

# Poverty targeting, gender equality and empowerment

## Gender, targeting and social inclusion



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Burundi - Transitional Programme of  
Post-Conflict Reconstruction

## Introduction

Poverty targeting, gender equality and empowerment are cornerstones of IFAD's work to reduce rural poverty and food and nutrition insecurity. This puts people – rural women, men, youth and indigenous peoples – at the centre of IFAD's development projects and policy engagement. This unique approach aims to support the development of inclusive, equitable, sustainable and resilient rural societies and agriculture sectors that are food secure and able to take advantage of the opportunities provided by growing markets, thus providing a springboard to rural transformation.

This toolkit explains how to identify and address the diverse needs, constraints and opportunities of poor rural people through IFAD-supported projects and policy engagement. It provides an analytical framework through which to design and implement interventions that take into account the specific characteristics of each target group. In this way, it is possible to develop tailor-made pathways that feed into an overall theory of change at the project level. The toolkit operationalizes the principles outlined in IFAD policies on targeting, gender equality and women's empowerment, and indigenous peoples. It will also be instrumental in achieving the goal set for a "gender transformative pathway" in IFAD projects, in which activities go beyond addressing the symptoms of gender inequality to tackling the underlying social norms, attitudes, behaviours, social systems and distribution of power and resources.

# The context of poverty targeting, gender equality and women's empowerment

The vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development leads with the pledge that "no one will be left behind". Its goals reflect this ambition through the targets of zero poverty, hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity, and of achieving universal gender equality and the empowerment of women.

In 2015, an estimated 10 per cent of the global population still lived in extreme poverty, 800 million people still suffered from hunger, and over 160 million children under the age of five suffered from stunting due to insufficient food.<sup>1</sup> The majority of today's poor and vulnerable people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture or agriculture-related activities for their livelihoods.<sup>2</sup> Rural populations are essential to a country's food security and nutrition, economic growth and sustainable management of natural resources.<sup>3</sup> Women play key roles in food production and natural resource management, yet they lack access to and control of resources such as land.

Understanding people's needs and priorities, their own perceptions of poverty, and **placing them in the driver's seat** of the change process is the starting point for designing and implementing development interventions that are accessible and beneficial to both women and men, contributing to their own transformative processes.

IFAD strives to support its partner governments in identifying the people left behind, why they remain poor, and effective methods for addressing the underlying causes of poverty and inequality. Targeting to reach potentially neglected segments of the community and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment are integral elements of development policies and programmes.

## Rural poverty

Poverty is a multidimensional concept, not just a condition of low income. It is a condition of vulnerability, exclusion and powerlessness. It is the erosion of people's ability to be free from fear and hunger and to have their voices heard. Poverty reduction is about enabling poor women and men to transform their lives and livelihoods, and supporting governments and civil society in creating and maintaining the conditions that allow them to do so.<sup>4</sup>

Rural poverty comes in many different forms and can be associated with food insecurity, poor access to basic infrastructure and productive assets, climate change and depleted natural resources, lack of economic opportunities and poor working conditions, gender inequalities, volatility of market prices, indebtedness and financial crises, lack of time, poor health, exclusion, and fragile and violent situations. It can affect pockets of people in otherwise better-off communities, or be the predominant condition in given areas. Some people – even those above the poverty line – can become trapped within a negative spiral of constraints, while others experience poverty as a transitory state. Moreover, poor rural people often have different perceptions of poverty and varied aspirations for a better life. Yet daily demands prevent them from planning their lives over the long term. If development is to be of genuine use to them, it must derive from a thorough understanding of these issues. Good targeting is an initial step and – combined with effective social analysis and participatory approaches – will enable poor rural people and their institutions to drive development and their own processes of change.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, 2015. *The Millennium Development Goals Report, 2015*, available at [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015\\_MDG\\_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20\(July%201\).pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf)

<sup>2</sup> IFAD, *Investing in smallholder family agriculture for global food security and nutrition*. IFAD Post-2015 Policy Brief 3 (Rome, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> IFAD, *IFAD targeting policy: Reaching the rural poor* (Rome, 2008).

