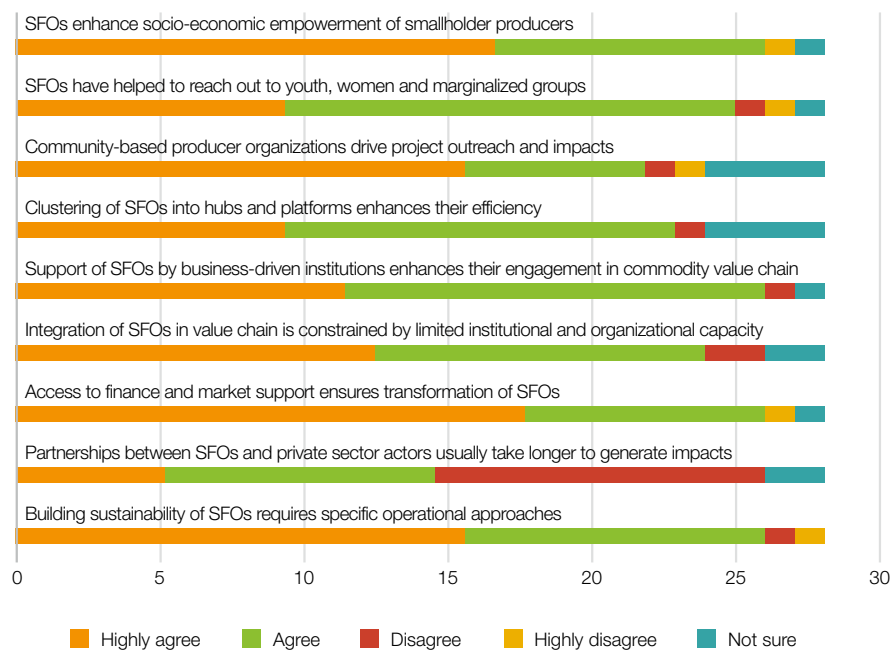
This section presents lessons drawn from ongoing and completed projects in ESA for selected SFO transformation parameters, based on findings from the field survey (figure 11) and the desk review.

Building sustainability of SFOs requires a systematic approach. IFAD projects have focused on building sustainable SFOs, more specifically on institutional development, including establishing sustainable organizational and governance structures. For this to happen, relevant sustainability elements need to be integrated into project designs and made an integral part of programming, monitoring and evaluation, and the exit strategy. The context-specific priority areas that need to be strengthened to ensure sustainability should be defined at the project design or start-up stage with progress tracking integrated into the project's monitoring and evaluation system. For example, in the Project for Restoration of Livelihoods in the Northern Region (PRELNOR) in Uganda (2014-2022), for the district farmers associations to grow and be sustainable, priority areas ought to be governance, lobbying, negotiations, access to advisory services and resource mobilization. Establishment of a legal framework for cooperatives was also integrated into the design to enhance sustainability.

FReMP in Eritrea demonstrates that a lack of a dedicated policy and legal framework for cooperatives presents some risks to their sustainability and empowerment, in the absence of stipulated participation benefits and rights, responsibilities, sanctions and legal obligations. In RDDP in Rwanda, the criteria used for selecting participating cooperatives such as leadership, management structures, milk collection infrastructure investment, diversification of services and tailor-made capacity-building, are regarded

Figure 11: Lessons learned from SFO engagement

Q10. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?



as factors that can support the success of interventions to strengthen producer organizations and enhance progress towards achievement of project objectives, as well as sustainability. The Burundi Rural Recovery and Development Programme (PROMR) interventions initially showed some signs of sustainability due to the high degree of programme ownership among local populations, participatory community development approaches, good financial returns, and partnerships with NGOs and other IFAD projects. However, the weak capacity of operation and maintenance user groups (together with the viability of community groups in general) were seen to limit infrastructure sustainability.¹⁵

SFOs are effective channels to enhance socio-economic empowerment of smallholders. The successful cases from ESA projects, such as the Smallholder Dairy Commercialization Programme (SDCP) in Kenya, indicate that SFOs have been instrumental in empowering smallholder farmers/producers to engage with various actors in rural development. In SDCP, dairy groups were empowered through capacity-building and awareness-raising sessions, which enabled them enter into contracts with the major dairy processors. The groups managed milk collection and cooling centres and demonstrated their potential to serve as “business hubs”, where small-scale producers and service providers exchanged products and services. Like sustainability, empowerment of smallholders is a process that needs to be an integral part of project design. Activities that enhance SFO empowerment need to be

15 PROMR - 2011/12 PPE and PCRV: In IOE Infrastructure ESR.

identified and included in the project implementation strategy, and in monitoring and evaluation. Field observations from UTaNRMP in Kenya revealed that it is necessary to train community forestry associations in negotiation skills so that they are able to negotiate income allocations and incentives for forest scouts, as part of the access and benefit sharing envisaged under forest management agreements. In addition, capacity-building for project beneficiaries, such as community forest associations and water-resource user associations, has enhanced the empowerment and potential sustainability of these associations.

ASDP-L in Zanzibar. Through farmer field schools and district farmer forums, participating beneficiaries (both men and women) have been empowered to articulate their priority needs and preferences and become full partners in their own development. This has enhanced their sense of ownership and their confidence and resulted in many farmers both calling for services and questioning the quality of services provided. The successes were due to the emphasis on beneficiary-demanded interventions; the adoption of bottom-up participatory approaches; and gender mainstreaming, cost-sharing and linkages with different stakeholders. The Malawi RLEEP demonstrated that when agriculture/farmer cooperatives are empowered (strengthened and formally institutionalized), they can play a role in providing technical support to farmers, complementing the work of existing local government technical service providers in production, processing and marketing.

Strategic partnerships between SFOs and private sector actors take a long time to generate impacts. The 4P approach in value chain projects provided smallholder farmers with reliable market solutions. The Project for Rural Income through Exports (PRICE) in Rwanda, for example, employed long-standing 4P arrangements (established with Rwanda Federation of Tea Cooperatives, Rwandan Coffee Cooperatives Federation and sericulture cooperatives) to promote sustainable linkages between tea cooperatives and private factories, enabling farmers to access reliable markets and earn a higher share of the end market price. In RLEEP in Malawi, however, similar arrangements were not so successful. Farmers had, through their groups, signed contracts with three private processors for beef, sunflower seeds and honey. The arrangements were introduced at the post-mid-term review stage of implementation and were new to both the farmers and the three processors. While some farmers were able to engage in some sort of supply contracts with the processors throughout the programme, most of them had one-off contracts, which did not last for various reasons, such as lack of trust or incomplete understanding of the contractual obligations by smallholder farmers. As a result, at the programme completion stage the partnerships were not strong enough and were experiencing a number of challenges, which threatened sustainability.

In this regard, for the 4P model to generate significant impacts and sustainability prospects, capacity-building of farmer organizations is a prerequisite, with a focus on institutional and organizational development, and business and operational skills, such as food safety and standards. Also needed is adequate orientation on legal obligations, together with a business legal framework that will support a win-win 4P arrangement (business/traded contracts or memorandums of understanding). A significant implementation period is also crucial to allow adequate space for farmer organizations to learn-by-doing. In addition, government support, especially during

the initial years of the partnership, is essential. The survey results showed that 4Ps arrangements that had formal supply contracts and integrated farmer organizations in the respective value chains were the most common type of partnership supported by IFAD projects.

Access to markets and finance support transformation of SFOs. Smallholder producer organizations such as cooperatives have the potential to link smallholders to sustainable markets and other services along the value chain. It is important to identify opportunities to strengthen market linkages for SFOs at the project start-up, for example through farmers' cooperatives. This is essential for the sustainability of production-oriented projects, such as the irrigation schemes supported by PASIDP in Ethiopia. Factors such as engagement in input procurement in large quantities with less cost, improved primary production technologies and coordination, and sales to better output markets and increased farm revenues, have all contributed to the success of many cooperatives in PASIDP. Lessons learned from RLEEP in Malawi and other IFAD projects with similar activities have demonstrated that value chain and market access development through support to farmer cooperatives is effective in enhancing smallholders' access to the market and their resilience to market fluctuations.

Other projects such as AROPA in Madagascar encouraged SFOs to specialize production and bulk their produce with a view to achieving sizeable volumes for market. However, it became clear that SFOs face recurring difficulties in coordinating and financing marketing operations and find it difficult to pay producers promptly at harvest. On the other hand, the innovation platforms in PROSUL in Mozambique address some of these challenges by periodically bringing together farmer groups, produce offtakers, input dealers, financial institutions, service providers and the public sector to discuss their needs and develop measures to solve challenges they face in market access. The platforms are chaired jointly by an offtaker and a lead member of a farmer group. The private sector is the driving force of the platform, which has become a reliable instrument for the sustainability of PROSUL.

Integration of SFOs into the value chain is constrained by limited capacity. The lack of agribusiness skills – for example in preparing business plans, market analysis, cost structure and gross margin analyses, and in business orientation – coupled with limited access to finance hampers the efficiency and sustainability of any integration of SFOs into value chain operations. Capacity-building interventions are critical and should be prioritized to support the gradual shift of SFOs towards market development. This should also include careful assessment of SFOs and identification of interventions to fill any critical capacity gaps. SFOs are constrained by inadequate institutional and organizational capacity and weak governance systems, which can also undermine sustainability. At the project design stage, the institutional capacity of SFOs should also be assessed, and appropriate interventions devised to address any shortcomings so that they can engage more fully in the economic/commercial value chain activities.

