



**WELCOMING ADDRESSES AND CLOSING REMARKS
BY IFAD AND SAVE THE CHILDREN**

Welcoming address by Cornelia Richter, Vice-President of IFAD

Your Royal Highness,
Excellencies,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. On behalf of President Houngbo, and all the IFAD staff, I welcome you to this conference on Making the Case for Adolescent Girls.
2. This topic is central to the work of my institution. **IFAD is committed to the 2030 Agenda - to ending poverty and hunger as laid out by the first two Sustainable Development Goals, and to leaving no one behind. And we know that doing this requires an extra effort to reach young people, and in particular, girls.**
3. In fact, I would argue that in addition to focusing on adolescent girls, we need to make a particular case for reaching **rural** adolescent girls.
4. Extreme poverty and hunger are concentrated in the rural areas of developing countries. Eighty per cent of the world's poorest people and most of the under-nourished live in rural, not urban, areas.
5. And by virtually every development indicator for which we have data, rural girls and women face greater disadvantages than rural men – or urban girls and women.¹

¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *State of Food and Agriculture: Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security* (Rome, 2016), p. 49. And https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Africa_Progress_Report_2014.PDF p 43 for African women and girls

6. Rural women too often lack rights to the land they farm; control over household finances; a voice in their communities; and in too many cases, even autonomy over their own bodies.
7. Now, let us consider youth. There are around 1.2 billion people in the world aged 15 to 24, and the youth population is growing fastest in the poorest nations.
8. Globally, young people are two to three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. Rural youth – male and female – are often excluded from decision-making, and do not have adequate access to land, water, markets, finance and entrepreneurial opportunities.
9. When you consider the status of rural women and the status of rural youth, it is clear that **adolescent girls in rural areas are doubly discriminated against** – by being female, and being young. They are also more likely to marry as children than urban girls, and to have children when they are adolescents, and barely out of childhood themselves.
10. If we want to reduce the rate of hunger and under-nutrition in the world, we must invest in adolescent girls, and in particular in rural girls.
11. With this in mind, beginning in January, IFAD is introducing youth as a new thematic area of mainstreaming across its portfolio. This will include a special focus on the needs of adolescent girls and young women.
12. Let me take this opportunity to share a few examples of effective interventions.
13. In Mali the l'Entreprenariat des jeunes Ruraux (FIER) project is focused exclusively on creating a new generation of entrepreneurs. Young people are included at every step, from project design to participating in supervision missions.
14. To prevent the exclusion of girls, every young person in selected villages is entitled to participate. The project also has women in high-level positions.
15. In 2017, the project provided vocational training for 3191 youth; at least 60% were girls. It is expected that over the duration of the project that 20,000 young people will benefit from training, and 30,000 from improved literacy.
16. In Senegal's groundnut basin, youth account for 60 per cent of the population. An IFAD supported project focused particularly on girls and young women, aged 15 to 25 to improve both nutrition and income. More than 800 women and girls were trained in processing and cooking techniques using local cereals. Innovative products, such as enriched flour, were introduced to reduce the nutritional deficiencies of children.

17. In recognition of the need for young people to communicate their needs and expectations to IFAD projects and other national stakeholders, IFAD supported the creation and strengthening of 11 rural youth networks in El Salvador. Young women, aged 15 to 29, made up half of the participants.
18. The national El Salvador network was instrumental in strengthening the capacity of IFAD project staff to ensure youth focus in projects. And as a result, a holistic national plan for the development of rural youth was drafted and endorsed in 2014 by the Vice-Minister of Agriculture.
19. **But we are also aware of our limitations, and the need to sharpen our investments.**
20. One of these limitations is data. To ensure our programs are improving inclusion of the most vulnerable, including young people, we need better data. That is why last year we overhauled our Results and Impact Management System (RIMS) to record not just the gender of beneficiaries, but also specifically track youth and indigenous groups. The monitoring of disaggregated data is essential for project quality in terms of tailoring and targeting interventions and ensuring inclusiveness.

