

IFAD ACTION PLAN

RURAL YOUTH

 2019-2021

Empowering rural young women
and men to shape the rural
economies of tomorrow


Investing in rural people



Therèse Tchouabe Siakam (right) from Mbalmayo in Cameroon is 27 years old and an engineer in fisheries science. After graduation, she wanted to set up a small farm specialized in fingerling production. Thanks to the training, technical assistance and start-up support provided by the IFAD-supported Aquaculture Entrepreneurship Promotion Project, she was able to start her business. Today, she earns about US\$500 a month. With this, she has been able to provide employment for her brother and support her sister's schooling, and now she is considering expanding her business.

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Key messages



Increased ambition: all country strategies and 50 per cent of all new projects to be youth-sensitive by 2021

More consultation with young people through Rural Youth Advisory Council, youth targeting, youth-sensitive country programming and delivery, more capacity, and more resources

Theory of change: jobs, entrepreneurship and well-being for youth through more access to productive assets, services and skills

Business development, new technology and innovation models, vocational training and education as well as emerging themes of decent work, child labour in agriculture, adolescent girls, indigenous youth and youth with disabilities

Fit for purpose: evidence-based policy engagement and partnerships

Country-level policy engagement, partnerships including for decent employment and child labour



Where IFAD is now

The “Y factor”

The overwhelming majority of the world’s 1.2 billion young people, equivalent to 88 per cent of them, live in developing countries and mostly in rural areas (FAO, 2019). Almost 71 million of them are unemployed (ILO, 2017). While the challenges to gainful employment are common to all poor rural people, rural youth are especially disadvantaged by them, and the livelihoods of rural youth are under increasing pressure from a lack of access to assets, goods and services as well as a lack of opportunity to acquire new skills. In turn, this is linked to unemployment, which may result in a host of connected problems such as financial exclusion and landlessness. Yet, the large rural youth population and a growing demand for diversified foods in many developing countries represent a unique opportunity to advance towards the three objectives of decent job creation for youth, food security and sustainable production, as spelled out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (OECD, 2018). IFAD is committed to maximizing this “Y factor”.

IFAD catalyses thousands of jobs for youth

IFAD investments kick-start thousands of jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities for young women and men in rural areas throughout the world. For example, in Burundi, the IFAD-supported Value Chain Development Programme Phase II is working to create over 33,000 jobs for young women and men along agricultural value chains, and in Cameroon, another project is aiming to establish more than 5,000 enterprises (of which 30 per cent are to be women-owned), which are to create over 20,000 direct jobs by 2021.

IFAD invests in piloting holistic, youth-friendly models that work. For example, in the Republic of Moldova, the Rural Financial Services and Agribusiness Development Project provided a package of loans and matching grants to young entrepreneurs, as well as technical assistance, training and capacity-building to both borrowers and financial institutions. This overcame the reluctance of lenders to take on what they initially perceived as greater risk, and a follow-on project is seeing young entrepreneurs already achieving up to a 140 per cent increase in gross profits (IFAD, 2018a). Young rural entrepreneurs need finance, and Mali’s Rural Youth Vocational Training, Employment and Entrepreneurship Support Project has introduced an innovation with scale potential – a platform that enables the Malian community in France to lend even very small amounts to rural microentrepreneurs in Mali. The platform was created by Babyloan, a European leader in online, interest-free lending, with the support of IFAD (IFAD, 2017). IFAD is also engaging young rural women and men in green growth and boosting their resilience to climate change. For example, in Grenada, IFAD is helping over 5,000 young people improve their livelihoods and resilience by accessing new jobs, starting up and consolidating businesses, and adopting climate-smart agricultural practices (IFAD, 2018b).

No more business as usual – learning from experience

IFAD knows that, if it is to boost rural youth employment and well-being, it must do things differently. At a corporate level, IFAD will ensure that young people are consulted on what this means in practice, through establishing a Rural Youth Advisory Council, which will support effective targeting of youth as well as give them a voice in global policy forums and in country programming. IFAD is also committed to understanding how best to engage specifically with young women. An example of this effort is the dedicated Taqeeem partnership between the International Labour Organization and IFAD, which aims to understand “what works” in gender mainstreaming, with the ultimate goal of gender-equitable, rural-employment outcomes across the region. Moreover, IFAD recognizes that “young people” is a moving target during the life of a project; for example, changing from adolescents to young family heads – and projects need to take this into account.

IFAD has been increasing its focus on rural young people especially since its Strategic Framework (2007-2011) introduced “... the creation of viable opportunities for rural youth and enhancing rural youth organizations” as principles of engagement. IFAD’s first Rural Youth Action Plan now positions IFAD to scale up successes and build on learning in order to help rural young women and men achieve their potential.