## Gender equality and women's empowerment

Overcoming gender inequalities and empowering women is a cornerstone of IFAD's work to reduce rural poverty and food insecurity. Addressing gender issues is central to delivering on all policies and strategic frameworks in IFAD.<sup>5</sup>

IFAD recognizes that it is critical to invest in women, youth and indigenous peoples. The empowerment, education and equality of women are fundamental to improved food security and nutrition, sustainable development and economic growth. Gender equality is one of the five principles of engagement in IFAD's work. Gender mainstreaming seeks to ensure that the differentiated needs and priorities of rural women and men are taken fully into account, making a difference to the rural livelihoods of women through economic empowerment, strengthening their decision-making and representation, and reducing their workloads. IFAD has developed a methodology to take gender considerations into account in the design of IFAD loans.

Women are major players in the agriculture sector, in household food and nutrition security, and in natural resource management. They work along the value chain – in their own enterprises, in family activities and as employees – and undertake a wide range of activities, often using their own knowledge systems. But they often work in marginal capacities as part of family labour, without pay or with very low incomes and stereotyped into low-value activities – unless this is addressed in projects. They also engage in a mix of non-farm activities as part of their strategy to diversify their livelihood options, and are responsible for the majority of household tasks. Women use forests and fields on a daily basis – for water, food, medicinal plants and as a source of fuelwood or for supplementing their incomes. Yet they have significantly less access than men to the assets and services that would enable them to increase their productivity, and they are underrepresented on natural-resource-management committees and in user groups. Thus, land management and resettlement plans can unsettle their role if not addressed during project planning. An overview of the five main areas of gender inequality, which vary among communities and societies, is presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Typical areas of gender inequality

<sup>5</sup> IFAD, *IFAD policy on gender equality and women's empowerment* (Rome, 2012).

The combination of poverty, gender inequalities and social exclusion establishes a vicious cycle, resulting in deep-rooted challenges in rural areas, to the detriment of family wealth and well-being. Despite the narrowing of some gender gaps – in education, health, life expectancy and labour market opportunities – the roots of poverty often remain.

## Indigenous peoples

Self-identified indigenous peoples are estimated to number over 370 million, or about 5 per cent of the world's overall population.<sup>6</sup> However, they disproportionately represent 15 per cent of the world's poor<sup>7</sup> and a significant proportion of poor rural people in many countries. Their food security and livelihoods depend on access to local ecosystems, which are already under pressure from precarious land entitlements and are being further challenged by the new demands of a growing population or business encroachments on natural resources, including mining and land-use conversion. Climate change, too, changes the productivity of land and impacts on species. All this not only affects the livelihoods of indigenous peoples and increases their poverty and malnutrition, but also affects their holistic culture and lifestyles. In addition, indigenous women are often lumped together with other women in project planning, although their needs can be quite different and require a special focus. Their roles also vary within ethnic groups, even within the same region, and according to the matrilineality or patrilineality of households.

## Youth

Globally, young women and men under 30 make up almost two thirds of the population in developing countries. And those aged 15-24 years account for one fifth.<sup>8</sup> This often better-educated and innovative cohort represents a great potential for growth, development and modernization. Yet the isolation of rural areas, lack of viable livelihood opportunities, and traditional societies that limit youth capacity to take part in decision-making processes result in high levels of youth unemployment and large waves of outmigration to urban centres and other countries in search of a better future. A large share of youth in developing countries lives in rural areas, with the majority being poor, unemployed or underemployed in vulnerable, low-quality jobs in the informal sector. Accordingly, young people have increasingly become a priority group for IFAD, as reflected in its reporting and the design of new projects. Thus, understanding and addressing youth's needs is key to achieving rural transformation – using technologies to innovate through income-generating activities, improving productive potential by enabling access to a wide range of assets, tailoring financial services to those needs and ensuring decent employment.<sup>9</sup>

The needs of indigenous young men and women require special consideration (e.g. early marriage, seclusion, adequate food security during reproductive and nursing years, special vulnerability and discriminatory practices).

It is important to acknowledge that youth are not a homogeneous group, but rather are characterized by socio-economic status and diverse characteristics that shape their circumstances, such as gender, age, geographical location, marital status, level of education, legal status and different stages in the life cycle. Gender differentiation is key, as the term “youth” refers to both young women and men with socially differentiated roles and needs.

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<sup>6</sup> United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, cited in: IFAD, *IFAD policy on engagement with indigenous peoples* (Rome, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> IFAD, *Policy brief on IFAD's engagement with indigenous peoples* (Rome, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> IFAD, *Lessons learned: Supporting rural young people in IFAD projects* (Rome, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> IFAD, *Investing in young rural people for sustainable and equitable development* (Rome, 2014).