Ladies and gentlemen,

21. Investing in adolescent girls is a cross-cutting action that requires partnerships across the development continuum.
22. IFAD is stepping up its investment in rural young people, including adolescent girls. And thanks to the generosity of our development partners, we are making a difference. And here, I would like to particularly thank Canada for making the rights and empowerment of adolescent girls a priority during its presidency of the G7.²
23. But we cannot achieve zero hunger on our own. We need partners – like the Government of Canada and Save the Children, who have co-sponsored this conference, and the young people – who have travelled from Colombia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua and Sri Lanka to be here today.
24. **Ending hunger is a multi-sectoral challenge that requires a range of development partners.**

² <https://g7.gc.ca/en/g7-development-ministers-meeting-focus-empowering-women-girls/>

25. With this in mind, we are seeking **Unrestricted complementary contributions (or: new funding sources)** to help us increase investments that generate significant social and economic returns, and make it possible for rural girls and boys alike to build the future they deserve.
26. Over the course of the next two days, I hope you will be able to explore how to scale up what works and to learn from sharing experiences – the less successful as well as the good. And I hope that, at the end of this conference, you will convey the case for rural adolescent girls back to your capitals.
27. Thank you.

Welcoming address by Daniela Fatarella, Deputy CEO Save the Children Italy

1. On behalf of Save the Children, I am very pleased to take part today to the important International Conference "Leaving no one behind – Making the case for adolescent girls" co-organized with IFAD and with the generous support of the Canadian Government.
2. The steps made on raising the importance of nutrition and getting the attention of policy makers is remarkable. Yet, the progress on children nutrition is still too slow, despite a global commitment to eradicate malnutrition by 2030, and despite nutrition being at the core of the SDGs Agenda.
3. Adolescents in particular have been left behind from any progress. This is due to multiple causes, including the lack of political steer, policy focus and funding. Failing to focus on adolescent nutrition - particularly for girls - represents a missed opportunity to break the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition. Adolescence is a vulnerable phase in human development as it represents a transition from childhood to physical and psychological maturity. During this period, adolescents learn and develop knowledge and skills to deal with critical aspects of their health and development while their bodies mature. Adolescent girls, especially younger girls, are particularly vulnerable because they face the risks of premature pregnancy and childbirth. The mother they will be will affect the children they will have.
4. Good nutrition is essential for adolescents, particularly for girls who will be mothers to the new generation. The lives of girls, especially the ones living in rural and poor areas, are too often determined by social and cultural dynamics that prevent them from making their own decisions and following their personal ambitions, and often result in extreme violations of their rights.
5. Girls and women, especially those from the poorest families, face gender inequality and violations in many different ways. They confront discrimination and exclusion with regards to education (especially at secondary level), child marriage and early pregnancy, violence, including sexual abuse, restricted access to nutritious food, the denial of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), the denial of opportunities in public and political life, and unpaid and unrecognized domestic work, to name a few. Not only they are marginalized in household

decision-making but also their needs are under-represented in policy debates, often poorly informed by gender and age disaggregated data.

6. Empowerment is particularly important in addressing gender inequality; by building capabilities, opportunities and creating enabling environments, adolescents and youth can successfully transition from childhood to adulthood and experience benefits in many areas of their lives.
7. From Expo Milan 2015, on to the Women G7 event "Starting from Girls. Women's Forum on Inequality and Sustainable Growth", in April 2017, to the Global Nutrition Summit in November 2017, Save the Children has called for policy makers to prioritize adolescent nutrition in order to achieve the Agenda 2030. Save the Children continues to advocate for increased investment to ensure girls grow up healthy, can learn and be safe. Save the Children recognizes that the starting point here remains early life investments to get children off to a good start. If you invest in children, it is going to affect the course of humanity. However, we should not stop there in terms of wishing.
8. Sustaining early gains and recovering early losses is important and we wish this conference could inspire concrete steps in this direction.
9. We therefore welcome today's Conference, made possible by the joint efforts of Save the Children and IFAD and thanks to the support of the Government of Canada, because we believe it is an important step forward toward a concrete and shared commitment to improve the life of the most marginalized girls (and youth in general). I am confident this Conference will also represent an important step forward in the Global Agenda by contributing to reinforce the message that renewed efforts in addressing malnutrition are necessary if we want to have a real impact on youth's life cycle.
10. We have come a long way but we are aware that we are still far from achieving what we aim to.
11. As Save the Children, we are determined to give our strong contribution to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. To this end, in our "Ambition for Children 2030" we committed to inspire three specific breakthroughs for children. "Ensure that all children survive, learn and are protected".
12. Yet, inspiring our breakthrough means focusing on reaching the most deprived and marginalized children, who are too often excluded due to poverty, geography, gender, ethnicity or disability. We cannot do it alone. No one can do it alone.

