



KEY FACTS

- IFAD is a specialized UN agency mandated to combat hunger and poverty in rural areas of developing countries.
- IFAD works with other UN organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development banks and private institutions to offer low-cost loans to developing Member States.
- IFAD's projects are designed and implemented with the involvement of the rural poor they serve.
- IFAD's resources come from the voluntary contributions of Member States, loan repayments and investment income.
- Since its establishment in 1977, IFAD has financed 584 projects in 114 recipient countries and in Gaza and the West Bank for a total amount of approximately USD 7.2 billion.
- IFAD's interventions to date have helped about 250 million rural people escape poverty and build a better life for themselves.

IFAD's essential focus is on improving the range of opportunities for the rural poor – primarily through better agricultural production, rural finance and local capacity-building. IFAD is the only United Nations (UN) agency whose funds are exclusively used to improve the food security and well-being of the rural poor.

HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY AND GENDER

Women play a key role in ensuring that their families have adequate supplies of food on a sustainable basis. Therefore, IFAD recognizes that:

- women are the main entry point for addressing food security and nutritional well-being at the household level;
- an increase in income controlled by women is of immediate benefit to household food security;
- the overall improvement of women's (and girls') lives has an immediate positive impact on the household's overall well-being, and particularly on the nutritional status of children.

THE CHALLENGE OF ENDING RURAL POVERTY

Whereas the years between 1970 and 1990 witnessed real gains in the fight against poverty, progress has since stalled. Rural economies have been neglected, aid for agriculture has dropped from 20% of overall assistance in the late 1980s to 12% today. IFAD's *Rural Poverty Report 2001* points out that the international commitment to halving poverty by 2015 "must focus on reviving agriculture".

The Report highlights four aspects that are particularly important:

- While non-farm activities are emerging as major factors in the lives of the rural poor, the critical role of food staples

must be recognized in technology and marketing policy. People in extreme poverty usually get about 70-80% of their calories from staple foods.

- Rural poverty reduction requires better allocation and distribution of water. Rural water supplies are becoming scarcer, not least because of pressure to divert water to urban areas and industrial uses. Securing more water to help increase the output of staple foods is a major challenge.
- Economic growth alone, in rural areas, will not be enough to ensure that the target of halving poverty is met. Inequality may be too great and poverty too deep. "Redistributive empowerment" of the rural poor is needed.
- Particular groups merit special attention, especially women; and the importance of the participation of the rural poor in decision-making should be recognized.

Giving the poor access to land, water, credit, information and technology, and also to health-care services and education, can do much to reduce poverty. At the international level, coordination among donors can increase the effectiveness of aid funds and help in the poverty reduction effort.



REGIONAL STRATEGIES

In **Western and Central Africa**, IFAD is emphasizing, *inter alia*, the building of human capital through skills training (both technical and financial), the promotion of non-farm rural enterprises and support to credit delivery, including new types of rural financial institutions.



IFAD / Côte d'Ivoire / C. Nesbitt

In **Eastern and Southern Africa**, the focus is mainly on smallholders and on increasing their production by, among other strategies, encouraging them to grow cash crops for which there is a strong local market, without compromising food security. In addition, means are being tested to enable poor farmers to access capital (for instance, through a group loan), in order to undertake on-farm processing to add value at the farm level.



IFAD / Uganda / R. Chalāsani

In **Asia and the Pacific**, the focus is on regenerative agriculture and enterprise development in upland and marginal areas, which are home to the poorest of the poor, including indigenous people. IFAD projects provide microfinance services through self-help groups to stimulate rural income-generation and empower the rural poor, particularly women.



IFAD / Nepal / F. Zanettini

In **Latin America and the Caribbean**, IFAD is working in a variety of ways to empower rural poor men and women by ensuring access to economic opportunities, building on local knowledge and developing links with the market. Several recent projects have adopted an approach that covers the full agricultural production chain, including transformation and processing of produce and marketing.



IFAD / Ecuador / G. Bizzarri

In the **Near East and North Africa**, the challenge is to support sustainable livelihoods within a fragile natural environment. IFAD's projects are providing farmers with access to appropriate technology and the credit needed to adopt it. They are also working with NGOs to enhance implementation capacity and make sure that women's interests are adequately and equitably addressed.



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