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Viet Nam - Ha Giang Development Project for Ethnic Minorities

Young women are positioned differently than young men with regard to obtaining a livelihood from agriculture and access to natural resources, land, credit and information in order to make a living. It is important to harness the “youth dividend” for agricultural productivity and rural development, while recognizing that agriculture also offers young people opportunities for improved livelihoods and employment. Agriculture remains largely unattractive to youth because it is associated with poverty and drudgery. To attract young people, it must be profitable, competitive, mechanized and dynamic.

Engaging youth successfully in agricultural productivity means engaging them in decision-making processes. Interventions aimed at supporting youth should seek to create opportunities for employment through various means, particularly agribusiness. They should address key challenges facing youth in the agriculture sector. These include access to: key resources, particularly land and finances; knowledge, skills and extension services; and markets, among others. Innovative application of information and communications technology is a key element of the strategy for attracting youth to agriculture.

### **Older people and people with disabilities**

The proportion of older<sup>10</sup> and disabled people living in rural areas and working in agriculture has increased in recent years. The causes include: reduced family size; lack or inadequacy of social security; outmigration of young people and “middle generation” adults; and the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in certain regions. The number of de facto or de jure woman heads of households has also grown. In 2015, 20 per cent of people living in extreme poverty had a disability. In Asia and Latin America, older people constituted 11 and 10 per cent of the population, respectively, with most residing in rural areas and reliant

<sup>10</sup> The United Nations defines older people as being 60 years of age or older. However, the concept varies among communities and countries.

on farming.<sup>11</sup> Many older people working in the informal rural labour force do not retire, but adjust the amount and type of their activity, and many continue to farm. In addition, older people in “skipped-generation” households (with grandparents and grandchildren, but parents absent) are providing childcare, undertaking domestic work and sometimes making substantial financial contributions to household well-being.<sup>12</sup>

## IFAD’s response

IFAD is uniquely placed to reduce rural poverty and improve food and nutrition security through its focus on rural people, their institutions and their largely agriculture-based livelihoods. The promotion of targeting, gender equality and women’s empowerment is central to IFAD’s work. The *IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025* makes these goals “principles of engagement” towards the vision of inclusive and sustainable rural transformation.

### IFAD’s policy on targeting<sup>13</sup>

IFAD’s mandate defines its target group as rural people living in poverty and experiencing food insecurity in developing countries. Within this broad group, IFAD aims to reach:

- poor rural people with the potential to take advantage of development opportunities;
- extremely poor people having fewer assets and opportunities;
- people vulnerable to becoming poor;
- marginalized groups, such as minorities, indigenous peoples, and young men and women;
- women, when they are disadvantaged by discriminatory norms and practices.

Capacity-building and empowerment are the cornerstones of IFAD’s approach to targeting. The focus is on enabling the active and informed inclusion of those often excluded, or who exclude themselves, from development processes.

IFAD’s approach to targeting is to empower the identified target group’s active participation in development projects, from design and planning through to project completion and achieving sustainable impacts. Targeting measures are also used to create and sustain a supportive policy and institutional environment for targeted development, including the improvement of administrative procedures, institutions, laws and policies. Thus, targeting can foster social inclusion, gender equality and the empowerment of marginalized groups – within households and communities and at local and national levels.

### IFAD’s policy on gender equality and women’s empowerment<sup>14</sup>

Improving gender equality and empowering rural women of all ages leads to mutually reinforcing benefits in economic growth, household food and nutrition security, household income, the well-being of household members and household resilience.

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<sup>11</sup> Enablement and MetaMeta, *Disability and age inclusive water management: A position paper* (’s-Hertogenbosch and Alphen aan den Rijn, the Netherlands, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Population Fund and HelpAge International, *Ageing in the twenty-first century: A celebration and a challenge* (New York and London, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> IFAD, *IFAD targeting policy: Reaching the rural poor* (Rome, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> IFAD, *IFAD policy on gender equality and women’s empowerment* (Rome, 2012).

In order to mainstream gender equality and women’s empowerment in development, IFAD organizes its action around three strategic policy objectives (figure 2):

- Promote economic empowerment to enable rural women and men to have equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, profitable economic activities.
- Enable women and men to have an equal voice and influence in rural institutions and organizations.
- Achieve a more equitable balance in workloads and in the sharing of economic and social benefits between women and men.