13. Malnutrition is going to stay if we do not act now, and we are going to achieve results only if we work together.
14. Creating solid, looking forward and innovative partnerships should be at cornerstone of these renewed efforts toward effectively promoting livelihood resilience and food and nutrition security for the most marginalized population.
15. Finally, we strongly believe that no one can be more creative and innovative as youth are. This is why today I am so pleased to be here with and for the adolescents and youth, girls and boys. The young girls and boys you see are here to represent their countries, not only the challenges that youth are facing on a daily basis but also to suggest possible solutions. If we really want to eradicate malnutrition by 2030, we need young people involved, because they are the agents of change. We cannot think about policies and programs without listening to their voices: the only way to protect their rights is to engage them as active citizens, include them in decision-making and recognize their rights and participation.
16. I will stop here but before doing so, I would like to share with you a statement from UNFPA Pakistan because I believe it reflects well the core message of this Conference.
17. "How well girls navigate adolescence will determine not only the course of their own lives, but that of the world" (UNFPA, Pakistan).

Closing remarks by Margarita Astralaga, Director, Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division, IFAD

1. I really appreciated this opportunity to be here with all of you during these two days. It has been really inspiring for me and I have learned a lot. While we are all working very hard to change this world, nonetheless, the problems are huge.
2. Having this frank dialogue with everybody in the same voice counts: it is the same level and value, and the comments are all considered important and constructive. The message was extremely powerful.
3. It has been really hard telling and hearing all those stories and all the challenges that everybody is facing, but, at the same time, inspiring to see that all of you have found solutions and have found best practices to learn about the experiences in different countries present here.
4. From IFAD's perspective, our first commitment is to have the Rural Youth Action Plan. This will be our roadmap of what we are going to do on youth in the next three years starting from now. This Action Plan includes key commitments; All IFAD's country strategies will have a look at not only youth, but also gender, nutrition, environment and climate in a very strategic manner from the beginning, before we even start planning how and what we are going to invest on.
5. Part of our commitments in the Youth Action Plan is the decision making and how youth can influence operations. One of our activities is to identify indicators which make sure that in the process of designing our COSOPs and projects we include the youth who are potential beneficiaries in the areas we are going to work in.
6. Another important commitment we are making is to establish the Rural Youth Council, which will help IFAD to understand better the needs of the youth in several places around the world. We know, although important, that it is not enough to have a Global Rural Youth Council: the national support and national platforms are the ones which will really influence what will happen at the national level.
7. We are working hard to empower women, girls, boys and men. We should try to mainstream nutrition more and to be able to transform the rural areas. Our job and also part of our commitments in the Action Plan will also ensure that the governments which have already put in place youth action plans and policies also look at the rural youth, because the rural youth, indigenous, vulnerable and minorities are very sensitive, and nobody is paying attention to their needs.

8. We know that we have to protect our planet and some of us have been lucky enough to enjoy a healthy planet. We have to continue working in smallholders' agriculture to ensure sustainable production and that our beneficiaries will have fair access to markets, not leaving one person behind.
9. Additionally the understanding of nutrition is key. When we talk to Ministers of agriculture the key element is to produce more food. But who are we feeding and with what kind of food? For us, one of the first steps is ensuring that our partners and own staff understand what nutrition is about and recognize its importance.
10. Another commitment we have is to improve and update our targeting guidelines so that we guarantee that all vulnerable groups, including the adolescent girls, and their needs are considered in our investments.
11. We made some changes in the Action Plan based on some of the comments we heard here, for example, the ones about the cultural barriers. This is why it is also very important for us to have this opportunity of reflection.
12. Some of you are active participants in the indigenous people and farmer's forums that we ran. Our plan is to learn lessons through those two forums to try to apply them into the rural youth at global level.
13. I would also like to invite everybody to visit the IFAD website. In your country section you will find all the projects that IFAD is doing there. You will also find all the countries' strategies and the names of the people working in those countries. It would be great if you could contact with our people at the country level and start building that relationships.
14. IFAD recognizes partnerships and we know it is key to deliver our agenda. I think that, as Daniela was saying, this event is the proof that together we can make a difference and that we have to continue working together.
15. There are many people whom I would like to thank starting with Save the Children and the Canadian Government. I would also like you to see all the people and institutions who helped us run this event. This is how together we can make the difference and hopefully, next time, the people working together towards the same objective will be tripled. I would invite everybody for a big applause to everyone who helped and to everybody who participated.
16. Thank you so much and I do apologize for speaking in English.

