Lessons learned

IFAD's approach to country-level policy engagement

IFAD
Investing in rural people

The **Lessons Learned series** is prepared by the IFAD **Policy and Technical Advisory Division** and provides a compilation of past experiences relating to a particular topic and a reflection on evidence-based best practices and failures. "Best practices" refer to processes or methodologies that have been proven to produce good results and are thus recommended examples to be replicated.

These notes are "living" documents and will be updated periodically based on new experiences and feedback. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact the originators.

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List of acronyms

CLPE   country-level policy engagement

COSOP   country strategic opportunities programme

PTA   Policy and Technical Advisory Division

Introduction

IFAD's approach to country programming assumes projects are neither an end in themselves nor the sum of what IFAD does in its member states. Increasingly, policy engagement is considered to be one of the key instruments of its country programmes for scaling up development impact, and thus a critical complement to the projects for achieving the strategic objectives of the country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP). Yet, while it is often thought of as a non-lending tool, policy objectives and activities are also increasingly being mainstreamed into loan projects, enabling a significant portion of IFAD loans to directly address policy conditions during the course of their implementation.

IFAD's approach to country-level policy engagement (CLPE) is one of facilitating, informing and supporting nationally-owned policy processes, so as to enable governments and other national stakeholders themselves to determine and realize the policy change required. Its approach is characterized by building national capacities for dialogue and the design, implementation and assessment of policies, and by bringing evidence to those processes, where appropriate and useful. It is a broad approach, and it includes, but goes beyond, policy dialogue. It is a process that may have political dimensions, as it can involve social and economic empowerment of groups that have been excluded or marginalized from policy processes. IFAD does not impose policy change as a condition for its support for investment projects, and rarely does it seek specific policy change.

CLPE can thus be seen as a process for IFAD to collaborate, directly and indirectly, with partner governments and other country-level stakeholders to influence policy priorities or the design, implementation and assessment of formal policies that shape the opportunities for inclusive and sustainable rural transformation.

This section of the CLPE toolkit seeks to present a series of examples of recent practice in IFAD projects, grants and country programmes, in order to extract a number of emerging lessons learned. This document describes 10 types of CLPE-related activity, and it draws out 10 lessons learned over the past few years.

More examples and case studies, including useful information such as Terms of Reference, logical frameworks and analytical tools, can be found in the longer CLPE Guidebook.

Context and challenges: CLPE in practice

IFAD-supported projects, grants and country programme teams are engaged in a multiplicity of policy activities. A review published in 2016 of CLPE confirms that much is being done in the area of policy engagement across all of IFAD's five regions, and that there has been a gradual improvement in the extent to which country programmes are engaged in policy. COSOPs have increasingly paid attention to CLPE (under IFAD10, in fact, they are all required to articulate a strategy for policy engagement); and between 40 and 50 per cent of IFAD's projects approved annually have either a project component or subcomponent focused on policy, with complementary activities, responsibilities and budgets. These encouraging results reflect a broad understanding of the important and potentially transformative impacts of engaging with government policy; though one of the conclusions of the review was that IFAD's approach can be further strengthened by being more specific about the prioritization of policy engagement and the articulation of clear strategies for engagement, linked to the creation of an evidence base and knowledge management strategies more generally.

Ten types of policy activities have been identified to date, targeting different types of outcomes and working at different moments in the policy cycle – that is, from agenda setting to policy formulation and decision-making, to policy implementation and finally to policy monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The remainder of this section provides more information about the types of CLPE activities, with examples of how IFAD is working. The activities are organized by the underlying objective, and lessons from each are highlighted.