SFOs supported by business-driven institutions engage more strongly in value chains. A professional institution capable of providing efficient and effective services to producers through their cooperatives is essential to guarantee the profitability of smallholders' enterprises. In Uganda, VODP2 developed innovations of farmer-owned and -managed associations/SACCOs and deepened farmers' control of the

functions of the Kalangala Oil Palm Growers Trust. Moving from an established trust with the participation of both farmer representatives and government officials to fully farmer-owned cooperatives offered them adequate flexibility to take on functions related to transport, input supply, extension services and other economic functions.

Clustering of farmer organizations enhances their efficiency. Lessons from the Climate-Resilient Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project (PASP) in Rwanda show that organizing cooperatives in hubs enhances their efficiency and integration. However, the hub cooperatives model requires long-term investment and an economically viable business model. Furthermore, to ensure sustainability, capacity-building and hub development processes, such as business development and 4P arrangements, it is necessary to gain the support of government at the district and sector levels and to ensure the involvement of local leaders. The inter-hubs knowledge exchange/sharing and joint learning are crucial for cross-fertilization. Cooperative members from strong hubs can serve as “farmer trainers” in supporting other hubs. In Lesotho, the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project Supervision Report (SADP) supported the formation of umbrella groups so that farmers were able to pool resources and negotiate prices based on bulk buying and thus increase the viability of enterprises. It was observed that the size of individual farmers’ accrued financial benefits is conversely related to the number of members of the umbrella group. Therefore, it is imperative that the groups are supported in their social dynamics and that social capital is strengthened to enhance achievement of results. Lessons from the Rural Financial Intermediation Programme (RUFIP) in Ethiopia show that consolidating rural savings and credit cooperatives (RUSACCOs) into unions and building their capacity improved their delivery of technical and financial services to the primary RUSACCOs. The creation of region-based apex institutions for the RUSACCO unions has the potential to enhance their operations and expand growth of the sector in a coordinated and sustainable manner.

Community-based producer organizations drive project outreach and targeting. Community-based organizations such as cooperatives, farmer groups and associations play a key role in the delivery of project support to beneficiaries, with the added assurance that intended target groups will be reached. E-SLIP in Zambia demonstrates this. The Caritas and Lumuna Mine cooperatives, for example, have played a key role in spearheading the stocking and restocking pass-on programme, which has a multiplier effect in that it extends outreach to a large number of beneficiaries. It is apparent that the cooperatives face challenges of limited resources, and need adequate financial and operational capacity to sustainably manage the programme, and other initiatives. In addition, lessons from partners with experience in pass-on programmes indicate that with adequate investment in strengthening governance and managerial systems at community level and access to finance, pass-on programmes can benefit large numbers of beneficiaries, going through many consecutive rounds and continue for many years beyond the life of the programme.

Inclusive SFOs require robust targeting strategies. The Cereal Enhancement Programme Climate Resilient Agricultural Livelihoods Window (KCEP-CRAL) in Kenya underscores the need for SFOs to target women and youth. Interventions should include development of women/youth leadership skills and build their confidence and competence to fill more leadership positions in their groups,



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associations or committees. In the Sustainable Agricultural Production Programme (SAPP) in Malawi, targeting women's participation in groups and decision-making within the different groups improved their social capital and empowerment. In addition, the village agriculture committees formed in SAPP have played a vital role in ensuring the project's wider reach and adoption of good agricultural practices. In this regard, targeting project interventions so that they strengthen and use existing structures, such as village agriculture committees and support from the local leaders, is an effective route to social inclusion and capital development through the grass-roots SFOs. In Malawi, FARMSE targets its support to community-based financial organizations to ensure the development of skills in financial literacy, enterprise development and mentoring of youth and women-based associations.



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6. Project design: What needs to be done differently

Participation of farmers' organizations needs to be an integral part of the project design framework and its delivery models to ensure sustainable engagement of farmer organizations and long-term impacts on poverty reduction and rural development. This calls for strategic targeting in supporting producer organizations to ensure they can progress to market-led commercialization partnerships. The gap analysis presented in annex 1 identifies a performance lag for SFOs, based on field experience and findings of the study. The objective of the analysis was to compare the current state of SFOs with the desired future state and thus to identify the "missing middle" in project designs with a view to ensuring that projects respond better to the challenges faced by different types of SFOs at all levels. It was also aimed at strengthening the prospects for transforming SFOs into sustainable, professionally managed institutions able to provide first class services, including agribusiness and financial services, to their members. The analysis was focused on generic or strategic parameters anchored in the strategic roles of SFOs, namely: (i) improving targeting of operations, (ii) enhancing inclusive rural development, (iii) improving relevance of projects, (iv) enhancing empowerment of smallholder farmers, (v) reinforcing impacts of operations and (vi) improving the sustainability of projects. The specific project design considerations and recommendations for the future are provided in section 7 and annex 1.

Outreach to target groups. IFAD projects supporting community-based organizations, such as producer organizations, are unable to adequately reach a critical mass of project target groups, particularly in remote areas, during implementation due to lack of resources and operational capacities, such as transport. There is also

a lack of community systems to manage and sustain the services that are offered to project beneficiaries beyond the project life. In view of this, interventions to empower and increase the sustainability of community-based organizations – for example tailor-made institutional and organizational capacity-building, policy engagement and legal and operational frameworks for business partnerships – need to include establishment of sustainable funding mechanisms to augment their capacity to serve the project beneficiaries more effectively and sustainably. This can include building systems for income-generation and feasible membership contributions that offer a resource base for sustainable operational support to their beneficiaries.

Inclusive rural transformation. Inclusion of marginalized groups (women, youth, Indigenous peoples and the poorest groups) is the core operational requirement in IFAD projects. Though most projects set inclusion targets for women and youth and extremely poor households, the inclusion of these marginalized groups in project activities and decision-making processes is constrained by poor attendance at meetings, lack of confidence in expressing views and limited powers of influence. In some cases, women, young people and extremely poor beneficiaries are excluded due to economic factors and socially constructed gender norms. The project design should address any socio-economic and cultural norms that are likely to reduce social inclusion in accessing project goods and services delivered through SFOs. A community-driven development approach that ensures proper targeting of the most vulnerable groups needs to be applied in project design to support producers' organizations and other types of SFOs in achieving optimum levels of inclusion. Integrating processes such as the Gender Action Learning System and other participatory tools to address gender inequality into project design should be further promoted. In addition, it is recommended that socio-economic analysis be conducted at the start of project design to develop tailor-made and context-specific interventions that enhance social inclusion and targeting.

Capacity to drive relevance of projects. Though SFOs represent large numbers of smallholder farmers and are responsible for providing economic/agribusiness services to their members, their involvement in the formulation of COSOPs and project design processes is limited. As a result, SFOs have limited influence on the relevance of country programmes and the focus of projects to ensure that they adequately address the constraints faced by smallholder farmers. Participation of SFOs in COSOPs needs to be strengthened to give them more space to contribute to IFAD's strategic and operational programming processes at country level. This also includes continuous engagement with IFAD country teams, consultations in the COSOP development process, project design and implementation review to improve the relevance of projects and the achievement of impacts on the livelihoods of smallholder farmers. The appointment of farmer organization focal points in ESA is expected to improve the involvement of SFOs in the programming of IFAD operations.

Empowerment of smallholder farmers. As revealed by the survey findings, a large number of IFAD projects in ESA have included interventions to strengthen empowerment of SFOs. The interventions have focused on capacity-building for advocacy, policy dialogue and governance structures that enhance their collective actions, influence and convening powers. Projects have provided limited support



