



SPOTLIGHT

# EMPOWERING RURAL PEOPLE

IFAD is unique in its prioritization of the most vulnerable people: those in the most remote communities. Through our projects, we strive not only to create economic opportunities for these groups of people, but also to address the root causes of their vulnerability. That means redressing power imbalances and enabling traditionally powerless groups to empower themselves and find solutions to the problems they are facing.

**A KEY ASPECT OF THIS WORK IN RECENT YEARS HAS BEEN BUILDING THE RESILIENCE OF RURAL PEOPLE TO THE IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, WHICH WAS THE FOCUS OF OUR RURAL POOR STIMULUS FACILITY (RPSF).**

It is encouraging, therefore, that assessments conducted in 2022 showed that at least three quarters of beneficiaries of the RPSF maintained or increased their levels of production and income, despite the impacts of the pandemic.

Rural people such as Madame Libératrice, a potato farmer in the Nyiragongo Territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have benefited from the RPSF, though old and new challenges continue to make life difficult.

Thanks to the RPSF, Madame Libératrice was able to relaunch her production, despite the impacts of the pandemic and a lava flow that devastated her farm in May 2020. But in late 2022, as a result of an armed insurgency in her region, Madame Libératrice fled her home with her children. Initiatives such as the RPSF can help people regain hope. For Madame Libératrice, the hope now is that the young people of today can help establish stable governance and a brighter future for farmers like her.

During 2022, we updated and refined several of our existing strategies so we can be even more effective in empowering vulnerable people and groups to handle the growing challenges they are facing. These included the updated [IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples](#), which covers 2022-2032. The policy was jointly developed by IFAD and the Steering Committee of the Indigenous Peoples Forum at IFAD. It builds on IFAD's [successful work with indigenous peoples](#) and recognizes the importance of their contribution as partners in designing and monitoring strategies to strengthen rural livelihoods and food systems.

We also revised our Targeting Policy: [Leaving No One Behind](#). The revised policy is focused on aligning our commitments with the SDGs – in particular the cross-cutting commitment to leave no one behind. The revised policy is geared towards the current global crises that are leading to a deteriorating development situation and to guiding action to build the resilience of the most vulnerable people to their impacts.

**ONE OF THE PRIORITIES IN OUR WORK ON EMPOWERMENT IS ENSURING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES BENEFIT FROM OUR PROJECTS. IFAD'S DISABILITY INCLUSION STRATEGY 2022-2027 PLACES THIS CRITICAL GOAL AS CENTRAL TO THE PURSUIT OF IFAD'S MISSION.**

In recent years, IFAD has acquired experience in working with people with disabilities, and has been stepping up its efforts to become more disability inclusive. The new strategy will guide efforts to raise IFAD's standards and performance on disability inclusion.

Alongside our partners, we are also pioneering new methodologies to empower women. For example, under the [Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security, Improved Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture](#) – which we are implementing alongside the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme – the [Financial Action Learning for Sustainability at Scale](#) toolkit is providing low-income women with financial planning skills and tools.

And we have taken important steps to implement the [IFAD Strategy on Biodiversity 2022-2025](#), which will support poor rural people to protect and enhance local biodiversity. Among the steps taken during 2022 were identifying a core biodiversity indicator for IFAD-supported projects, developing a finance-tracking methodology for nature-based solutions and establishing a cross-divisional biodiversity community of practice. We have also established partnerships for increased resource mobilization, capacity-building and knowledge exchange related to biodiversity – for example, IFAD is now a partner of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

In addition, we are raising the visibility of rural people and creating awareness of the urgency of investments to address growing threats to their livelihoods. The Platform for Agricultural Risk Management [Art Challenge](#) celebrated rural women and men and their important work in helping to feed the world. Works of art showcasing rural people, their activities and their lives were displayed at the Food Heroes exhibition that took place from 31 May to 21 June 2022 in the Botanical Garden of Cheikh Anta Diop University, Senegal, as part of one of the major contemporary African art exhibitions. The exhibition attracted more than 1,700 in-person visitors and over 7,600 online visitors, who participated in the virtual tour carried out on the PARM and IFAD West Africa digital platforms.