Table 1. IFAD country-level policy activities and outcomes

Policy activity	Outcome sought from activity
Create space for policy dialogue	Enhance participation of smallholders in policy processes and ensure these reflect their interests
Enhance stakeholder capacity for policy processes	Enhance participation of smallholders in policy processes and ensure these reflect their interests
Support policy analysis and formulation	Stimulate the production and utilization of evidence for the policy process
Review policy implementation to identify gaps, constraints and blockages	Stimulate the production and utilization of evidence for the policy process
Draw out successful models and promote adoption or scaling up	Stimulate the production and utilization of evidence for the policy process
Share experience at the regional or global level	Stimulate the production and utilization of evidence for the policy process
IFAD itself participates in policy dialogue forums	Stimulate the production and utilization of evidence for the policy process
Strengthen the capacity of government agencies for policy planning and monitoring	Enhance policy capacity of government
Operationalize or pilot national policy at the local level	Enhance policy capacity of government
Promote inter-agency dialogue	Enhance policy capacity of government

Outcome 1: Enhance participation of smallholders, rural people and organizations in policy processes

A large body of literature in political science and political theory suggests that public policy made through deliberation and discussion has distinct advantages over policy which is not broadly discussed and commented upon.[1] According to these theorists, deliberation enhances the legitimacy of policy by increasing perceptions of fairness, as well as enhances the stability of policy decisions.

IFAD is interested in promoting the participation of rural people and their organizations in policy processes in order to strengthen their voices, which historically have been marginalized in policy processes, and to enhance the quality of public policymaking, in line with the argument above. Discussions among stakeholders about what is wrong and what might improve the situation for different players – particularly smallholder farmers – can help to set the stage for the formulation of better policies. Some examples of the way this can be done include multistakeholder platforms which work on specific topics or with specific industries, value chains or products; special units within government tasked at analysing government policy; or facilitating dialogue between smallholder farmers and relevant government actors, which can be very useful in creating consensus and clarity during the design, implementation and evaluation of public policies.

IFAD contributes to the participation of smallholders in the policy cycle by supporting the process of discussion in at least two ways: creating and convening space for policy dialogue, and enhancing the capacity of their representative organizations to set agendas for, or influence, policy processes. The following paragraphs describe these activities in more detail.

Activity 1: Create space for policy dialogue. IFAD's work with rural people's organizations/farmer organizations often leads projects to support new or expanded ways for those organizations to participate in discussions about their livelihoods and products. Many projects, working in different thematic areas, include among their activities the establishment of multistakeholder platforms for discussing production and

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[1] See, for example, Elster, 1998 (pp.97-122) and Risse, 2000 (Vol. 54, No. 1: 1-39).

policy issues or for engaging particular populations (e.g. rural youth, indigenous peoples) on identification of policy problems and potential solutions. In some cases, where civil society already counts, and spaces for discussing policy areas of interest to rural people's organizations already exist, then IFAD supports or strengthens these arrangements rather than creating them from scratch. This is useful to ensure that such efforts are sustainable beyond the lifespan of the project itself. In other cases, IFAD helps create platforms that are then sustained either by ongoing IFAD interventions or by their own internal logic.

Example: The **Smallholder Agribusiness Partnerships Project** in Sri Lanka will create space for policy dialogue between national stakeholders and then support that dialogue. At the national level, regular **4Ps multistakeholder meetings** will be established, with participation of representatives of relevant government agencies, of producers and their organizations involved in agricultural value chains; private-sector processors and exporters; and interested banks and microfinance institutions. These multistakeholder meetings, which the project management unit (PMU) will convene twice a year, will be professionally facilitated. The meetings will serve as an opportunity for the different actors along the project-supported agricultural value chains to interact, and specifically, to identify and bring to the attention of government critical policy and regulatory issues affecting the sector; to prioritize these and propose research, where needed, to better analyse the issues and identify solutions; and to validate the findings and advocate for policy change.

Activity 2: Enhance stakeholder capacity for policy processes. In tandem with creating or supporting spaces for policy dialogue, or occasionally on a stand-alone basis (through, for example, the Support to Farmers' Organizations in Africa Programme, SFOAP, in Africa or the Medium-Term Cooperation Programme, MTCP, in Asia), IFAD often seeks to enhance the capacity of smallholder farmers and rural populations to participate in policy processes – be it agenda setting, policy formulation or monitoring the implementation of policy. Providing producers and/or rural organizations and their representatives with training courses and capacity-building related to the policy process and the technical content of policies can help them to make more substantive and informed contributions to dialogue about public policy and to better represent their organizations. This kind of training might be bundled with other types – for example, training in management and marketing – and can play a key role in ensuring that rural people's organizations speak the language of policymakers and therefore have an influence on the debate.