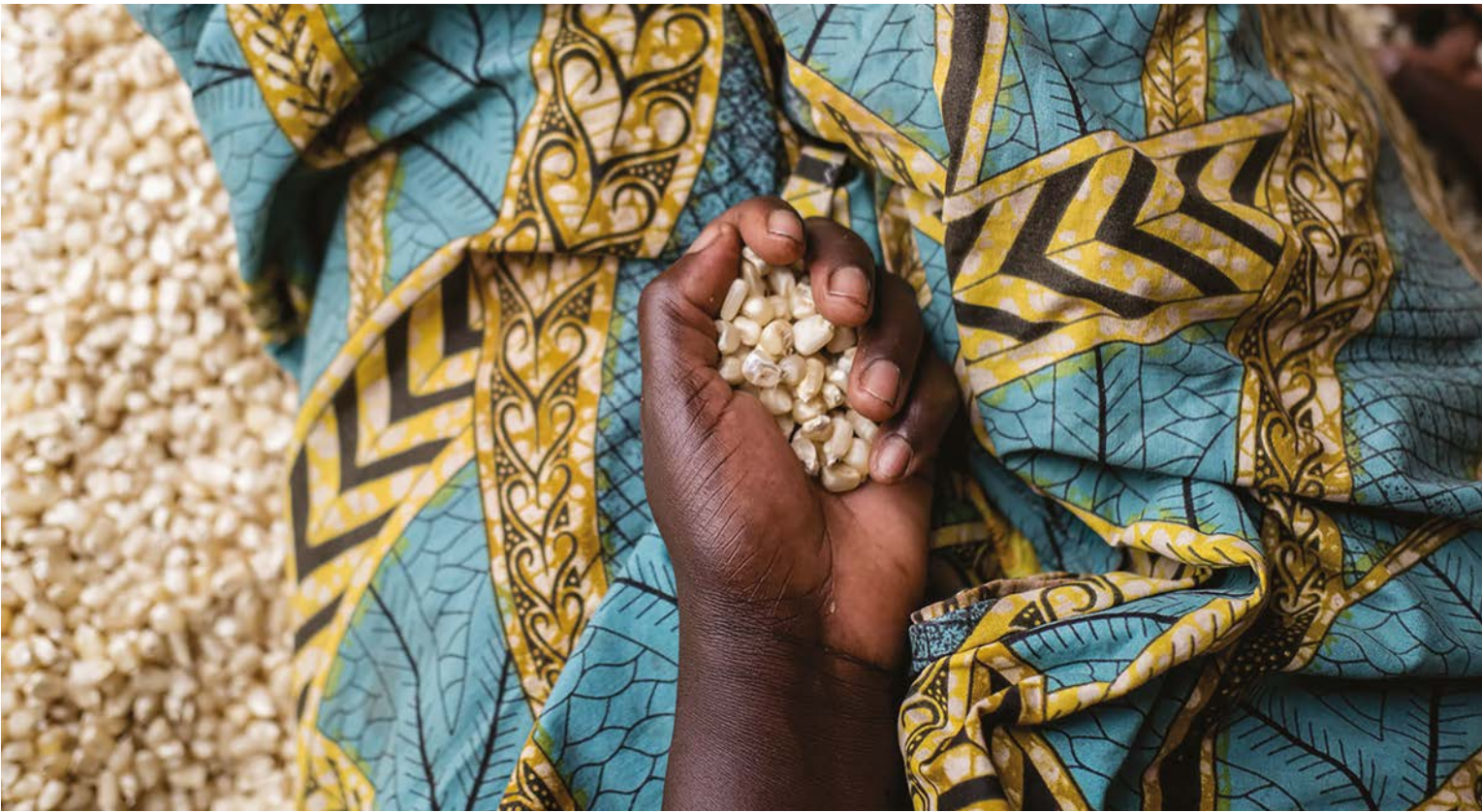
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in negotiation skills, legal and contracting literacy, and entrepreneurship skills for building effective business partnerships with the private sector. Additional gaps have been identified in the digitalization of services, which has become important in reaching out to smallholder farmers to support their access to economic services in the presence of COVID-19 challenges. Project designs, especially where a value chain approach is used, need to put more emphasis on interventions that support SFOs to address these gaps. The focus should be on improving their operational and agribusiness skills, confidence and competencies so that they can participate actively as equal partners in the rural development space.

Transformative operations. In order to realize full impacts and transformation of SFOs through ESA projects, it is important for projects to support SFOs to take a transformative leap towards strengthening their business orientation, particularly in terms of redirecting their organizational and institutional culture and mind-set towards a business-led approach. The focus should be on business management skills and capacity to develop, manage and sustain business partnerships, with attention being given to contractual processes and obligations for producer organizations in value chain projects, such as delivering produce that meets agreed quality standards and is on schedule; and adhering to payment and other business agreements. Coaching and mentoring by specialized business development service providers to strengthen overall business orientation and skills should be made an integral part of project interventions. In addition, project designs need to pay attention to capacity-building (hardware and software) of producer organizations (commodity-based) to mobilize their members for collective actions, such as bulking of produce and investments in upper stream value chain segments.

Sustainability of projects. Lack of adequate organizational and agribusiness skills by community producer organizations, such as preparation of business plans, market analysis, cost structure and gross margin analyses, hampers the sustainability of their integration into value chain operations. In addition, there is a lack of financial management skills and strategies. Both national and regional farmers' organizations may have insufficient operational and technical skills to manage project

implementation and provide the envisaged services to project beneficiaries. It is a good practice to conduct institutional analysis as part of project design to identify key priority areas that need to be strengthened to ensure that different types of SFOs are properly integrated into projects, with a view to promoting their sustainability. This should be refined at project start-up and progress should be tracked throughout the life of the project by making the SFO capacity-building and graduation pathway part of the monitoring and evaluation framework, using specific sustainability indicators to track achievements.



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7. Conclusions and recommendations

IFAD-financed projects integrate an array of SFOs in ESA, as project beneficiaries and/or implementation partners. SFOs range from community-based farmer groups and associations to national and regional level apex organizations. In most cases, IFAD projects engage enterprise-based groups/associations and youth/women-based groups, farmer field schools and primary cooperative societies. Other common SFOs include primary cooperative societies, natural resources management groups and community-based seed producers. IFAD's support for SFOs in the region is a clear confirmation of the Fund's commitment to leverage the potential and opportunities presented by such organizations as vehicles to serve smallholder farmers better, within the context of its 2016-2025 strategic framework.

IFAD projects in the region cover a range of different interventions to empower SFOs for the delivery of economic services. For all types of SFOs, substantial investment has gone to interventions to strengthen their capacity for advocacy and lobbying, policy engagement and dialogue; development of organizational and governance systems; facilitating processes to acquire legal status; and building sustainable financing mechanisms. While these interventions are important in getting the right institutions and organizational structures in place for the delivery of services such as access to markets and finance for productive investments, transformative solutions to improve the quality of agribusiness services and sustainable finances for commercialization are equally relevant for development of SFOs. IFAD support should therefore target SFOs in the region (especially commodity-based NFOs and RFOs) that display capacity for business ventures and potential for accessing finances under the new IFAD private sector funding programme to strengthen their business capacity and expand outreach to smallholder farmers. For example, the preliminary

lessons from ongoing non-sovereign operations (NSOs) in the region should be used to identify potential opportunities for including SFOs in the NSOs pipeline. Integration of SFOs at retail level for the Green Climate Fund, and participation in the ABC Fund and in ASAP+ should also be explored.

The value chain approach is widely used to support the integration of SFOs in IFAD investments, often through the 4Ps model. The value chain approach has helped SFOs to forge business relationships between their members and other actors in the value chains, such as input suppliers; commodity traders; food processors; financial institutions; and service providers, such as business and advisory services. Taking into consideration the importance of linking smallholder farmers to finance, markets and agribusiness services, ESA is better positioned to build on these achievements by investing more in innovative business models that offer transformative commercial partnerships for smallholders through their organizations. The innovative business models developed by various projects in the region, such as the business-to-business model (B2B) piloted under the e-Granary project, should provide useful lessons. Important partnership elements, such as agribusiness skills, economies of scale and developing a conducive business environment, would need to be equally considered as priority areas for any SFO capacity development agenda.

SFOs serve as advisory service providers, whereby farmer groups, associations and cooperatives facilitate smallholder farmers' access to productivity-enhancing farming technologies and practices. The farmer field schools approach is commonly used to introduce and disseminate improved farming practices through systematic group-based learning-by-doing processes aimed at accelerating the adoption of new technologies, good agricultural practices, including climate-smart practices/innovations, and business skills. The farmer field schools approach has resulted in increased agricultural productivity, farmer empowerment and improved food and nutrition security for households. To enhance outreach and impacts from farmer field schools, ESA projects could benefit from investing in the digitalization of farmer field schools processes, building on the lessons from the Rural Poor Stimulus Facility interventions designed to digitalize extension services in response to movement restrictions due to COVID-19, such as E-SLIP in Zambia.

National farmer organizations and regional farmer organizations have played a significant role as project partners. They have cofinanced and managed project implementation, which contributed to increased ownership and sustainability of the projects. In parallel, the IFAD projects have supported operational and institutional capacity-building of apex organizations to elevate their ability to deliver economic services and benefits to smallholder producers. However, the actual capacity of RFOs/NFOs to manage and implement projects in some cases is overestimated, especially for fiduciary aspects (financial management and procurement), monitoring and evaluation, specialized technical areas such as digitalization, and complex business management roles. To minimize the risks to achievement of the intended project results, IFAD should provide continuous tailor-made, hands-on, implementation support to NFO/RFO partners throughout the project period to build capacity for the identified skill gaps. Furthermore, engagement with apex organizations as partners in project execution needs deeper assessment so that lessons can be drawn to inform IFAD's strategic approach.



©IFAD/Scaling Up Bee-keeping and Other Livelihood Options to Strengthen Farming Systems grant to *icipe* (Ethiopia)

SFO operations are constrained by lack of access to finance and business skills and limited integration of SFOs in selected value chains. The SFOs are unable to command sufficient sustainable financial resources to support their operations and lack agribusiness skills, such as in the preparation of business plans, and market and financial analysis. This hampers their ability to provide quality services to their members and to build sustainable commercial partnerships in value chains. In addition, multiple obstacles are responsible for SFO empowerment being only partly achieved under IFAD-financed projects, mainly because resources allocated are insufficient, suitable interventions have not been identified at the design stage and project duration is too short. To accelerate SFO transformation, project design should focus more on these obstacles, particularly building the capacity of SFOs to deliver professional and efficient agribusiness services to smallholder farmers. Greater attention should also be given to offering coaching and mentoring through specialized business development service providers, including agri-agencies already working with IFAD; and to expanding the engagement of apex commodity NFOs to enhance smallholders' trade volumes.

Building sustainable SFOs requires institutional development, through the establishment of robust organizational and governance structures. It is important to conduct institutional analysis as part of project design to identify priority intervention areas; to determine capacity gaps and how to address them; and to assess the level of readiness to deliver required agribusiness development services. Institutional development should be an integral part of the project monitoring and evaluation framework, with specific indicators for tracking progress towards achievement of desired organizational systems and structures that facilitate SFOs to deliver on their mandates, effectively and efficiently.

