INNOVATION FOR IMPACT: DELIVERING RESULTS FOR THE RURAL POOR

This session "Innovation for impact: delivering results for the rural poor" was structured as a Fireside Chat between IFAD's President, Dr. Alvaro Lario, and Alessandra Poggiani, Director of Administration at Human Technopole Foundation. The event also included a Q&A section with lively engagement from the audience.

On Wednesday 11 January 2023, IFAD's Change, Delivery and Innovation Unit (CDI) hosted the twelfth IFAD Innovation Talk to engage in a dialogue about IFAD's vision of innovation and how it is expected to deliver transformational impact for the rural poor.

Opening the session, **Gladys H. Morales** introduced the speakers, President Dr. Alvaro Lario and Alessandra Poggiani.

In dialogue with Ms. Poggiani, the President shared his vision on IFAD distinguishing itself as being able to design certain approaches on how IFAD is able to innovate and learn from what is not working especially in the field. He emphasised the importance of creating a culture of innovation within the organisation bringing leaders and staff together to produce something new and have an impact on the people that IFAD is serving. He mentioned that the most important aspect to succeed to roll out innovative solutions are the people – especially those located on the field bringing in local innovative solutions. Coming from an academic background with different work experiences gathered in the private and public sector, he encouraged disruptive thinking, bringing new ideas, products and services on board and overcoming the initial stages of rejection, push back and risk-aversiveness.

> **Speakers and panellists at the event**
> - Dr. Alvaro Lario, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
> - Alessandra Poggiani, Director of Administration at Human Technopole Foundation
> - Moderator: Gladys H Morales, Senior Innovation Adviser, Change Delivery and Innovation Unit, IFAD

The importance of technology was frequently mentioned as a mean to the end of improving well-being to people. It was highlighted that innovative solutions should aim to have a long-term sustainable effect and target vulnerable parts of the population, with a vision to change their lives for the better. The President shared tangible examples of how this is done in IFAD, with the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) to reduce fires for a rice paddy production in Sierra Leone, and the deployment of blockchain technology in Kenya to tracedonors' funds.

Innovation management is of particular importance in IFAD. The President described how the organization is using data, and monitoring and evaluation tools to translate impact into quantifiable results such as through the use of randomised control trials. Each project of IFAD is further contributing to common goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UN Innovation toolkit serve as useful guideline to ensure innovation within the whole UN system. He also mentioned the importance of IFAD's flagship innovation initiatives such as the Corporate *Innovation Challenge* as accelerator of new ideas, and the *Omnidata* solution allowing IFAD to analyse, evaluate, produce data and bring it together using AI.

> **"***Technology is not innovation – but innovation is what is being done with it. The most important thing is how we use technology to serve the people on the ground and change their life so that their challenges become easier.***"**
> ***Dr. Alvaro Lario***
> **"***Sometimes innovation can be found in tradition, sometimes research needs to be done on the field as only people working in certain environments have the key and resources and tools to do the actions suitable to resolve a certain problem.***"**
> ***Alessandra Poggiani***

Also, the importance of partnership and collaboration was given a particular emphasis especially in the context of encouraging learning between leading institutions.

During the Live Q&A that followed, both speakers gave their views on a variety of topics including, the role of every member of staff to promote innovation, the use of grants to foster entrepreneurship in Africa, possible innovative tools to de-risk private sector investments, how research and evidence can foster innovation and, concluding, IFAD's mission to serve underserved groups such as disabled and indigenous populations through innovative operations.

If you are interested in the discussion with the audience, please consult the Q&A report and the event recording on the event page.

CDI would like to thank the participants for taking part and for making the event such a success and showing how increasing interest and ample opportunities to create systematic approaches for improve global comprehension of progress.

Missed the event? Watch it online!

A recording of the event can be found here.

Join the IFAD Innovation Network to receive our updates and to contribute to the knowledge sharing and learning of our innovation community of practice.

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

Innovation for impact: delivering results for the rural poor

Since March 2022, IFAD defines innovation as a new process, product or approach that adds value and delivers a sustainable, equitable, inclusive and/or new contextual solution to rural development challenges. For IFAD, the most important innovations are those that impact rural poor people directly.

In September 2022, Alvaro Lario, Ph.D., a Spanish national, who has served as IFAD's chief financial officer since 2018, took office as IFAD's President. Since joining IFAD, Dr Lario has led efforts to harness private sector investment to boost the resilience of millions of small-scale farmers and rural communities who are among those affected by global shocks. Under Alvaro's stewardship, IFAD became the first United Nations Fund to enter the capital markets and obtain a credit rating, enabling IFAD to expand resource mobilization efforts to the private sector.

The event aimed to answer the following questions:

- Why has IFAD adopted a new definition and approach to innovation?
- What is IFAD's vision for innovation management?
- How is IFAD aiming to leverage innovation?
- What will success look like in the innovation space for IFAD?
- How is IFAD planning to monitor and evaluate progress on innovation?
- What will be IFAD's core priorities to foster and support innovation?

Time (minutes)	Section
00.00-03:44	Welcome by moderator Gladys H. Morales
03.44-25.46	Fireside Chat featuring Alvaro Lario and Alessandra Poggiani
25.47-58.25	Q&A