Example: In Brazil, the **Agricultural Development and Poverty Reduction in the State of Maranhão** seeks to "strengthen existing community organizations and foster the creation of new ones… to increase their ability to identify problems and priorities, improve their interaction with municipal authorities and participate more effectively in local discussion and decision-making platforms (collegiate bodies, for example)". It involves teams of mobilizers working in the communities, along with training activities to disseminate information about relevant public policies and programmes and their operational procedures, so that beneficiaries can take advantage of them.

Outcome 2: Stimulate the production and utilization of evidence for the policy process

Evidence-based policymaking, a term that was first promoted actively in the late 1990s and early 2000s by the Government of the United Kingdom, is a concept that encourages all actors to engage rationally in policy processes by bringing to bear evidence in order to improve the performance of policies rather than seeking to influence the goals of the policy process. According to a paper by the Overseas Development Institute, the objective of evidence-based policymaking is to undertake "a more rational, rigorous and systematic approach" and is "based on the premise that policy decisions should be better informed by

available evidence and should include rational analysis. This is because policy which is based on systematic evidence is seen to produce better outcomes."[2]

IFAD is interested in this approach of bringing evidence to inform policy processes, and seeks to work closely with the government either by providing targeted analysis and assessments of successful models or by assisting governments in sharing, drawing on and using evidence. Being a trusted partner of government is critical here. Trust is built through long-term engagement, by demonstrating the capacity to bring to bear evidence which has positive outcomes on policy, and on some occasions, through alliances with other actors where IFAD can play the role of "honest broker".

Activity 3: Support for policy analysis and formulation. IFAD and IFAD-financed projects fund analysis intended to inform new policies, regulations and laws; they support governments and other stakeholders in generating, evaluating and prioritizing information when drafting policies; and they provide support for the consultative processes in which policies are formulated and approved. This is one way in which IFAD helps to ensure that the policy environment in which its projects and grants are implemented is one that can facilitate inclusive, sustainable rural transformation. In fact, financing for short-term consultancies/technical assistance for policy formulation is one of the most frequent policy activity types found in IFAD projects.

Consultancy/technical assistance support to analyse policies may happen in many different ways. In many cases, the consultant may support the process of drafting a policy document. In other cases, however, IFAD may provide support for inputs further upstream, doing more research-based work. For example, through a regional grant programme, the Latin America and the Caribbean Division supported research on the connection and synergies between conditional cash transfer programmes and programmes aimed at rural economic development. The study, which yielded a book with several country case studies and an overarching theoretical framework, aimed to see whether these two types of policies could be better designed to work together, initially in future IFAD projects but ultimately in national programmes.

Example: The **Ghana Agricultural Sector Investment Programme** (GASIP), approved in 2014, intends to fund the drafting of a series of white papers (detailed policy documents used at the cabinet level) to address core underlying policy issues with the objective of improving the policy framework for smallholder farmers. Such papers will reflect higher-level consultations and greater consensus between the government and stakeholders on how to move the policy agenda forward rather than the research example mentioned above.

Additionally, and as in the example below, some projects go further to strengthen or support the process of policy formulation beyond the provision of just technical inputs to the policy process.

Example: The **Rwanda Dairy Development Project** (RDDP), designed and approved in 2016, seeks not only to provide technical inputs into a new national dairy law, but also to support "stakeholder consultations and consensus-building on the new policy … and facilitation of the drafting and adoption process through the various organs of government, following the processes set out in the Cabinet Manual of the Office of the Prime Minister". Thus, RDDP will not only provide evidence for the policy formulation, but will also help structure the process of garnering consensus among stakeholders for the new policy, and accompany the ministry as it brings the policy through various stages of formalization and approval.

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[2] See S. Sutcliffe and J. Court, 2005.

Activity 4: Review policy implementation to identify gaps, constraints and blockages. Once policies have begun to be implemented, IFAD-supported projects can take a proactive approach to see what is working on the ground and what is not; where the gaps lie between policy intention and local-level implementation; and identify whether there are adjustments in the implementation arrangements that can be made to improve the performance of the policy or whether more substantive policy changes are needed. IFAD can support governments to review policy experience to identify implementation gaps and/or policy constraints and blockages. Given that some of the information collected will be about the ways that policies change during implementation, it may be useful to explore the causes of the changes. This can be part of the monitoring process to determine where further work is needed.

