

# Behavioural approaches for development and climate programmes: optimizing results and enhancing the nexus among gender equality, climate resilience and nutrition

*Development and climate organizations are increasingly recognising the value of behavioural approaches to maximise the results and impact of their operations and to enhance their sustainability.*

*Speakers at this session focused on sharing experiences on how their organizations aim to increase the access to and use of inputs, diversify livelihoods, and optimize investment decisions by using behavioural science approaches.*

**On Wednesday 23 June 2021, IFAD's Change, Delivery and Innovation Unit (CDI), and the Environment, Climate, Gender, Youth and Social Inclusion Division (ECG) hosted an inter-agency event in occasion of the United Nations Behavioural Science Week, to engage in a dialogue about behavioural science and how they can optimize results and enhance synergies between different areas, namely gender equality, climate resilience and nutrition.**

Opening the session, **Juan Lucas Restrepo** underlined that Behavioural Science can change the narrative, putting the beneficiaries at the centre projects. **Anita Bhatia** talked about how gender equality, climate resilience, food systems and nutrition are inextricably linked, and shared details about the work of UN Women on behavioural science. **Maria Helena Semedo** emphasized the cost-effectiveness of behavioural science based approaches, and highlighted the role of collaboration between the different Rome-based agencies and their innovation teams to

## Speakers and panellists at the event

**Juan Lucas Restrepo**, Director General, Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), CGIAR.

**Anita Bhatia**, Assistant UN Secretary-General, Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, UN System Coordination, Sustainability and Partnerships, UN Women.

**Maria Helena Semedo**, Deputy Director General, Climate and Natural Resources, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

**Jyotsna Puri**, Director, Environment, Climate, Gender, Youth and Social Inclusion Division (ECG), IFAD

**Nathanial Peterson**, Vice-President for Partnerships, Busara Centre for Behavioural Economics.

**Martin Prowse**, Evaluation Specialist - Independent Evaluation Unit, Green Climate Fund (GCF).

**Nancy J. Aburto**, Deputy Director, Food and Nutrition Division, FAO

**Ndaya Beltchika**, Lead Technical Specialist, Gender and Social Inclusion, IFAD.

**Dominik Ziller**, Vice-President, IFAD

The event was moderated by **Gladys H. Morales**, Senior Innovation Adviser, Change, Delivery and Innovation Unit (CDI), IFAD.

**“Behavioural science can play a fundamental role in achieving the sustainable development goals by: (1) encouraging more sustainable consumption; (2) promoting practices that protect the environment and fauna; (3) transforming social norms that end domestic violence and support equality and inclusion; (4) improving health by using trusted messengers to promote vaccination and better nutrition; and (5) encouraging our agencies to work together and deliver better results for our beneficiaries.” – Dominik Ziller, IFAD.**

**“One of the advantages of incorporating Behavioural Science into development programmes is that it changes the narrative, putting the beneficiaries at the centre of strategies to fight malnutrition, gender inequality, and climate change.” Juan Lucas Restrepo, Alliance of BioversityI and CIAT.**

**“If we really want to have significant impact in a short period of time (...) it is going to be very important to put innovation technology [at the center], and to marshall the evidence from Behavioural Science to come up with solutions that can help us leapfrog.” Anita Bhatia, UN Women.**

**“We should re-examine our development efforts to ensure our interventions (...) truly consider how children, youth, women and men make decisions and then build enabling condition for health and sustainability enhancing behaviour” Maria Helena Semedo, FAO.**

advance innovation and partnerships that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

During a highly engaging interactive panel discussion, panellists **Jo Puri, Nathanial Peterson, Nancy J. Aburto, Martin Prowse and Ndaya Beltchika**, offered their thoughts and reflections on a variety of topics. **Jo Puri** provided an introduction to behavioural approaches for development and climate programmes, providing a combination of references to academic research and practical examples, which was key to frame the discussion. **Nathanial Peterson** provided insights about how behavioural science can help improve not only uptake, but also sustained use of full-suite agri-tech solutions. He highlighted the importance of building trust, communicating risks to farmers, and recognizing that there are gender differences in how peer pressure and peer group communication occurs; this

must be taken into account when dealing with transmission of knowledge. **Martin Prowse** discussed how the Independent Evaluation Unit of the Green Climate Fund is building the capacity of project managers to integrate behavioural science into climate projects. He underscored the value of country ownership of knowledge, as well as of flexibility and uptake. **Nancy J. Aburto** illustrated specific examples of how behavioural science is reflected in FAO's work on nutrition, thereby focusing on local contexts and projects entailing local taboos regarding women and nutrition. Nancy also stressed the role of long-term education and underlined the results of the Dimitra Clubs initiative implemented by FAO. **Ndaya Beltchika** talked about how IFAD's programmes use behavioural science to deliver results for climate, gender and environment and the visions that the organisation has with regards to designing programmes that recognise and enhance the links among these factors. Ndaya shared with the audience IFAD's household methodology called [Gender Action Learning System \(GALS\)](#), which aims to achieve deep behavioural change for gender equality. She also talked about IFAD's FormaPro programme in Madagascar that pilots the integration of gender and equality considerations with climate adaptation and nutrition security aspects, introducing a new tool called the [climate and nutrition action tree](#).

