

Rural Youth Evaluation Synthesis

Executive Summary

1. This evaluation synthesis was undertaken at a time when the effects of the 2008 financial crisis were having serious repercussions for a generation of young people, who constituted a large proportion of the populations of many developing countries, in the form of long-term unemployment, under-employment and uncertain employment. The evaluation, which was mandated to find ways in which IFAD could improve its work with rural young people, first reviewed recent literature on youth development with a view to building an argument in favour of rural investments that benefit young people. It then assessed IFAD's past loans and grants and the work of other organizations to identify comparative advantages, lessons learned and partnership potential. In the context of the post-2015 agenda, the evaluation suggested five ways in which developing country partners could cultivate the potential of their young people.
2. **(i) Mainstream youth issues in country programmes.** IFAD has adopted this as a major principle of engagement in its Strategic Framework, and established policies and guidelines to guide the design and implementation of country programmes with favourable outcomes for young people.
3. The main challenge concerns the systematic integration of IFAD's knowledge into its operations and consistent application of its fifth principle of engagement, and providing financial support that is commensurate to the task envisaged.
4. **(ii) Invest in updating knowledge about youth issues and socio-economic profiles.** Both investments must influence project design and lead to improvements in the quality of response in country programmes to issues affecting young people. The information gathered will inform targeting strategies, support packages, project management and the sequencing of activities with a view to outcomes that favour young people. IFAD must prioritize the allocation of resources to this updating of its knowledge base during socio-economic profiling at the project design stage. The justification is clear in that IFAD will increasingly be called to assist Member States classified as middle-income countries with specialist information and trend analysis rather than financial support.
5. **(iii) Resolve the issues of efficiency and equity in terms of identifying target groups.** A common question is: "Which youth groups is the project targeting?" The heterogeneity of rural young people is a targeting challenge in itself; it is compounded by the needs to balance design with the available management capacities and to focus on a few activities that will drive development and extend programme outreach to young people and particular youth groups. IFAD should adopt direct targeting of particular sub-groups on the basis of clear eligibility criteria rather than self-targeting approaches so that the risks of spreading resources too thinly and having to state what cannot be done are avoided.
6. Evaluations noted that grouping young people with other vulnerable groups and implementing self-targeting approaches alone did not lead to success. The questions to be addressed are which organizations will target those left out of IFAD-funded projects, and to what extent IFAD can advocate on their behalf.
7. **(iv) Adopt age-disaggregated monitoring indicators to enable IFAD to learn, report results and support scaling up.** The adoption of age-disaggregated monitoring indicators for COSOPs and projects will enable IFAD to

learn what works and adjust its interventions accordingly, share its knowledge with partners and evolve into an enabling platform for scaling up successful models.

8. **(v) Partnering is fundamental to IFAD's work with rural young people.** Providing comprehensive assistance packages for young people calls for a range of skills, types of investment and resources that cannot be provided by IFAD and governments alone. Partnerships are therefore essential: they must be flexible and effective, and must enable IFAD to learn from its collaborators and develop innovative approaches.
9. In this context, IFAD must determine whether grant-funded innovations and pilot initiatives for young people are adequately balanced with work in learning and scaling up, and ensure that procedures are in place for engaging with other actors such as private-sector organizations and South-South cooperation frameworks that can mobilize more resources than official development aid.
10. IFAD's successful intervention models now need to be scaled up to provide adequate responses to the needs of young populations. To achieve this, more IFAD investments will have to be combined with inputs from its humanitarian partners.