Involvement of SFOs in the formulation of COSOPs and project design is still inadequate. Targeted consultations with SFOs and their active participation in the formulation of COSOPs and project design is of paramount importance to increase

the influence of SFOs on IFAD's strategic agenda at the country level and to ensure that the priorities of food producers inform the country's five-year investment vision. Their participation in project design as partners is equally important to ensure that the proposed project target groups and interventions respond well to the constraints, challenges and investment priorities involved in transforming all categories of smallholder producers.

Project designs need to integrate SFOs as drivers of **resilient, inclusive and equitable rural development**. The project design framework, proposed theory of change and interventions should embrace innovative business models that support the capacity of SFOs at the local and apex levels to deliver or facilitate agribusiness services to a critical mass of smallholder farmers. At the same time, project design models should aim at increasing the responsiveness of producer organizations to market demands for quality, delivery volumes and timeliness. Financial cooperatives, such as SACCOs, should be supported to build their financial base and take a leap to provide innovative financial services in partnership with commercial financial institutions and community financial service providers, such as microfinance institutions. In addition, project interventions should put in place systems within community-based organizations to manage and sustain services offered to project beneficiaries beyond the life of a project.

Annex 1: Gap analysis matrix for project design

Benefits of strategic integration of smallholder farmers' organizations	Desired state	Current state
Improving targeting of operations	Smallholder farmers' organizations (SFOs) play an active role in ensuring that projects and programmes reach and benefit their target groups of smallholder farmers to reduce rural poverty, increase food security and enhance ownership of programmes.	SFOs, especially community-based organizations, such as farmer groups and associations, play a key role in delivering project support to beneficiaries, with assurance of reaching the intended target groups, especially the marginalized poor, vulnerable groups and extremely poor people.
Enhancing inclusive rural development	Women, youth and other marginalized groups participate in and benefit equally from project activities that support SFO development and enhance IFAD's inclusive development agenda.	In most cases, projects have quotas of 40-50 per cent for women's participation in FO committees. Ordinarily, the leadership positions they occupy are secretary and treasurer. Experience shows that their participation in meetings is limited due to conflicting responsibilities in the household, lack of confidence and competence. On the other hand, youth participation is constrained by age-related cultural biases.
Improving relevance of project	SFOs serve as an entry point in understanding area-specific needs of smallholder farmers and defining their priorities in agricultural development and thus help to adapt project activities to their needs and ensure their relevance.	Engagement with SFOs during project design is not evident in most projects. The specific needs of smallholder farmers are therefore not necessarily identified, except where SFOs are either beneficiaries or implementation partners of a project.
Enhancing empowerment of smallholder farmers	SFOs represent smallholders in contract negotiations with different actors and in dialogue with government authorities on important policy issues, and promote better governance, policies and institutions for agriculture and rural development.	Empowerment of SFOs focuses on skills development through training in various topics – such as financial literacy, enterprise development, group formation and record keeping – to strengthen SFO capacity to manage their businesses independently.
Reinforcing transformative impacts of operations	SFOs are increasing project outreach to include marginalized poor people and vulnerable rural populations, linking them to productive assets and market opportunities by creating economies of scale upstream and primary production downstream for large numbers of beneficiaries, thus generating greater impacts on poverty reduction and food insecurity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved productivity due to increased access to inputs through inputs-bulking initiatives, and advisory services for a large number of farmers through their cooperatives, groups and associations; • Increased access to markets and sales due to collective selling; • Improved profitability resulting from economies of scale and competitive access to inputs markets; • Increased access to affordable loans through group-adapted financial products; • Improved access to relevant economic services.

Identified gaps

Priority action areas for project design

SFOs are unable to adequately reach a critical mass of project target groups. They lack resources and operational capacities, such as transport, which hinders their ability to reach project beneficiaries in remote areas. They also lack adequate capacity and community systems to manage and sustain services offered to project beneficiaries beyond the project life.

Project support should include establishment of a conducive environment to enable SFOs to increase their membership base to include marginalized groups and communities in remote areas. In tandem with this, their capacity to provide critical services to all project target groups should be strengthened throughout the life of the project.

Participation of women in leadership positions is limited. Their active participation in decision-making processes is constrained by poor attendance at meetings, lack of confidence to express their views and limited powers of influence, while in most cases youths and the extremely poor are excluded due to economic factors and socially constructed gender norms.

The economic and social empowerment of women and youth needs to be improved, and they need to be equipped with leadership skills to develop their confidence and competence so that they are able to fill more leadership positions in their groups, associations or committees. SFOs with a focus on women and youth should be targeted for support by projects to directly address their specific needs and challenges.

There is limited involvement of SFOs in the formulation of country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) and project design processes.

SFOs should be actively engaged as key stakeholders in the preparation of COSOPs. Participatory approaches should be applied during project design to identify the specific needs of different target groups and to help devise differentiated solutions.

There has been limited support through projects on negotiation skills, legal literacy and contracting processes, and entrepreneurial skills, which would provide a stronger foundation for effective partnership with the private sector and in lobbying and advocacy for policy dialogue. These gaps have undermined the operational capacity, confidence and competencies of SFOs needing to actively participate in rural development initiatives as equal partners.

SFOs that are project beneficiaries need capacities that cover specific gaps in areas such as governance, policy dialogue and lobbying, institutional development, communication and negotiation skills, legal and financial literacy. Their participation and influence in rural development initiatives needs to be developed, with a view to enabling them to support smallholder farmers in a sustainable manner.

Realization of full impacts from the engagement of SFOs in the project is constrained by various factors, particularly organizational and institutional shortfalls; capacity gaps in leadership, business management and technical skills; partnership gaps with development actors; inadequate capacity to mobilize smallholder farmers to benefit fully from collective actions, such as bulking of produce, and shortage of capital to invest in upstream segments of value chain, such as processing.

Focus on coaching by specialized business service providers to strengthen overall business operational and managerial skills; improve services to SFO members, such as bulk buying of inputs, product bulking for joint marketing, creation of commercial partnerships with private companies or linkages to large commodity traders, and increasing capital and investments along the value chain (such as in processing and value addition) to increase profits.

Benefits of strategic integration of smallholder farmers' organizations	Desired state	Current state
Serving as business partners	SFOs are recognized business partners with various actors and provide smallholders with a range of economic services that enable them to increase benefits derived from market participation.	A number of value chain projects include building partnerships between SFOs and various private actors such as offtakers, input dealers, financial institutions and advisory service providers. In most cases, the partnerships are formalized through memorandums of understanding or business contracts.
Improving sustainability of projects	SFOs increase ownership of interventions, and foster sustainability of projects.	Building sustainable SFOs has been the focus of many projects with attention given to institutional development, capacity-building in organizational and governance skills, business planning and marketing.

Identified gaps

Priority action areas for project design

Partnerships are experiencing a number of challenges that threaten their sustainability. In addition, some SFOs are able to engage through contracts with private actors throughout the life of a project, but most do not last due to a number of challenges, such as lack of trust and inadequate understanding of contractual obligations on the part of smallholder farmers, particularly in terms of timely delivery of produce at agreed quality standards, on the one hand, and delayed payments and low prices paid by business partners on the other.

Producer organizations lack agribusiness skills (for example in preparation of business plans, market analysis, cost structure and gross margin analyses), which hampers the efficiency and sustainability of their integration into value chain operations.

Prioritize capacity-building to support professionalization of SFOs and their gradual shift towards market development, business orientation including food safety and standards, as well as putting in place a legal framework to foster win-win partnerships. Also, SFOs should be assessed at the project design stage to determine their strengths and weaknesses and identify opportunities for them to sustainably provide services to their members in partnership with other development actors.

Conduct institutional analysis as part of project design to identify key priority areas that need to be strengthened to ensure SFO sustainability. This should be refined at project start-up and progress should be tracked throughout the life of the project by making capacity-building part of the monitoring and evaluation framework.

Annex 2: Mapping matrix: Projects supporting farmer organizations in East and Southern Africa at different levels

Methodology: Review of president's reports, project design reports, selected supervision mission reports, mid-term reviews and project completion reports.

#	Country/subregion	Project name	Brief description of the type of farmer organization(s)
Regional farmer organizations			
1.	East and Southern Africa Region	Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (FO4ACP) (2019-2023)	The project is a five-year initiative funded by the European Union and IFAD. Project coverage includes Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. In Africa, the FO4ACP is implemented by five regional farmers' organizations that are members of the Pan-African Farmers Organization (PAFO), the first continental platform of farmers organizations in Africa, and by AgriCord, a non-profit global alliance of agri-agencies mandated by FOs in Europe, Canada, Africa and Asia. In East and Southern Africa (ESA), FO4ACP is implemented by the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF) in the East Africa subregion and the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU) in the Southern Africa subregion, with involvement of national farmer organizations (NFOs) across all countries. The overall goal of the project is to increase income and improve the livelihoods, food and nutrition security and safety of organized smallholder and family farmers in southern Africa. The project comprises four components: delivery of economic services along priority value chains, enabling the business environment, institutional development of FOs, and communication and visibility.
2.	East and Southern Africa Region	Support to Farmers' Organizations in Africa Programme (SFOAP) (completed) (2013-2018)	SFOAP was cofinanced by the European Union, Swiss Development Cooperation and Agence Française de Développement to strengthen the capacity of farmers' organizations in African countries and regional and pan-African networks. In ESA, the project supported NFOs in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. The main purpose was to support farmers' organizations to develop into stable, performing, accountable organizations that represent their members effectively and advise farmers. In addition to strengthening institutional and organizational capacities, and capacities to influence policies, SFOAP developed new activities to improve entrepreneurial capacities and participation in value chains and provided support to PAFO. SFOAP closed in 2019.