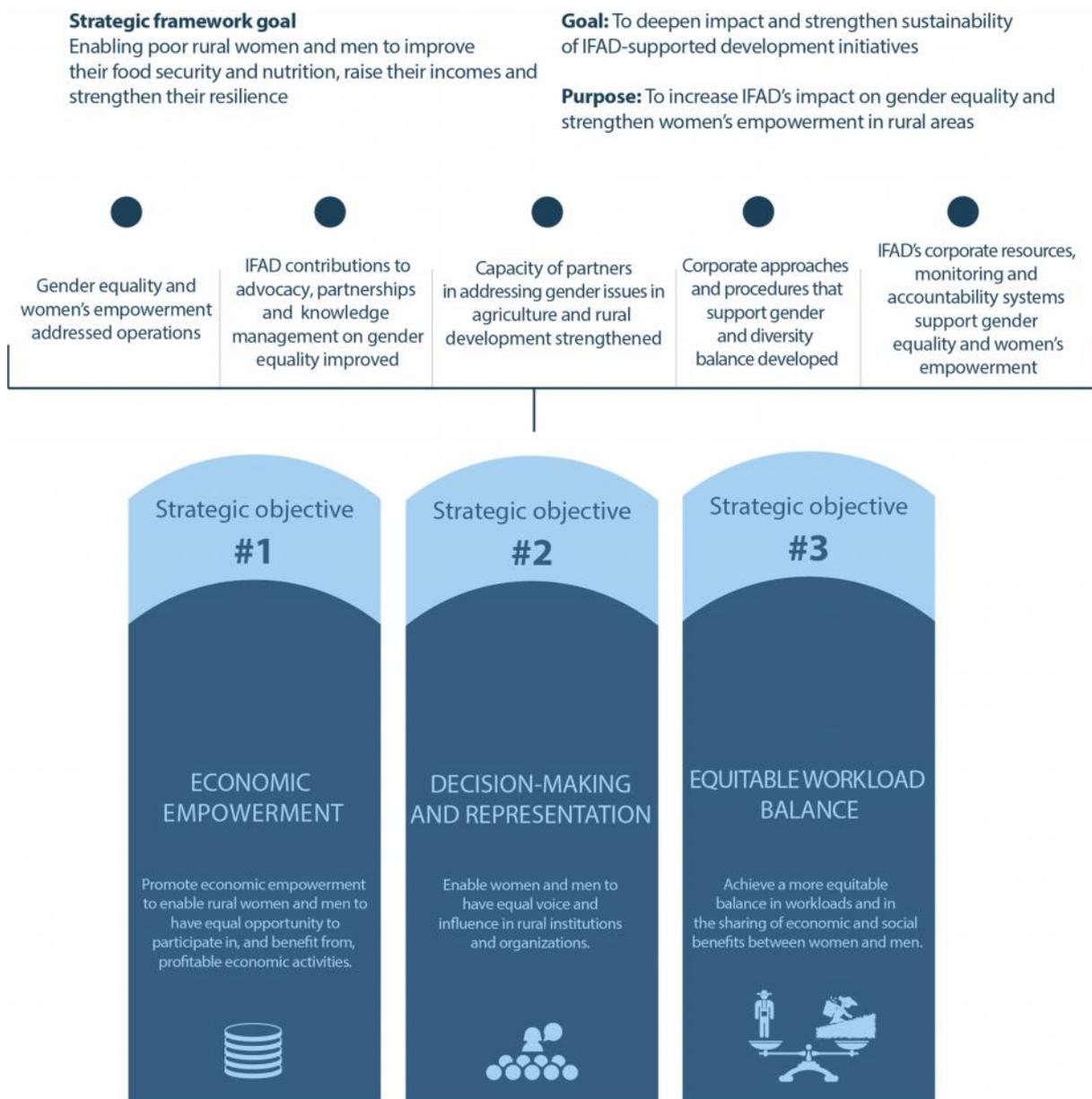


Figure 2. The three pillars of IFAD’s gender policy

Gender mainstreaming in IFAD's work involves:

- Reducing the gaps in development opportunities between women and men of different ages and across socio-economic groups, and between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples – working towards equality between them;
- Assessing the implications of any planned action for women and men, including legislation, and ensuring that both women's and men's concerns, needs, knowledge and experiences are taken fully into account in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all IFAD development activities;
- Developing interventions that overcome barriers preventing men and women from having equal opportunity to access, and benefit from, the resources and services they need to improve their livelihoods;
- The full reflection of gender in the mindset of IFAD's leadership and staff, its values, resource allocations, operating norms and procedures, performance measurements, accountabilities, competencies and learning processes.