Closing remarks by by Daniela Fatarella, Deputy CEO Save the Children Italy

Dear all,

1. We are about to end this two-day strong **journey** which drove us through adolescent girls nutrition issues. These two days have been inspiring and provided us with a lot of good arguments and food for thoughts to keep doing our best **to improve adolescent nutrition and to prevent the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition and poverty as well as looking for a greater accountability.**
2. There have been a number of analysis, presentations, input and valuable contributions to the debate as well as clear recommendations for the future. I want to name here a few ones that I take home from this Conference:
 - First and most important, we need to secure a meaningful **youth engagement** in program and policy design. During these two days we had the opportunity to listen to the youth that I want to thank for their valuable contribution to the event in a very creative way (as the theatre performance) Adolescents and youth have to be at the very center of interventions from policy to implementation, from design to monitoring. It is not just a matter of involving them but also letting them guiding us to meet and address their needs and wishes. If we really want to make a change, we need to listen to them, to trust them, and to work with them to address attitudes and practices in communities. Working with influential community and religious leaders, schools, boys and men, families, and of course girls to empower, build capabilities, offer opportunities and enabling environments in order to positively support adolescents and youth transition from childhood to adulthood.
 - For that reason, priority should be given to interventions focusing on the **empowerment of young girls and boys** in order for them to be aware of their rights build awareness on their potential and to equip them with the capabilities and opportunities, particularly when we look at the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. **Education** represents a key resource, a life-saving intervention, and an entry point to work for and with adolescents at different levels, but in addressing youth related policies and strategies, youth empowerment initiatives should include a nutrition component.

- **Empowering young people** and enabling them to develop their own agency and claim their right to actively participate in building their future **requires concerted, cooperative and integrated efforts**. We are urged to **address discriminatory social norms** and power imbalances for greater gender equality. This means addressing social and economic structures that discriminate against girls, fostering youth participation, enabling access to livelihoods opportunities, health services, education and protection, particularly when we look at rural areas.

It is not an easy job but it is imperative for our work.

- We need to stop **early marriage and girls' rights deprivation**. Child marriage transcends religious and cultural boundaries, and is rooted in gender discrimination, poverty, and structural inequalities, violates internationally defined child and human rights. Again, it is not an easy job but what has been reported during this conference is alarming: early pregnancy and child marriage are longstanding, multidimensional, and deep-rooted traditional practices that cannot be reversed by briefly implemented single-component interventions. We need to understand how to translate words into actions considering local cultural behaviors and habits. There is a need for **cultural sensitive approach** particularly when dealing with child marriage and early pregnancy.

Many adolescents who have been married before age 18 years do not have access to care and support. In addition to law reinforcement and behavioral and belief change, communication is key. Adolescents and other stakeholders need to be informed about the consequences of child marriage and early pregnancy, as well as the health, social and legal services available to them. Support is another fundamental element. Married girls and girls need access to and **support to utilize physical and psychosocial care and support for immediate and long-term health and social consequences**.

Most health-care providers are not prepared to deal with adolescent, girls and gender-based violence, including as it relates to reporting of early pregnancy, sexual abuse or the deprivation of girls' right. We need to fight against this culture of silence.

- All these efforts risk to be invisible. This is why we need greater **investments in monitoring indicators and data**: there is still a significant gap in terms of age and sex disaggregated data across multiple sectors. In particular, adolescent nutrition data are generally excluded from Demographic and Health Surveys and

not adequately captured at programmatic level where data should also be disaggregated in terms of dietary intake and diversification. CSOs should advocate and keep governments accountable on prioritizing adolescent nutrition in their policies and practices, including providing adequate resources for monitoring and evaluation. We need clear and appropriate data also to show progresses.