Business model**Salient lessons**

No documentation of lessons in the Grant portal.

SFOAP policy engagement activities have shown that pursuing policy changes at regional and national level can be particularly challenging. Experiences with the EAFF have shown that it is important to have dedicated staff, in the regional farmer organization and NFOs, who are tasked with analysing existing policies and formulating policy positions.

Experiential learning among SACAU members provides practical experiences in dealing with day-to-day challenges encountered by NFOs.

FOs need to think of how to mobilize resources in addition to the conventional way of writing project proposals. Getting funding is becoming more competitive and young NFOs are at a disadvantage. Building strategic relationships with partners has proved critical in mobilizing resources as well as other avenues for efficient collection of members fees.

#	Country/subregion	Project name	Brief description of the type of farmer organization(s)
3.	Eastern Africa (Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda)	e-Granary (2018-2022)	The project uses the e-Granary innovative mobile platform to deliver economic services to farmers in East Africa. The project goal is to improve the income and living standards of participating smallholder farmers in Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda. The project development objective is to increase the productivity and profitability of participating farmers. The e-Granary is financed by the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP). IFAD is the designated supervisory entity for this grant. The e-Granary project coordination is under the responsibility of the EAFF and key implementing partners are: in Rwanda, Imbaraga and the National Cooperatives Confederation of Rwanda; in Tanzania, the Tanzania Federation of Cooperatives (TFC) and Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania (MVIWATA) (Swahili name meaning National Network of Small-Scale Farmers Groups in Tanzania); and in Uganda, the Uganda Cooperative Alliance (UCA) and Uganda National Farmers Federation (UNFFE).
4.	Eastern Africa (Burundi Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda)	Scaling up rural youth access to inclusive financial services for entrepreneurship and employment (SYAF) (2017-2021)	The implementing agency was the Eastern Africa Farmers' Federation (EAFF) in partnership with its affiliated national farmers' organizations in target project countries (Burundi, Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda). The main objectives of SYAF were to: (i) build the capacity of poor rural youth organizations to design and deliver entrepreneurship training, mentorship, business development services and partnership services to support youth entrepreneurs in rural areas of East Africa; (ii) build the capacity of local financial institutions to provide alternative start-up and scale-up capitals through risk assessment and mitigation, and to develop and deliver pro-poor youth-inclusive financial tools to rural young people in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda and (iii) consolidate and share learning from the project through practical knowledge products, communities of practice, and events that will support the scaling-up and replication of successful pro-poor youth-led venture creation and business development for rural youth in East Africa.

No record of this grant.

- Young people do not have sufficient understanding of calls for proposals and are therefore less able to respond adequately. Significant capacity-building is needed to ensure young people can understand and access opportunities open to them.
- There is a need to involve the market/offtaker stakeholders in this project because they are the ones who will guarantee the market for produce/raw materials for youth enterprises. These offtakers will enter into contractual agreements focusing on demand versus supply of raw materials or commodities. The youth enterprises can then present both supply contracts and investor trajectory proposals to financial service providers to secure loans for their enterprises.
- Partnerships and alliances are a very important component in this project. This is because they create an opportunity to learn from each other and develop mutual synergies to address critical issues affecting youth in agriculture.
- There is a need to phase out training for youth and instead to categorize young people in clusters as agribusinesses or start-ups. This is because their capacity needs differ and also the level of entrepreneurship engagement will be different.
- There is a need to match business plans to the right funding institutions. This will contribute to ensuring that the needs of youth will be met.
- Young people need a considerable amount of capacity-building to handle the technical side of their enterprises. Some of them are not really considering how they could do business properly for better profits.

#	Country/subregion	Project name	Brief description of the type of farmer organization(s)
5.	Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Côte d'Ivoire	Transforming Systems for Professionalizing Farmers and Farmer Organizations in Developing Countries (2020-2022)	This is a grant-funded project implemented by the Agribusiness Market Ecosystems Alliance (AMEA), a global network bringing together currently 26 members from the agribusiness sector with the common goal of professionalizing farmer organizations. The project became operational in March 2020 and will continue for three years. The primary target group consists of smallholder farmers in seven developing countries, including four with existing AMEA networks – Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Côte d'Ivoire; and three other countries where new local networks will be developed. The project will accelerate the professionalization of farmer organizations and incentivize the improvement of service quality by establishing more accountability and transparency on the services provided and the level of professionalism achieved, through various interventions in three components: Component 1: Sustainable ecosystems of business development services that accelerate the professionalization of farmers and their organizations; Component 2: Professional farmer organizations are able to obtain financing from agribusiness financiers; Component 3: Vibrant member-driven local networks exist in seven countries.
National farmer organizations			
6.	Lesotho	Wool and Mohair Promotion Project (WAMPP) (2014-2022)	WAMPP work with Lesotho National Wool and Mohair Growers Association (LNWMGA) by strengthening their capacities and that of shearing shed associations. LNWMGA exercises leadership over the wool and mohair subsector, oversees activities of the subsector actors, provides wholesale inputs, delivers extension services and runs breeding farms. In addition, the LNWMGA acts as the policy advocate for the wool and mohair subsector and a key service provider to the project. The association is a cofinancer of WAMPP and implementer of some of the project activities, particularly the feeds and drugs revolving fund through its district and national committees.
7.	Kenya	Smallholder Dairy Commercialization Programme (SDCP) (2005-2019)	<p>This project closed in February 2020. It had worked with dairy groups and a number of apex organizations that had contractual arrangements with suppliers of inputs and milk buyers.</p> <p>Apex organizations played a central role in the dairy business hub approach in terms of offering a range of services to small-scale dairy producers including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to quality inputs at a competitive price including artificial insemination, feed and veterinary products • Support for registration and recording of animals • Linkages with public and private technical service providers for capacity-building • Access to financial services as registered agents of financial institutions.

Business model

Salient lessons

A new project, no lessons to document as yet.

Public-private-producer partnership

Strengthening the human–environment nexus can be done steadily through supporting grazing associations and other producer conglomerates in understanding the urgent need to manage their surrounding resources. The support includes a variety of tools such as Participatory Integrated Climate Services for Agriculture training.

The nature-asset approach in rangeland management is linked to productive value chains (wool and mohair) that (i) integrate rural farmers and (ii) provide financial well-being and rural livelihoods.

No clear/formal model (mix of community organization and private sector engagement in commercialization)

Better targeting is essential in supporting producer groups. This includes considering aspects such as groups' economic activity, level of organization and individual farmers' milk production in order to support the progression of groups to market-oriented dairy farming.

Dairy groups are empowered to enter into contracts with major dairy processors. Such groups manage milk collection and cooling centres and have demonstrated their potential to serve as “business hubs” where small-scale producers and service providers exchanged products and services.

#	Country/subregion	Project name	Brief description of the type of farmer organization(s)
8.	Madagascar	Support to Farmers' Professional Organizations and Agricultural Services Project (AROPA) (2008-2019)	<p>The goal of AROPA was to strengthen existing farmers' organizations, with the aim of improving agricultural production and increasing the incomes of rural households. It reinforced farmers and their organizations to better integrate them into the value chain and to facilitate farmers' access to services by matching demand and supply.</p> <p>Capacity-building was also implemented in sustainable development of farming systems and conservation of natural resources for professional organizations (farmers' organizations/apex organizations) together with training of trainers in the project's target regions.</p>
9.	Rwanda	Project for Rural Income through Exports (PRICE) (2010-2020)	<p>Working through farmer cooperatives such as the Rwanda Federation of Tea Cooperatives, the Rwandan Coffee Cooperatives Federation and sericulture cooperatives, this project provided support as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the farmers' negotiating position and developing capacities to orient and monitor value chain development by strengthening unions of cooperatives and their federations • Promoting better relations between tea cooperatives and private factories enabling farmers to earn a higher share of the end market price • Supporting participating cooperatives in their management capacities • Providing technical assistance to support the Rwanda Silk Farmers Federation.
Subregional farmer organizations			
10.	Uganda	Project for the Restoration of Livelihoods in the Northern Region (PRELNOR) (2014-2022)	<p>PRELNOR works through district farmers associations (DFAs) to deliver extension services through farmer group facilitators. A farmer group approach is used, with a total of 1,800 groups reached.</p> <p>The project will train DFAs and local government extension staff to provide support to farmer group facilitators and to plan, monitor and supervise group programmes.</p>
Community-based farmer organizations			
11.	Burundi	Value Chain Development Programme (PRODEFI II) (2010-2021)	<p>The project launched a new dynamic focused on structuring and strengthening the capacities of producers and their organizations, and on development through the conservation, processing and marketing of products.</p>