IFAD is moving beyond mainstreaming to creating transformative gender impact. This will require a deeper analysis and understanding of structures and norms of exclusion and the promotion of sustainable, inclusive and far-reaching social change. Through investments and policy engagement, IFAD will address root causes of gender inequality: policy and legal constraints; prevailing social norms, attitudes and behaviours; and the distribution of power and resources. Measurable changes are expected in five areas: improved access to resources (including land) and opportunities; a more equal work burden and reduced time poverty; increased decision-making power at various levels; changes in norms and socio-cultural values that set barriers for gender equality; and formal systemic changes in laws, policies and governmental and other institutional capacities.

IFAD promotes "household methodologies" as an innovative approach to gender equality and social inclusion for transformation within households and communities. These methodologies shift the focus from the individual to the household level, from things – such as assets, resources and infrastructure – to people, their needs, priorities and goals. Household methodologies are particularly important in promoting women's empowerment, which cannot be achieved without change at the household level, involving all household members, women and men, young and old.

## **IFAD policy on engagement with indigenous peoples<sup>15</sup>**

Indigenous peoples' needs and priorities are taken into account in IFAD loan and grant programmes. Indigenous peoples are proactive partners in design and implementation, rather than just beneficiaries, and they determine activities and strategies for their own development, pursuing their own goals and visions. When the project involves land or resettlement activities, extra care is taken to obtain free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples to the plans. They also participate in each country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP).

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<sup>15</sup> IFAD, *IFAD policy on engagement with indigenous peoples* (Rome, 2009), available at <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/14e50d95-2c58-423e-8ac6-3023359173b6>



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A 2012 policy brief outlined nine principles of engagement underpinning the Fund's work with indigenous peoples:<sup>16</sup>

1. Cultural heritage and identity
2. Free, prior and informed consent
3. Community-driven development
4. Land and resources
5. Indigenous peoples' knowledge
6. Environmental issues and climate change
7. Access to markets
8. Empowerment
9. Gender equality