Example: In Ethiopia, the **Pastoral Community Development Programme** has conducted a number of "policy implementation gap" studies. These do not explicitly seek to influence the policy itself, but rather to review the extent to which it is being effectively implemented on the ground and analyse the associated implications in terms of policy outcomes.

Activity 5: Share experiences at the regional level. Another activity aimed at sharing experience and contributing evidence, present particularly in IFAD's grant portfolio where regional models of working dominate, is sharing experiences at a regional level among national policymakers in order to encourage the adoption of successful models and policies being piloted elsewhere. The experience suggests that meeting at the regional level creates a "safe space" for discussion, and enables policymakers from the individual countries both to interact with other stakeholders from their countries in a more open manner and to learn from their peers in neighbouring countries.

Examples: In the Southern Cone of Latin America, IFAD provided long-term support through the grants programme to MERCOSUR's REAF (*la Reunión Especializada en Agricultura Familiar* or the specialized meeting on family farming) to enable governments and civil society to come together to share problems, experiences and opportunities for promoting family farming. As a result, individual national governments were able to make good progress on designing and implementing their own public policies, particularly because it facilitated coordination between markets that were formally linked via integrated trade arrangements.

In Asia, the Asia and the Pacific Division is supporting a large grant to analyse how countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations region are successfully integrating their trade policies within the bloc and their food security policies, looking for ways to ensure that there are positive linkages between the two.

Activity 6: Draw out successful models and promote adoption or scaling up. For a growing number of IFAD member states, a major motivation for engaging with IFAD is to learn from the experiences of the projects it supports, and draw on the lessons in formulating their own policies and programmes. IFAD is well placed to facilitate that learning, to adopt lessons into new and existing programmes, and to support scaling up. As part of the knowledge management function associated with the projects it supports and its broader country programme, IFAD draws on the project experiences (and results from grants) to accumulate experience about models that have proven to be successful, to analyse and document those lessons, and to feed them back to governments so they can promote further adoption of the policy or scale it up by increasing the resources for the activity.

Examples: In India, the violence against women initiative ("Shaurya Dal") developed under the **Tejaswini Rural Women's Empowerment Programme** has been scaled up across Madhya Pradesh. IFAD's support role was to highlight the contribution that projects make to rural development, rather than attributing changes to particular actors.

In Nepal, the successful experience of the IFAD-financed **Leasehold Forestry and Livestock Programme** was used to convince senior government officials of the effectiveness of a new pro-poor approach to forestry, which was then incorporated as a priority in the Poverty Reduction Support Programme and incorporated as a national policy. Consequently, the government increased investment in leasehold forestry from 6 to 22 districts. Notable in this success was the capacity-building that preceded the increased dialogue, because the increased capacity allowed a focus on space for dialogue.

In Bangladesh, the ICO hired a consultant to conduct a study aimed at providing a framework and agenda for IFAD to better support and contribute to national policy processes in that country (see Appendix 4.6). The report identified a total of 15 operational and policy-related successes under the currently ongoing projects that could potentially provide the basis for a policy engagement strategy and were grouped into five broad thematic areas. For each of these 15 successes, the report also defined a specific and structured plan for policy engagement.

Activity 7: IFAD itself participates in policy dialogue forums. IFAD has undertaken a major effort in decentralization over the past several years and now has almost 40 country offices. The presence of senior staff (country programme managers [CPMs] and country programme officers [CPOs]) in-country has increased the extent to which IFAD staff can play roles as active participants in policy dialogue in the country, either via sector/subsector working groups in-country where such groups exist, or in a more ad hoc fashion with the government ministries. In doing so, IFAD brings its strategic priorities and the evidence of its own field-level experience to policy conversations and seeks to promote the utilization of the lessons learned in national policies and programmes.

Examples: The Lao People's Democratic Republic is one of the growing number of countries where IFAD has acted as the chair of the subsector working group on agriculture: through its participation in that body, in 2015 it helped to formulate the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan and the government's new Agricultural Development Strategy, as well as supporting government entities engaged in policy-related research.