Business model	Salient lessons
No clear/formal model	<p>Maintain additional support for producer organizations (POs) that do not have a strictly economic vocation (exchange groups, regional associations, unions, etc.).</p>
Public-private-producer partnerships (4Ps)	<p>Strategic partnerships between the factories and cooperatives promote better relations between tea cooperatives and private factories enabling farmers to earn a higher share of the end market price.</p> <p>The sequencing of Turnaround Programme (TAP1) and TAP2 interventions enabled the project to integrate lessons from TAP1 into TAP2, contributing to the greater impact of TAP2.</p> <p>It is crucial to follow up on the TAP-supported cooperatives to guarantee the sustainability of the impacts realized. Some farmers claimed that the one-year programme was insufficient to tackle the issues they currently face.</p>
Community-based organizations	<p>Building the capacity and competencies of district and local government staff is key to the success of farmer organizations.</p> <p>Considering the importance of farmers' organization, DFAs need to be supported in the priority areas of governance, lobbying, negotiations, extension services and resource mobilization.</p>
Community organization and institutional linkages	Not available

#	Country/subregion	Project name	Brief description of the type of farmer organization(s)
12.	Eritrea	Fisheries Resources Management Programme (FRMP) (2016-2023)	The programme provides direct support to inland fishing cooperatives/enterprise groups to strengthen input-provision services and ensure that legally constituted cooperatives and enterprise groups have access to the inputs required to operate economically viable and sustainable fish-related businesses. Assets financing to established cooperatives/enterprise groups is also covered by the programme.
13.	Eritrea	National Agriculture Project (NAP) (2012-2021)	<p>This project works with a number of farmer groups, including village-based seed enterprises to produce certified seed. Producer groups/associations are also supported through training, including technical support to enable them to undertake processing and marketing of honey and honey products. Two honey processing centres are managed by producer groups/associations.</p> <p>Other local community institutions and producer organizations (e.g. water user associations (WUAs)) are strengthened and encouraged to participate in all stages of project implementation, including design, construction, operation and maintenance of infrastructure, including systems for irrigation, and soil and water conservation, seed development facilities, and livestock investments.</p>
14.	Eswatini	Smallholder Market-led Project (SMLP) (2015-2022)	The project supports the formation of natural resource management groups such as water users and erosion control groups; and infrastructure users' groups to operate, maintain and guard the irrigation and water infrastructure. It also trains infrastructure users' groups in aspects such as operation and maintenance, internal rules (and task distribution) and hand-over of management.

Business model	Salient lessons
Community organization–cooperative	<p>While cooperatives use by-laws to manage their activities, there is no legal framework to regulate cooperatives in the country, which presents some risks to their governance sustainability as the benefits, rights, responsibilities, sanctions and legal obligations are unclear and likely to undermine their institutional effectiveness.</p> <p>There is an opportunity for the project to initiate a dialogue about developing a dedicated cooperatives policy and legal framework.</p> <p>The Cooperative Support Unit and cooperatives themselves need further training and hands-on mentoring to build their managerial and business capacities. Furthermore, capacity-building opportunities should be explored for short-term exchange training and linkages with other IFAD projects (e.g. a recent exchange visit to IFAD’s project in India) and international fisheries organizations.</p>
A combination of community organizations and public-private-producer partnerships	<p>Local-level institutions, particularly WUAs, should be further supported to strengthen their capacity in operation and maintenance for water infrastructures. Other institutions such as cooperatives would need capacity-building in business orientation.</p> <p>Partnership is critical in the delivery of outputs and outcomes of research, particularly on leveraging knowledge, experience and benefits of scaling up.</p>
Community-based organizations	<p>Building human and social capital is critical in achieving group sustainability and effectiveness. The effectiveness of the training methodology should be tracked, with a view to making it transferable and improving its impacts.</p> <p>As training intensifies following the recruitment of business development service providers, it is important to ensure that training methodology improves accessibility of training for beneficiary groups. A monitoring system will need to be developed to measure the effectiveness of each training event.</p> <p>Aspects that promote inclusion, participation and empowerment can be built into future training plans for water user groups, natural resource management groups and similar associations.</p>

#	Country/subregion	Project name	Brief description of the type of farmer organization(s)
15.	Ethiopia	Participatory Small-scale Irrigation Development Programme (PASIDP) (2016-2024)	<p>In PASIDP multiple farmer organizations are involved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrigation water users' associations (IWUAs), which are involved in the entire process of irrigation scheme development, from identification to the scheme handover • Multi-purpose cooperatives, which help farmers to market their surplus produce • Watershed management groups, which play an important role in improving land and water management through watershed/catchment rehabilitation and management activities. <p>Access to sustainable irrigation schemes is through the establishment and strengthening of IWUAs, which act as representatives of the irrigation farmers. IWUAs actively participate in the entire process of irrigation scheme development, from identification to the final hand-over. PASIDP also supports the improvement of crop husbandry practices, mainly through farmers' research groups.</p>
16.	Ethiopia	<p>Rural Financial Intermediation Programme (RUFIP I, II and III)</p> <p>RUFIP I (2003-2010)</p> <p>RUFIP II (2012-2020)</p> <p>RUFIP III (2020-2026)</p>	<p>Some components of RUFIP are aimed at strengthening and promoting a number of community-based financial institutions and rural SACCOs such as rural savings and credit cooperatives and their unions.</p>
17.	Kenya	Kenya Cereal Enhancement Programme Climate-Resilient Agricultural Livelihoods Window (KCEP-CRAL) (2015-2022)	<p>Under KCEP, 250 cereal farmer associations have been established and linked to structured grain trading, including selling to the Strategic Food Reserve through the National Cereals and Produce Board. The cereal farmer associations established are linked to a structured grain trading system, comprising 250 collection centres and 137 certified warehouses with warehouse receipt system services.</p> <p>KCEP also works with a host of other institutions, including farmers groups, marketing committees, self-help or community-based organizations, farmer cooperatives and agrodealers associations.</p>

Business model	Salient lessons
<p>A mix of farmer organizations involved for different interventions</p>	<p>Market-oriented farmers' cooperative development is essential for sustainability. Engagement in input material procurement in large quantities with less cost; improved primary production technologies and coordination; and sales to better output markets and increased farm revenues contributed to the success of many cooperatives in PASIDP.</p> <p>Social acceptance of the programme during implementation keeps things live and sustains the benefits.</p>
	<p>The transition of activities, particularly those related to fiduciary and capacity-building development, is required to build sustainability in institutional and organizational development of microfinance institutions, rural SACCOs and their unions.</p> <p>The structured training programme and tailor-made exposure visits have enhanced the knowledge and skills of participating institutions; improved business processes, leadership competences and technical aspects such as risk-based supervision, governance and managerial skills.</p>
<p>Public-private-producer partnerships (4P) with financial institutions</p>	<p>The programme needs to improve on women and youth leadership skills so that they have the confidence and ability to fill more leadership positions in their groups, associations or committees.</p>

#	Country/subregion	Project name	Brief description of the type of farmer organization(s)
18.	Kenya	Upper Tana Catchment Natural Resource Management Project (UTaNRMP) (2012-2022)	<p>The project has operated through water-resource users' associations (WRUAs) to manage river basins, and through community forest associations to develop sub-catchment management plans. A participatory process has been followed, involving all communities dependent on the natural resources of the Upper Tana catchment area. Community forest associations have developed forest management plans, which include initiatives for forest protection, rehabilitation of degraded areas, reduction of human-wildlife conflict and alternative income-generating activities.</p> <p>UTaNRMP provided WRUAs with training to develop their sub-catchment management plans. In terms of capacity-building, the training was offered in data collection, development of income-generating activities, tackling climate change issues that affect sustainable use of water, gender equity, ownership, laws, conflicts and conflict management, leadership and book-keeping.</p> <p>A number of community forest associations formed in the gazetted hills within the project area have been taken through the preparation of participatory forestry management plans and funded to implement these plans through the matching grants administered by the Water Services Trust Fund.</p>
19.	Lesotho	Smallholder Agriculture Development Project Supervision Report (SADP) (2011-2020)	<p>SADP targets smallholder farmers and farmer groups that need support to improve their income-generating activities. This is being achieved by strengthening farmers' groups, market linkages and information flows. Market linkages target farmer groups such as commodity-based farmer associations, district and local apex associations, registered farmer cooperatives, informal farmer organizations or producer interest groups, market intermediaries, agribusinesses, input suppliers and other market participants.</p>
20.	Malawi	Sustainable Agricultural Production Programme (SAPP) (2012-2023)	<p>Farmer groups are engaged by the programme and supported through training in group dynamics and leadership for group leaders. Facilitation support is also provided to encourage and enable the groups to affiliate with higher-level farmer organizations such as the Farmers Union of Malawi, National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi, and/or thematic networks involved in sustainable land and water management. Training activities are delivered by contracted NGOs and private sector service providers and monitored by the district agriculture extension personnel.</p>
21.	Malawi	Financial Access for Rural Markets, Smallholders and Enterprise (FARMSE) (2018-2025)	<p>FARMSE works by supporting community-based financial organizations (CBFOs) in order to improve rural people's access to CBFO services, such as through strengthening of existing CBFOs, establishment of new CBFOs and linking CBFOs and their members to SACCO savings, loans and insurance services. CBFO structures are designed to also serve as platforms for community members to discuss the development of their livelihoods.</p>