## Targeting and gender in the IFAD project cycle

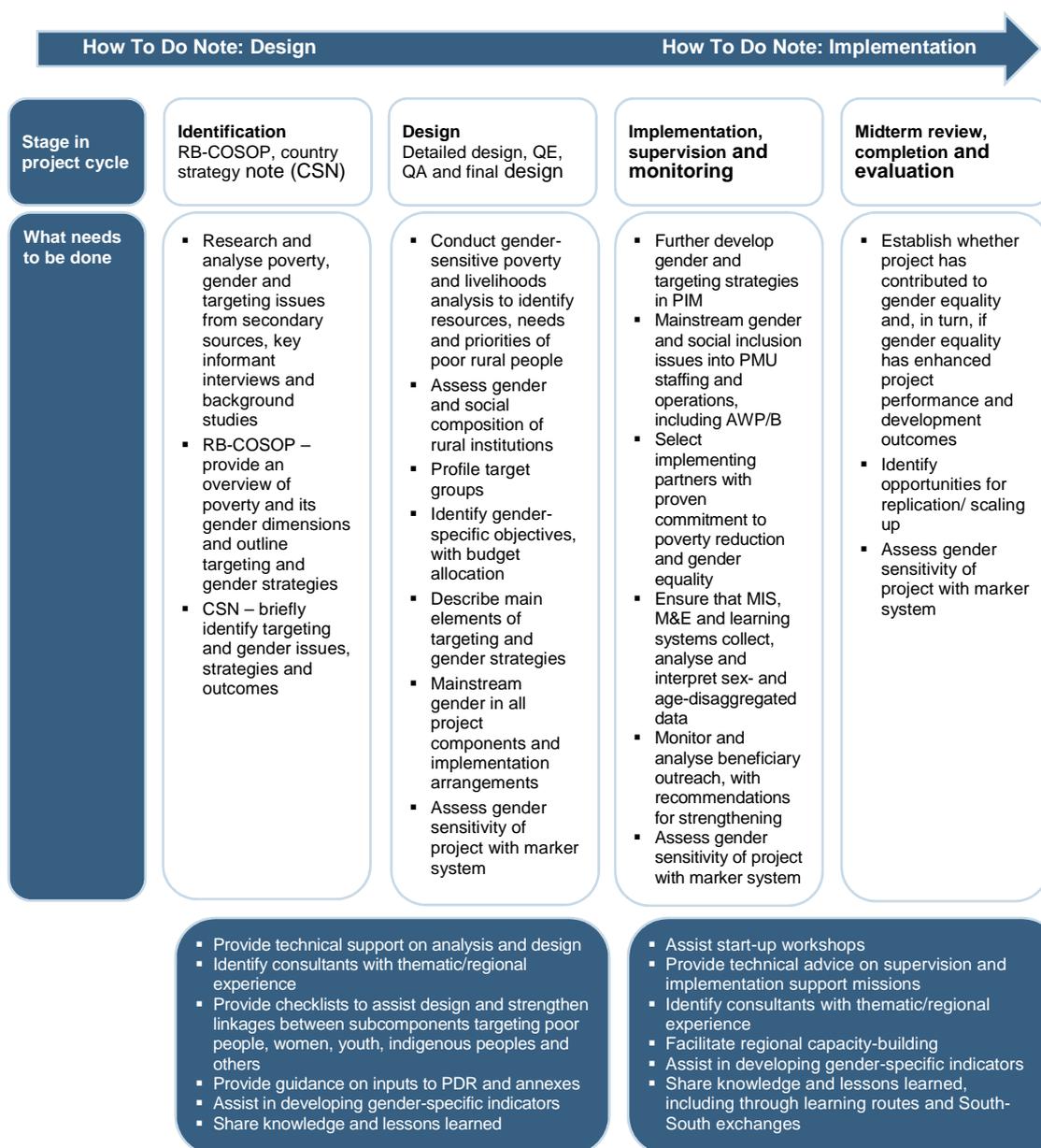
The principles of targeting, gender equality and women's empowerment in IFAD-supported projects include:

- Using participatory approaches to ensure that the diverse voices of poor rural people, including women, are heard equally;
- Working with all household members, including women, to identify a unifying household vision for improved food and nutrition security, well-being and increased income, and to address discriminatory roles and relationships;
- Enabling rural women and men to lead their own development by transferring to them decision-making power over the use of funds and selection of service providers;
- Using quotas for participation in groups selectively, accompanied by enabling measures, such as training;
- Engaging with leaders and men to promote gender equality and behavioural change;
- Working with partners:
  - from local to international levels – including government institutions and implementing agencies – to create an enabling policy, institutional and cultural environment supportive of gender equality and social inclusion;
  - with development agencies providing support to those beyond the reach of IFAD-supported projects to attend to the needs of the extremely poor – for example, humanitarian relief or social development, such as health or social protection programmes;
- improving contributions to advocacy, learning and knowledge management.

Figure 3 highlights actions required to promote gender equality and targeting at different stages of the project cycle. It also indicates the type of support available from the Gender Desk in IFAD's Policy and Technical Advisory Division and from regional gender coordinators. The two How To Do Notes on design and implementation explain the processes in more detail.

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<sup>16</sup> IFAD, *Policy brief on IFAD's engagement with indigenous peoples* (Rome, 2012), available at <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/acf878e2-9bc6-4fc7-b1ad-a23aaabf62e4>



**Acronyms:** RB-COSOP = results-based COSOP; QE = quality enhancement; QA = quality assurance; PIM = project implementation manual; PMU = project management unit; AWP/B = annual workplan and budget; MIS = management information system; M&E = monitoring and evaluation; PDR = project design report.

**Figure 3. Gender and targeting in the project cycle**

## About this toolkit

**Teaser:** outlines the context and benefits of targeting and gender equality in rural and agricultural development and IFAD’s response at the policy level.

**How to do poverty targeting, gender equality and empowerment during project design** provides step-by-step guidance on addressing targeting and gender issues in the design of IFAD-supported projects, with supporting tools and examples.

**How to do poverty targeting, gender equality and empowerment during project implementation** provides practical guidance on strengthening, implementing, tracking and supervising the performance of targeting and gender strategies in IFAD-supported projects, with supporting tools and examples.



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Tajikistan - Mobilizing Public Private Partnerships in Support of Women-led Small Business Development

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