In Uganda, IFAD country staff were able to engage in policy dialogue about micro and rural financial policy over a long period of time, facilitating a process of discussion about the future direction of policy. IFAD engaged with representatives of the private sector and rural producer organizations to bring evidence to the table, advocating the need for a sound regulatory and supervisory framework for savings and credit cooperative societies (SACCOs), using evidence from the implementation of the Rural Financial Services Programme. This aimed to ensure the sustainability and growth of SACCOs and to influence the policymakers to acknowledge SACCOs as demand-driven, member-based and savings-first institutions.

Outcome 3: Enhance policy capacity of government

IFAD also supports activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of governments to identify policy issues, develop policies, implement them at local level and assess their results and impact; as weaknesses in capacity around policy are one of the core reasons that both development and IFAD projects fail to meet their objectives and expectations. These activities underpin the entire policy cycle and focus on strengthening core functions and knowledge management for governments. There are three separate sets of activities worth recognizing.

Activity 8: Strengthen the capacity of government agencies for policy planning and monitoring. It is not always enough for a project to work on individual policies in order to improve the framework and environment in which projects are implemented. In some instances, a government's capacity for planning, formulating and monitoring policy and other core functions may be too weak to engage in other sorts of policy activities without central support. In these cases, and when a government is interested in this sort of support, IFAD engages in strengthening the capacity of government agencies directly.

Example: In El Salvador, the **National Programme of Rural Economic Transformation for Living Well – Rural Adelante**, approved in 2015, seeks to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture's operation planning, policy and strategy department to formulate and articulate implementation plans for a number of large strategies approved by the Government of El Salvador. While the ministry is strong in the implementation and formulation of some strategies, in others it needs specific support.

Activity 9: Operationalize or pilot national policy at the local level. The implementation of policies is the step in the policy cycle at which many other development partners stop actively participating: while they will be involved in the structuring of policy dialogue or in commissioning studies contributing to the formulation of new policies (or even the more political processes of lobbying to ensure such policies are passed), fewer agencies actively work to help the government mobilize policy in practice or to help policies that may have been on the books for some time become embedded in local practice. Nonetheless, policy implementation is one of the largest challenges in development effectiveness, and is often limited by budget constraints and capacities.

Through investment projects, IFAD can support governments in operationalizing national policy at the local level and piloting new policy implementation models. Often, despite policies being well formulated on paper, there is a gap in understanding and capacity in implementing them on the ground. Often, a lack of resources and political will hinders effective implementation. By utilizing projects as testing grounds for policy implementation, IFAD can contribute to the efforts of a government to deliver on its policies and provide evidence of what works so that approaches can be scaled up. This in turn builds the capacity of the government as a policy actor.

Examples: In India, through the ongoing projects, IFAD has assisted the Ministry of Tribal Affairs in operationalizing Tribal Sub Planning, a policy which requires the earmarking of funds to tribal areas by the departments of state government as well as union government.

In Djibouti, the **Microfinance and Microenterprise Development Project** has supported the government in implementing its microfinance policies and regulations through the establishment of a national commission for microfinance, which includes a monitoring cell. The establishment of this body has strengthened the institutional context of microfinance in the country and resulted in the regulation of the sector.

Activity 10: Promote inter-agency dialogue. In many countries, individual ministries have a tendency to work in silos and they have difficulties effectively addressing issues that involve collaboration with other ministries or agencies. This is of particular relevance today: ministries of agriculture are increasingly expected to take on issues around climate change adaptation and nutrition – both issues that traditionally have been addressed by different ministries; and the issue of effectively linking IFAD-supported projects with national programmes and so enhancing the implementation of those programmes is an important issue in a growing number of IFAD member states. IFAD-supported projects can be structured to promote collaboration between the government agencies responsible for the different initiatives in order to develop multisectoral strategies or to improve coordination between programmes.

Example: As part of the **Integrated Participatory Development and Management of Irrigation Project** in Indonesia, a policy-focused knowledge management centre will be established under the Ministry of Planning (Bappenas). A key dimension of its role will be to convene relevant ministries involved in the irrigated agriculture sector, strengthen operational collaboration between them, and promote policy dialogue among them at the national and local level for an improved and more consistent policy and regulatory environment for smallholder irrigated agriculture.