Business model	Salient lessons
Community-based organizations	<p>Field observations revealed that community forest associations need training in negotiation skills so that they can negotiate income allocations and incentives for forest scouts under the access and benefit-sharing schemes envisaged in forest management agreements.</p> <p>The capacity-building extended to associations through the project has put them on the path to sustainability.</p>
	<p>Despite farmer associations being the vehicle to raising working capital for many poor farmers, it was observed that financial benefits accrued to individual farmers are conversely related to the number of members of an association.</p> <p>The formation of umbrella groups is encouraged so that farmers can pool resources and negotiate prices based on bulk buying. This needs to be intensified across project districts, if enterprises are to be viable. Therefore, it is imperative that groups are supported in their social dynamics and that social capital is strengthened. This requires evaluation of the maturity and capacity of the existing Productive Investments and Competitive Grants Programme groups, while supporting them in their process of forming district-wide organizations.</p>
Community organizations (also public-private partnerships)	<p>The improved social capital generated through the use of the Household Approach is a good illustration of how women can be empowered through better participation in groups and joint decision-making within the different groups.</p> <p>Village agriculture committees have a vital role to play in ensuring the wider reach and adoption of good agricultural practices beyond the SAPP target groups.</p> <p>Strengthening and use of existing structures such as village agriculture committees and support from local leaders is seen as an effective route to social capital development.</p>
Community-based organizations	<p>Trained community facilitators to support CBFOs ensures availability of transferable skills such as financial literacy, enterprise development and mentoring, and improves the quality of human capital available.</p>

#	Country/subregion	Project name	Brief description of the type of farmer organization(s)
22.	Malawi	Programme for Rural Irrigation Development (PRIDE) (2016-2024)	PRIDE works with producer groups to enable participating farmers to develop economies of scale for bulking, processing, transport and marketing of their produce. These groups include WUAs, farmer field schools and farmer business schools. Producer groups are encouraged to bulk, grade and transport their products jointly and can subsequently benefit from negotiating better deals with market parties. Representatives of the producer groups participate in commodity platforms that seek new opportunities for creating surplus along the value chains for specific product groups.
23.	Malawi	Rural Livelihoods and Economic Enhancement Programme (RLEEP) (2009-2017)	RLEEP works through various farmer organizations, including village implementation groups, farmer production cooperatives and social development associations. According to the project completion report, there were some 640 farmers' organizations listed in the project counties, and about 70 per cent of these are legally registered as either cooperatives or social development associations. Examples of established farmer groups in RLEEP are milk-bulking groups; the umbrella organization, the Malawi Milk Producers' Association; and the Shire Highland Milk Production Association.
24.	Mozambique	Pro-poor Value Chain Development Project in the Maputo and Limpopo Corridors (PROSUL) (2012-2020)	PROSUL supported the strengthening of farmer organizations and WUAs, with a view to ensuring operation and maintenance (e.g. irrigation schemes, multi-functional boreholes, shade-cloths). The project established WUAs and service hubs that provide basic services such as storage and packaging and strengthen market linkages.
25.	Mozambique	Artisanal Fisheries Promotion Project (ProPESCA) (2010-2019)	ProPESCA strengthened the involvement of community fishing councils, community forest management committees and fishers associations with provincial and district co-management committees; improved fishing resource management; identified natural resource use by poorer members of the community, women and youth; and enabled artisanal fishing communities to map their resource use and to secure their resource rights.

Business model	Salient lessons
Community-based organizations/groups	<p>The capacity of WUAs has been improved through tailor-made training. Awareness campaigns on new land laws have also been run for district executive committees, area development councils and village development councils. Community involvement through WUAs, village natural resources management committees and farmer field schools, together with various training sessions, has contributed to social empowerment by improving skills, knowledge and self-perception. This has culminated in the development of 86 village-level agricultural plans and 42 forest management plans that have given users and associations control over their environment.</p> <p>The forward and backward linkages with input suppliers, traders and agribusiness enterprises paved the way for sustainability and a smooth programme exit.</p>
Community-based organization	<p>When agriculture/farmer cooperatives are strengthened and formally institutionalized, they play a role in providing technical support to farmers, which complements the work of the existing local government technical service stations. The scope of some cooperatives goes beyond production to processing and marketing interventions.</p> <p>Lessons learned from this programme and other IFAD programmes and projects in the country with similar activities demonstrate that developing value chain and market access through support to farmer cooperatives is an effective approach. It can enhance beneficiaries' access to the market and their resilience to market fluctuations. It also provides necessary technical services and can help raise production quality, thus leading to better opportunities.</p>
Community-based organizations	<p>Through the governance structure of multistakeholder platforms consisting of farmer groups, produce offtakers, input dealers, financial institutions, service providers and the public sector, meetings were held periodically to discuss members' needs and develop measures to solve their challenges. Chaired by an offtaker with a lead farmer group member as co-chair, the private sector is the driving force of the platform, which has become a reliable instrument for PROSUL sustainability.</p>
Community-based organizations	<p>Tap into extensive organized fisheries sector network and the relevant government staff (at different levels) for continuous capacity support to the exiting NutriPesca groups and create new ones.</p> <p>There is a significant need to address weak governance structure in co-management at the community fishing council level through more participatory engagement of beneficiaries and other stakeholders. An effective framework also needs to be put in place based on a review of the fisheries legislation and to address issues of participation, decision-making, revenue-generation, access rights, remuneration and equitable benefit-sharing.</p>

#	Country/subregion	Project name	Brief description of the type of farmer organization(s)
26.	Rwanda	Rwanda Dairy Development Project (RDDP) (2016-2022)	<p>RDDP works through establishment and strengthening of dairy farmer organizations; and facilitation of linkages to markets and dairy value chain actors, such as milk collectors, processors, transporters, traders, and investors in milk quality through public-private-producer partnerships (4Ps).</p> <p>Mapping and rapid assessment of all primary and secondary dairy cooperatives in the targeted area; formation, registration and support for establishment of governance structures for those under formation; preparation of five-year bankable enterprise development plans to guide investments for business growth; and tailor-made capacity-building of the cooperatives structured to address the specific capacity gaps identified in their enterprise development plans (in governance, business management and technical areas).</p>
27.	Rwanda	Climate-Resilient Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project (PASP) (2013-2020)	<p>PASP operated mainly through the Crop Intensification Programme, which has led to large numbers of smallholder participants in an established fertilizer distribution network and laid the foundation for stronger farmer cooperation for the purpose of bulking up output. It has also initiated the development of modern post-harvest infrastructure in key value chains.</p> <p>Of the 277 farmer cooperatives under the Crop Intensification Programme, 214 are currently supported by the project through a matching grant in different value chains: Irish potatoes, maize and beans, cassava, milk and horticultural products.</p>
28.	South Sudan	Livestock Marketing and Resilience Programme (LMRP) (2014-2021)	<p>The programme works through multipurpose village development councils; village-based institutions registered under the state law for community development committees. The councils consist of about 10-15 members, with responsibilities in the management of community development, operation and maintenance of community services, and management of the <i>sandug</i> as the microfinance arm in each village.</p>
29.	Tanzania	Marketing Infrastructure, Value Addition and Rural Finance Programme (MIVARF) (2011-2020)	<p>Under the Producers Empowerment and Market Linkage component, MIVARF works with producers through grass-roots financial institutions such as agricultural marketing cooperative societies and village community banks. The project worked through other farmer organizations, for example district farmer forums in Zanzibar, with more than 11,000 farmers. It performs a key advocacy role as an intermediary between farmers and district authorities, ministries, services and markets. The district farmer forums have amalgamated into national apex organization, representing smallholder farmers in national policy dialogues.</p>

Business model	Salient lessons
Public-private-producer partnerships (4Ps)	<p>Criteria used for the selection of cooperatives – such as leadership, management structures, milk collection, infrastructure investment and diversification of services – are considered an important ingredient for success.</p> <p>This is complemented by capacity-building, five-year strategic/business and implementation plans of milk collection centres and cooperatives. These are all key to the success of interventions to strengthen producer organizations.</p>
No clear/formal model – mainly public support to farmers organizations – access	<p>Building cooperatives into hubs requires a long-term investment and should be founded on an economically viable business model.</p> <p>To ensure sustainability, capacity-building and hub development need to systematically involve staff at the district level and local leaders. Training of trainers programmes on hub development, business development and 4P arrangements need to be organized with participation of all these actors. In addition, more exchange visits need to be planned, so that hub members can learn from each other. Members from strong hubs should be involved as “farmer trainers” in supporting other hubs.</p>
Community organizations and 4Ps	<p>For rural men and women to have control over their economic relations and manage their institutions, and to participate more actively in local decision-making processes, human resources and social capital should be boosted.</p>
Public-private-producer partnerships	<p>For many of the supported groups, viable business plans and access to loans are key objectives to be achieved so that these groups can be considered to have been empowered in a sustainable way.</p>

#	Country/subregion	Project name	Brief description of the type of farmer organization(s)
30.	Uganda	Vegetable Oil Development Project 2 (VODP2) (2010-2019)	<p>In VODP2, oilseed farmers associations participate in the Kalangala Oil Palm Growers Trust (KOPGT). In local seed businesses, the project worked with cooperatives and related farmers associations.</p> <p>The project also worked with the Uganda Cooperative Alliance (UCA) to support the formation and strengthening of farmer organizations in the oilseed sector under the project in the four hubs.</p> <p>The 26 higher-level farmer organizations and 800 lower-level farmer organizations have been registered as members of area cooperative enterprises.</p>
31.	Uganda	National Oilseeds Support Project (NOSP) (2021-2028)	<p>NOSP aims to build and strengthen higher-level farmers' organizations to sustainably provide services to their members, particularly in collective marketing. It will conduct a major capacity enhancement programme for clusters, groups, and their members covering production technologies, marketing and business skills. Cluster-level multistakeholder platforms will support the drawing up of contracts with agrocompanies on improved terms.</p>
32.	Zambia	Enhanced Smallholder Livestock Investment Programme (E-SLIP) (2016-2024)	<p>E-SLIP supports its beneficiaries through a number of community-based institutions, such as cooperatives, farmer groups and rangeland management committees. Cooperative societies, such as Caritas and Lumuna Mine, have played a key role in spearheading the stocking and restocking programme. The village stocking and restocking groups were established to support livestock stocking and restocking based on the "pass-on" approach, market-oriented livestock production techniques and farm business management. The village stocking and restocking groups provided training over a 2-3 month period in: (i) gender awareness, group formation and management, leadership, entrepreneurship and negotiation skills; (ii) market-oriented livestock production and animal health management for cattle, goat, pig and poultry; (iii) farm business management, including business planning and record keeping; and (iv) household nutrition.</p>