In the [Q&A session](#) that followed, the speakers gave their views on effective communication and participation as a key component of behavioural science, overcoming structural barriers, de-biasing decision makers, and obtaining results from donors to invest in innovative approaches since experimentation is often accompanied by uncertainty.

In his [closing remarks](#), IFAD's Vice President, **Dominik Ziller**, stressed how important it is to be more innovative and creative in order to enhance effectiveness and efficiency and achieve the SDGs even with limited means. He emphasised how the **Fund's people-centred approach to development** is already delivering results to empower rural women, contribute to increased financial inclusion and to strengthening a more sustainable, local development. IFAD projects that adopted behavioural insights have and are contributing to SDG1 (No poverty), SDG2 (Zero hunger) and SDG5 (gender equality). He added that IFAD is committed to evidence-based strategies, and is therefore dedicated to reducing inherent human biases.

#### **Behavioural approaches for development and climate programmes – the background**

A critical missing gap in development and climate assistance, with a special focus on climate and gender is a widespread recognition that despite considerable resources being spent on aiming to realise impacts related to climate, nutrition and gender, we are not realising these outcomes. A key reason is that there is an intention-action gap in these areas. Behavioural science presents a potential avenue for dealing with this gap. Indeed, behavioural science creates structures, processes and changes, so we can behave the way we want to. Behavioural science tools ordinarily should not change our pay-offs.

Mr Ziller highlighted the statements from FAO's Semedo on the cost-effectiveness of implementing behavioural insights and Jo Puri's emphasis on how **IFAD is moving inexorably towards building greater resilience in the face of climate change induced uncertainty, no-where is this intention-gap more easy to grasp than in the climate change space**. On one hand, we have the evidence that anthropogenic climate change is occurring, and on the other, human action to mitigate and adapt is failing far short of what is required. Understanding how we can change action in the context of climate change is a key area that IFAD will be focusing its energies on, going forward.

He placed particular emphasis on how **these behavioural barriers occur not just within investments but also how we ourselves as staff of international organizations, examine and interpret evidence and translate it into action**. There are several ways to deal with this. IFAD as an agency is committed to evidence based strategies and policies. In fact, the fund is committed to reducing inherent human biases that are commonplace to most of us.

Mr Ziller remarked how our agencies are translating this learning into action and into results for our beneficiaries. Diagnostic studies could play a key role in this process.

In addition, IFAD is working on developing social and behavioural change interventions that focus on social norms, men and community leaders engagement to foster behavioural changes in households; and on raising awareness, training and continuous learning to promote the inclusion of behavioural insights in project design and project implementation.

To conclude, Mr Ziller mentioned that behavioural science can play a fundamental role in achieving the sustainable development goals by 1) encouraging more sustainable consumption; 2) promoting practices that protect the environment and fauna; 3) transforming social norms that end domestic violence and support equality and inclusion; 4) improving health by using trusted messengers to promote vaccination and better nutrition; and 5) encouraging our agencies to work together and deliver better results for our beneficiaries.

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CDI would like to thank the participants for making the event such a success and showing how behavioural science can contribute to enhancing effectiveness in development programmes, reinforcing synergies between climate, nutrition and gender aspects for advancing towards a world free of hunger and poverty.

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## Missed the event? Watch it online!

A recording of the event can be found [here](#).

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If you would like to skip directly to certain sections of the event, the times are listed below:

Section	Participant(s)	Time (minutes)
Welcome	<i>Gladys H. Morales</i>	00.00–01.50
Opening remarks	<i>Juan Lucas Restrepo Anita Bhatia Maria Helena Semedo</i>	01.50–25.06
Panel discussion	<i>Jyotsna Puri / Nathaniel Peterson / Martin Prowse / Nancy J. Aburto / Ndaya Beltchika</i>	25.06–1.01.16
Q&A	<i>All participants</i>	1.01.16–1.17.40
Closing remarks	<i>Dominik Ziller</i>	1.17.40–1.23.51
Farewell and thanks	<i>Gladys H. Morales</i>	1.23.51–1.24.55