Lessons learned

The above section provided some recent examples of how IFAD undertakes country-level policy engagement around the world. These examples, and others as highlighted in the reviews and case studies recently published by IFAD, have enabled the PTA Policy Desk to draw out a number of lessons.

Ten such lessons are highlighted below.

1. **CLPE is not a mystery**, and in many countries IFAD is doing it, and doing it well.

    Policy engagement is no longer a new topic for IFAD, and there is evidence showing that, in different ways, much is already going on in all regions. At the central level, a broad framework for thinking about CLPE has largely been established, and in many cases a clear understanding of IFAD's approach has been reflected in COSOP and project designs. Where this shared understanding is still to be developed, the CLPE desk within PTA is working to provide better guidance and support via publications, its participation in country programme management teams (CPMTs), design and implementation support missions, and other types of training and interaction, such as the emerging initiative, IFAD's Operations Academy, and learning events.

2. A **wide diversity of topics and activities fall under the CLPE umbrella** at different levels (sector-level versus more specific, strategic versus technical) and in different kinds of states (from those with fragile situations to upper-middle-income countries).

    As highlighted in the above section, there are at least 10 different ways that IFAD projects and programmes have sought to engage with country governments and other IFAD stakeholders in policy processes, and as the examples in the boxes demonstrate, a great diversity of countries engage in these activities. While some have put emphasis on the importance of policy engagement in middle-income states (see, for example, the recent Update on IFAD's Engagement with Middle-Income Countries submitted to the Executive Board in 2016),[3] there are also numerous examples of good practice in policy engagement in low-income states and states with greater capacity constraints (i.e. those in which there are fragile situations – see for example IFAD's strategy for engagement in countries with fragile situations, 2016).[4] And while generally IFAD's engagement in policy issues is focused on technical-level policies, in some states, IFAD can take on a more strategic role and help shape sectoral strategies and approaches, as well as more technical laws, regulations and policies.

3. There are some **unique features to IFAD's conceptualization and operationalization of policy engagement**, which provide IFAD teams with comparative advantages.

    The longer CLPE guidebook provides background on what makes IFAD's approach to policy engagement unique: for example, its view that policy engagement should be a *partnership* with government, to support their policy process as a trusted partner; its focus on *smallholder farmers/rural people* and in enhancing their *representation*; its interest in working across the *policy cycle*, from identification of policy issues to policy implementation; and its *flexibility* on financing mechanisms for policy work – both within projects and outside them. These features should be

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[3] https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/117/docs/EB-2016-117-R-3.pdf
[4] https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/119/docs/EB-2016-119-R-4.pdf

utilized to the advantage of IFAD country teams, especially in countries where governments may be recalcitrant to engage development partners in discussions of policy.

4. **COSOP design is a key moment to define policy engagement** priorities and activities.

    COSOPs approved from the start of IFAD10 are committed to including a section on policy engagement, which sets out a strategy for how the country programme will engage in policy. This provides a perfect space for discussing policy engagement, even in countries where there is little prior IFAD experience in doing so. However, it is important to reflect this engagement strategy elsewhere in the document – if not necessarily in the strategic objectives, perhaps in the results framework, where policy objectives can be named with the source of financing set against them (e.g. projects or grants). In other words, CLPE needs to contribute to the achievement of one or all of the strategic objectives of the COSOP; and it is one of the activities that will be carried out, or tools that will be used, in the thematic areas that support the achievement of the strategic objectives. So CLPE is intimately linked to the strategic objectives and, conversely, CLPE that does not contribute to the achievement of the strategic objectives is probably beyond the scope of what IFAD should be doing in the country.

5. **Most projects can engage in a policy agenda**, with specific activities reflected in the logical frameworks/theories of change, component structure, budget and implementation arrangements.

    Most projects can include a policy agenda, which at the least is likely to involve analysing and feeding back to government the lessons – and proven successes – of the implementation experience. Policy components in IFAD projects are highly context-specific, shaped by the policies the individual project plans to engage with and the specific strategy likely to be successful for that policy topic and country. But in all cases, policy-related activities should contribute to the project's theory of change, and they may form the underlying conditions under which a project is likely to succeed. The activities for policy engagement, and their outputs, need to contribute to the achievement of the project's development objectives and to specific outcomes within the project's results hierarchy. Analysis of the ways that projects globally are seeking to engage in policy demonstrate that there is a wide variety of sectoral issues being supported, but that in almost all cases, to be successful, policy activities must be treated as any other element of projects, with specific indicators, detailed descriptions within the project document, budgetary assignments and, in some cases, ToRs for the project staff expected to implement them.