IFAD's Rural Youth Action Plan (2019-2021)

This Rural Youth Action Plan (IFAD, 2018c) sets out the framework and guides youth-sensitive agriculture and rural development investments at IFAD. What does this mean for IFAD? In short, a “youth-sensitive” project is one that (i) describes youth and its context-based challenges and opportunities in the project design analysis; (ii) informs a targeting strategy that explicitly targets youth with concrete objectives and activities to achieve impact in priority areas (see below), expressed as part of the project’s theory of change, approach and results framework; and (iii) allocates resources to deliver activities targeting youth. This working definition of “youth-sensitive” will be refined on the basis of IFAD’s experience in youth-sensitive programming and backed up by practical guidance. The official United Nations definition of “youth” is people between 15 and 24 years of age, but countries often adopt different definitions. For example, African governments’ national youth policies normally adopt the definition provided by the African Union, which is from 18 to 35. All IFAD’s country strategic opportunities programmes and project designs will define youth on the basis of a country’s own definition.

“Enhancing impact in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by empowering rural young women and men” – IFAD’s theory of change

Figure 1 illustrates IFAD’s theory of change, through which its investments will contribute to socially and economically empowering rural youth. The theory of change is founded on IFAD’s commitment to make effective and efficient contributions to SDGs 1, 2 and 8 and to the broader 2030 Agenda. IFAD’s pro-youth interventions will foster youth economic empowerment through a comprehensive menu of strategic directions, key themes and action areas.

Strategic directions comprise: (i) business development services; (ii) investments in mechanization and the use of modern technologies, including information and communications technology; (iii) vocational and technical training; (iv) actions targeting youth including credit/equity financing for youth-owned enterprises and start-ups, innovative use of migrants’ remittances to spur investment in rural youth, agricultural risk management and involving youth as stakeholders in farmers organizations, youth associations and cooperatives; and (v) engagement with governments and youth for conducive policy frameworks.

IFAD’s comparative advantage in youth

IFAD’s comparative advantage is reflected in priority themes as shown in table 1, and with a clear focus on jobs as well as what young people need to access employment and set up as entrepreneurs. Emerging themes are also extremely important but beyond IFAD’s specific experience. Hence, the Fund will strengthen its partnerships with agencies already spearheading these themes. Table 1 provides a summary of priority and emerging themes.

All country strategies and 50 per cent of new project designs to be youth-sensitive by 2021

The Rural Youth Action Plan has clear targets that all country strategies and 50 per cent of IFAD new project designs between 2019 and 2021 will be youth-sensitive, and 70 per cent of new project designs are to be youth-sensitive by the end of the Thirteenth Replenishment of IFAD’s Resources in 2027. There is a focus on putting in place the corporate systems and capacities to ensure youth-sensitive programming, and also on creating enabling frameworks at the national level. IFAD’s experience with mainstreaming gender, climate change and nutrition show that this approach is critical to a sustainable mainstreaming approach. Action Areas support the practical implementation of IFAD’s ambitions in youth mainstreaming. They revolve around youth-sensitive country programme delivery, stronger implementation capacity at all levels, knowledge management and communications, and policy engagement. Table 2 outlines key deliverables or outputs.

