



About Learning Notes

For pro-poor rural development investments

Learning Notes are intended to serve as reminders of key issues and main tasks in the design and implementation of pro-poor investment projects in rural areas. They are based on lessons learned from experience, accumulated knowledge and current innovations.

The intended users of these Learning Notes are IFAD Country Programme Managers and team leaders/members at all stages in the design (inception, formulation and appraisal), review, supervision and evaluation of investment projects and programmes.

The first section identifies 'Core issues' to be considered. The second section indicates the 'Key tasks for design and review' to generate robust investment plans. The final section, 'Sources of information and examples of good practice', directs users to some relevant examples drawn from IFAD's portfolio of loan and grant-financed projects, studies, and other sources of best practices and relevant information.

The Learning Notes aim to assist project design teams to generate the information required to prepare and enhance the quality of IFAD's Project Design Documents, the supporting logframes and Key Files.

Comments and suggestions for the improvement of Learning Notes are welcome. These, together with requests for further information, should be addressed to learningnotes@ifad.org

IFAD's [Strategic Framework for 2007-2010](#) reiterates the Fund's basic mandate to increase incomes and enhance the food security of the rural poor. To achieve this IFAD is committed to six strategic objectives: improved access to, and use by, the poor of natural resources; improved technologies and production support services; development of a broad range of financial services; effective input and agricultural produce markets; development of off-farm enterprises and rural employment; and participation of the poor in development policy formulation and programming. Six principles of engagement are to guide pro-poor support: selectivity and focus of efforts; targeting; empowerment of rural people; maximising opportunities for innovation, learning and scaling up; use of effective partnerships; and sustainability of impacts.

The Strategic Framework also commits IFAD to provide more practical guidance on quality enhancement (QE) to teams designing investment projects. A consensus has been reached on a set of key success factors (KSFs) that are considered critical in focusing team efforts on the above strategic. KSFs seek to optimise the relevance, coherence, implementability and impact of the IFAD portfolio, providing both a checklist for quality enhancement during design and a framework to assess the readiness of projects for implementation. Six general KSF Domains have been agreed: country relevance, national commitment and partnership; poverty, social capital and targeting; alignment with IFAD strategic objectives, rural development policy, lessons learnt and requirements for project analysis; implementation arrangements and institutional aspects; risks and sustainability; and innovative features, learning and knowledge management.

The attached Learning Notes (LNs) aim to guide and support teams in applying KSFs to enhance lending quality and impact. LNs provide concise reminders of core issues and operational tasks facing designers or reviewers in dealing with important individual themes during the design, execution and evaluation of investment proposals. They crystallise knowledge and lessons learnt, drawing on IFAD, borrowers' and outside partners' experience. It is assumed that LN users have had some prior exposure to the design, implementation or supervision of investment projects; but for those less familiar, links are also provided to sources of more detailed information and examples of best practices. The LN themes are grouped under the KSF Domains to which they relate.

This is an open-ended series. The topics covered by Learning Notes so far reflect recurrent QE challenges or needs under individual KSFs, IFAD strategic priorities, as well as the availability of drafting staff. Existing LNs will be updated and improved. More will be added as necessary. Comments and suggestions for improvements or new LN themes are welcome. Contact learningnotes@ifad.org.