6. **Policy engagement, scaling up and knowledge management are not separate agendas**.

    IFAD's Strategic Framework 2016-2025 highlights the role of innovation, learning and scaling up as one of five principles of engagement at country level. It makes clear that IFAD's scaling-up agenda – its success in leveraging financial resources and knowledge beyond the programmes it supports – is critical to achieving expanded and sustainable development impact; and it also recognizes that CLPE is a key dimension of scaling up. Equally, the Strategic Framework notes that effective project-level monitoring and evaluation and knowledge management systems are a necessity for measuring results and impact, and analysing drivers of success; and that these functions must feed the process of policy engagement and scaling up. The point then is that CLPE, innovation, scaling up and knowledge management are all closely intertwined: CLPE is one route to scaling up, and its success is fed by effective knowledge management. The fact that in COSOP and project design documents these themes are addressed in different sections should not mean they are considered separately; on the contrary, the close relationship between CLPE, scaling up and knowledge management needs to be acknowledged, and the different texts should complement and support each other.

7. It is the **quality of the IFAD-supported projects that gets IFAD a seat at the table**.

    IFAD's operating model sees policy engagement as a non-lending activity, yet it is closely related to and is often built upon IFAD's project portfolio. That means the quality of that portfolio, and the performance and impact of the projects that make it up, are critical both for establishing their

credibility in the eyes of government as a source of policy evidence – and indeed for building IFAD's standing as a reliable and trustworthy partner in policy dialogue with government and other national stakeholders. Projects that are seen to deliver real benefits are going to be well placed to make a contribution to a national policy agenda; conversely, poorly implemented "problem projects" are unlikely to be able to do so.

8. **Evidence is critical** for informed policymaking, but evidence can mean many things.

   The production of evidence to inform policy processes is an important dimension of IFAD's comparative advantage for policy engagement, with much of that evidence drawn from the real on-the-ground experience gained through project implementation. Yet evidence does not necessarily need to be "researchers' evidence", based on, for example, the results of randomized control trials or econometric analysis; what is important is that it speaks to the specific needs of policymakers. So those products may be reports, briefs or even newspaper articles or videos; they may present the results of desk reviews, surveys, interviews with farmers' groups or the outcomes of policy forums; and they may serve to identify and document policy blockages or limitations, gaps in policy implementation or even the "success stories" of project approaches that can inform national policy. Arguably, with its strong focus on field-level experience, IFAD's comparative advantage is precisely in this domain of "policymakers' evidence".

9. However, the process of **policy change often takes a period of time that extends beyond projects**, and dedication and interest is needed from the country team to reach success.

   One lesson which has emerged from a number of long-standing policy engagements IFAD has undertaken, including the case mentioned above of the Ugandan microfinance project (see Appendix 4.1 of IFAD's CLPE Guidebook) and the example above on Nepal, is that policy processes often outlive the project cycle, and thus in order to be successful, IFAD needs to be both realistic about what it can achieve in the course of a single project, and dedicated over the course of a longer country programme to continue working on a policy area in which it is seen to have a comparative advantage.

10. **M&E of policy activities is a challenge**, but gathering frequent data about policy-related activities helps in creating qualitative, well-documented stories of change later.

    While the CLPE desk within PTA is working to help systematize corporate reporting on policy via the reformed RIMS indicators, there is still work to be done on assisting project and country teams on the ground in tracking, monitoring and eventually evaluating the results of policy activities. Complicated by the long processes which often underpin policy work and the uncertain, non-linear nature of the policy process, teams may need more flexible ways to keep data about policy impact, above and beyond the sort of basic monitoring undertaken for other types of project activities. The CLPE desk is working on a new, replicable method for evaluating policy impact, as well as considering ways to finance the creation of tools which can be utilized by project teams to carry out M&E of policy activities.

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