Figure 1: Theory of change to empower rural youth through IFAD investments

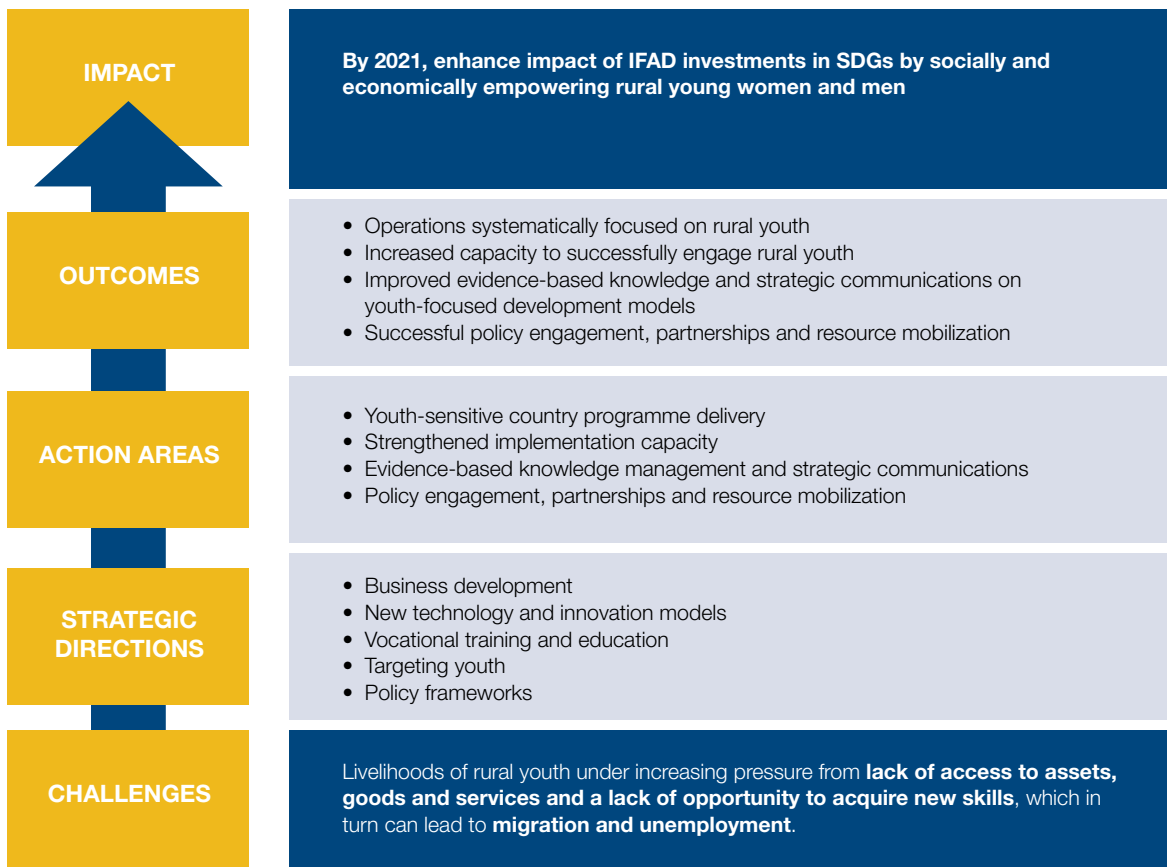


Table 1: Priority and emerging themes

PRIORITY THEMES	EMERGING THEMES
Youth employment and entrepreneurship	Decent employment
Access to land and natural resources	Child labour in agriculture
Access to rural finance	Adolescent girls, indigenous youth and youth with disabilities
Access to climate-resilient productive technologies and practices	
Profitable smallholder organizational models	

Table 2: IFAD's youth Action Areas at a glance

	ACTION AREAS			
OUTPUTS	Youth-sensitive country programme delivery	Strengthened implementation capacity	Evidence-based knowledge management and strategic communication	Policy engagement, partnerships, resource mobilization
	100% country strategies 50% new project designs Grants to foster innovation Revised targeting policy M&E age disaggregation	Awards for best projects by region Skills development for 25% of youth targeted in projects Youth organizations Consultants and service providers roster IFAD capacity development Youth Engagement Guidance Note	Knowledge management plan Communication strategy 5 case studies 6 multimedia knowledge products Regional knowledge events	Rural Youth Advisory Council established Country-level policy engagement Campaign for rural youth empowerment IFAD goodwill ambassador for rural youth Grants and resources for innovative pilots Partnerships including for decent employment and child labour UN Youth Strategy implementation UN Economic and Social Council and UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development meetings

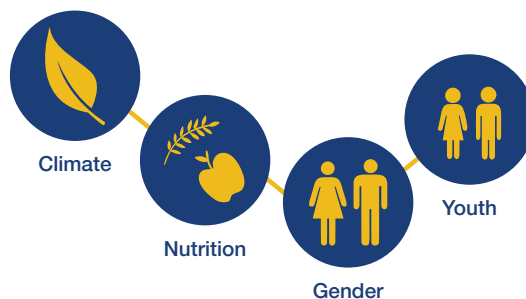
Empowering rural youth within a holistic transformation framework

Achieving Agenda 2030 depends on a holistic approach, and IFAD has stepped up efforts to integrate cross-cutting themes through its framework for implementing transformational approaches to the mainstreaming themes. This sets out IFAD's commitment to integrated mainstreaming of youth and gender, nutrition and climate change so that synergies are tapped and trade-offs are managed. IFAD wants to ensure that smallholders benefit from interventions that are fit for purpose in their complex reality, in which they face multiple challenges.

Youth-sensitive agriculture supports results in nutrition, gender equality and climate change adaptation. For example, IFAD can support young women's and men's economic empowerment through helping them produce and market more nutritious foods based on crops, fish and livestock grown in a way that minimizes greenhouse emissions and environmental impacts. It can also promote more accessible financing to allow young women and men to access climate-resilient technologies and participate in agricultural value chains that increase incomes for rural youth as well as their food security and nutrition.

Each context is different, and each IFAD project will therefore need to adopt the most appropriate youth-gender-climate-nutrition combination. For example, Bhutan's Commercial Agriculture and Resilient Livelihoods Enhancement Programme targets rural young women and men by making climate-resilient agriculture more attractive through better incomes and less drudgery. Child malnutrition will be reduced by 15 per cent through a combination of better access to a more nutritious and varied diet in community households and schools, more income and nutrition education to promote consumption of foods produced by households, and women's empowerment, for example, easing their work burdens (IFAD, 2018b).

By the end of IFAD11, all country strategies will mainstream all cross-cutting themes








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