Business model	Salient lessons
Public-private-producer partnerships	<p>A professional, business-driven institution capable of providing efficient and effective services to the oil palm growers is essential to guarantee the profitability of the smallholders' enterprises.</p> <p>The innovative farmer-owned and -managed associations, i.e. savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs) deepened farmers control of the functions of KOPGT. The innovations include moving from an established trust with the participation of both farmer representatives and government officials to cooperatives that are fully owned by farmers and offer sufficient flexibility to take on functions related to transport, fertilizer, extension and other, social functions.</p>
	No significant lessons have been generated by the project so far.
No clear/formal model	<p>Lessons from partners with experience in pass-on programmes indicate that with sufficient investment in strengthening systems at the community level, annual pass-on programmes can go through many consecutive rounds, continuing for years beyond the life of the original programme. Therefore, in areas with significant social capital communities will be able to ensure the pass-on scheme continues beyond the E-SLIP lifespan.</p>

Annex 3: Survey questionnaire

INTEGRATION OF SMALLHOLDER FARMERS AND PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATIONS (SFOs) IN IFAD-FINANCED PROJECTS

EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA REGION

A. INTRODUCTION

A1. Name of respondent:

A2. What is your country of duty station*¹⁶:.....

A3. What is your role? (Please select from the categories below)*

- Project coordinator
- Component manager
- M&E officer
- Technical specialist
- Others (*please specify*)

A4. Project name*:

A5. Project status:

- Ongoing
- Completed

A6. Start date*:.....

A7. Completion date*:.....

A8. Project geographic coverage (*Select one applicable*)*:

- National
- Sub-regional
- Regional
- Global

A9. Countries covered by project (list all)*

.....

16 Questions with asterisk are mandatory

A10. From the list below, select all applicable thematic areas covered by your project*

- Value chain development
- Capacity-building empowerment
- Natural resource management
- Advisory service
- Access to finance
- Market participation
- Climate change adaptation and resilience
- Other (*please specify*)

A11. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? (Scale of 1-5*)

(1 = Highly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Not sure; 4 = Agree; 5 = Highly agree)

- Building sustainability of SFOs requires specific operational approaches
- SFOs enhances socio-economic empowerment of SFOs
- Partnerships between SFOs and private sector actors usually take long to generate impacts
- Access to finance and markets support ensures transformation of SFOs
- Integration of SFO in value chain is constrained by limited institutional and organizational capacity
- Integration of SFOs in value chain is constrained by limited operational and technical capacity
- Support of FOs by business-driven institutions enhances their engagement in commodity value chain
- Clustering of SFOs into hubs and platforms enhances their efficiency
- Community-based producer organizations drive project outreach and impacts
- SFOs have helped to reach out to youth, women and marginalized groups

B. PROJECT INTERVENTIONS

B1. From the list below, which type(s) of SFO are supported by your project

(*select all applicable*)

- National or regional farmer organization
- Cooperative unions
- Primary cooperative societies
- Farmer/producer groups/associations
- NRM groups (water user groups, NRM committees, etc.)
- Village saving and loan groups
- Community seed producer groups
- Youth/women-based groups/association
- Farmer field schools
- Others (*Please specify*)

B2. From the list below, select broad categories of interventions supported by your project to strengthen SFOs (select all applicable)

- Skills development
- Improving governance structure
- Strengthening organizational framework
- Empowerment
- Group formation
- Business/ agribusiness management
- Access to markets
- Access to finance
- Others (*Please specify*)

C. Lessons learned from Integration of SFOs in IFAD PROJECTS

Benefits and impacts

C1. In the following list, which are the salient benefits/impacts realized as a result of engaging SFOs in your project?

- Improved productivity
- Increased incomes of SFO members
- Increased volume of sales and profitability
- Expanded investments in small enterprises/businesses
- Increase access to affordable finance
- Improved economic services to smallholder farmers
- Improved governance structure
- Improved SFO engagement in policy dialogue
- Others (*Please specify*)

C2. To what extent are each of the following obstacles significant to achievement of impacts from your project's support to SFOs? (Scale of 1-5*)

(1 = Highly insignificant; 2 = insignificant; 3 = Not sure; 4 = significant; 5 = Highly significant)

- Limited access to finance
- Limited integration of SFOs in value chain
- Trade/market barriers
- Limited access to support services
- Inadequate economies of scale
- Lack of legal framework to support SFOs operations
- Inadequate business skills
- Others (*Please specify*)

Sustainability and empowerment of SFOs

C3. Rate the importance of each of the following categories of project interventions in strengthening sustainability of SFOs. (Scale of 1-4*)

(1 = Not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = important; 4 = very important)

(Not important, somehow important, important, very important).

- Institutional development and capacity-building in governance
- Improving business planning and management skills
- Building sustainable financing mechanisms
- Increasing membership base
- Facilitate achievement of legal status (registration)
- Others (*Please specify*)

C4. To what extent are the following factors significant in enabling achievement of sustainability for SFOs? (Scale of 1-5*)

(1 = Highly insignificant; 2 = insignificant; 3 = Not sure; 4 = significant;

5 = Highly significant)

- Integrate clear sustainability elements in project design and M&E system
- Clear exit strategy of SFOs support
- Long-term vision
- Robust financial strategy
- Legal framework for SFOs operations
- Formalized linkages and partnerships with other development actors
- Contribution to implementation of project interventions
- Clear leadership and management structure
- Others (*Please specify*).....

C5. Rate the importance of the following project interventions in enhancing empowerment of SFOs (Scale of 1-4*)

(1 = Not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = important; 4 = very important)

- Building capacity for advocacy and lobbying
- Active engagement in policy dialogue
- Strengthening negotiation skills
- Enhancing ownership of project interventions by SFOs
- Using participatory approach in identification and implementation of project interventions
- Access to finance
- Demand-driven capacity-building

C6. Rate the significance of the following obstacles to achievement of full empowerment of SFO in projects. (Scale of 1-5*)

(1 = Highly insignificant; 2 = insignificant; 3 = Not sure; 4 = significant; 5 = Highly significant)

- Short duration of project
- Inadequate resources allocated for empowerment interventions
- Absence of dedicated staff for empowerment interventions
- Empowerment interventions not identified at design stage
- Inadequate monitoring and evaluation of project empowerment interventions
- Lack of O&M plans for infrastructure provided to SFOs by project
- Others (*please specify*).....

Partnerships and collaboration

C7. In the following list select categories of partners linked with SFOs, facilitated by your project (select all applicable).

- Commodity traders
- Input suppliers
- Food processors
- Financial institutions
- Service providers
- Government and regulators
- Agrodealers
- Regulating institutions
- Research institutions and training institutions
- NGOs
- Other (*Please specify*).....

C8. Which model(s) is used to support partnerships with FOs in your project (select all applicable)?

- 4P arrangement
- Formal supply contacts
- Out-growers schemes
- Integration of SFOs into value chain
- Use of farmers subsector marketing platforms
- I do not understand
- Memorandum of understanding (MoU)
- Informal linkage to traders
- Contract farming
- Formal meetings
- Direct financing of cooperatives where in members of FOs could be also members
- Linkages of VSLs to formal financial sector
- Other (*Please specify*).....

C9. If you chose more than one model of partnership in C8 above, which model appeared to be the most effective and why?.....

.....

C10. Assess the significance of the following constraints to effective SFO partnerships to access output markets for IFAD-financed projects. (Scale of 1-5*)
(1 = Highly insignificant; 2 = insignificant; 3 = Not sure; 4 = significant; 5 = Highly significant)

- Lack of trust
- Inadequate understanding of contractual obligations by SFOs
- Side-selling practices by SFO members
- Inadequate volume due to low productivity
- Limited business and operational skills for SFOs
- Inadequate skills on food safety and standard
- Short project duration to realize full maturity of partnership

SFO access to finances

C11. Rate the significance of the following obstacles to FOs access to finance. (Scale of 1-5*)

(1 = Highly insignificant; 2 = insignificant; 3 = Not sure; 4 = significant; 5 = Highly significant)

- Weak institutional capacity
- Unattainable loan conditions by commercial financial institutions (FIs)
- Poor credit history
- Lack of financial products in FIs adapted to SFOs needs
- Access to credit guarantee facility
- Absence of financial institutions at local level
- Others (*Please specify*)

C12. What could be done differently in IFAD projects to improve access to finance by SFOs?.....

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C. GENERAL COMMENTS

C13. In future, what does IFAD as an institution need to do differently to strengthen its engagement with SFOs in its operations?.....

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