- **This point brings us to investment and accountability:** Governments must step up their efforts to develop and implement multisector national action plans to reach the targets of the Global Agenda and stop the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition.
- **On the multi sectoral approach** - The Agenda 2030 emphasizes the importance of multisectoral approaches when it comes to global challenges. Among them stands nutrition, increasingly recognized as a multi-dimensional issue strongly affected by complex determinants (e.g. poverty, lack of resources, access to education and socio-economic and political factors), as well as a key objective for sustainable development policies.

We need to work on a more accountable multisector approach and improve it in terms of coordination between the different Ministries and other stakeholders. As said yesterday, for a real hand in hand work we need everybody on board and a strong intersectoral collaboration and coordination, which may not always be the case.

- **Youth are not a homogenous group. They come from a very different social-economic and cultural background and they hold specific needs.** Therefore, the **life cycle approach** promoted by SUN in order to have specific actions for different age groups should be adopted in all nutrition programs to achieve a broader impact on reducing the intergenerational transmission of malnutrition.
3. **Having said that, we cannot give up, we cannot achieve our global goals if half the world's population continues to be left behind**, and their potential and talent continues to go untapped. Interventions to improve women's and girls' nutrition are among the most effective and sustainable means of achieving impact and reducing inequalities across future generations, as such, they should be placed high on the development agenda. **If we prioritize closing the inequity gaps and reaching those who are currently not being reached with critical nutrition interventions and support the most vulnerable to affirm their**

own rights to be represented and heard, we can correct and catalyse progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

4. I recognize that the challenges to make these recommendations a reality are many. **However, no words make sense without actions. Adolescents represent the future generation, but this is not well recognized.** Protect their rights and participation, improving their nutrition have the potential to improve the lives of present and futures generations. This is our mandate.
5. **Adolescent nutrition is a key priority area for Save the Children at Global Level.** We have – as Save the Children Italy - been promoting it for a number of years through our advocacy work. This Conference is the latest example of the numerous steps we are taking to ensure adolescent nutrition is prioritized, understood and acted upon – which critically includes meaningful engagement of adolescents.
6. **As I said yesterday, malnutrition is here to stay. Sharing best practices and recommendation is clearly not enough, we all do need to take action and to make a real commitment at programmatic and policy level in order to produce a concrete impact on the life of millions of girls around the world.**
7. **As Save the Children Italy, we commit today to mainstream nutrition in our youth programmes in addition to the ongoing work on maternal and child nutrition.**
8. Governments, donors, private sector and international organizations need to play their part according to their responsibility and mandate. In addition, we, the CSOs, should advocate keeping governments accountable on prioritising adolescent nutrition in the next upcoming international moments to push this argument high in the Agenda and to move to concrete actions, starting from integrating our programmes and better coordinating in inclusive and multi-stakeholder partnerships.
9. I am very pleased the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs took part to the Conference yesterday, reaffirming the importance nutrition has for the Italian development cooperation. We will keep asking the Italian government to invest in nutrition within food security and nutrition interventions and to keep a focus on the food and nutrition security in its programmatic and political commitments in the framework of the Decade of Action on Nutrition and with a specific attention to the most vulnerable groups (particularly children and adolescents).

10. **This Conference was possible thanks to the partnership with IFAD and the support of the Canadian Government.** As Save the Children, we are ready to support and to sustain with our centenary experience and wide footprint at grassroots level this renewed efforts of the international community and we are glad that IFAD, with its mandate to bolster rural development has been proactively seeking for a new emphasis on rural youth. IFAD Rural Youth Action Plan is a landmark initiative, not only in the objective but also in the process and approach adopted, which were largely participative and based on the recognition of complementarity and partnership. We take stock of it, hoping that this and other promising practices will be set as benchmark for future initiatives.
11. Finally, I would like to share a couple of quotes: *"The total is greater than the sum of the parts"* (Aristotele)
12. *"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together"* says an African Proverb.
13. If we really aim to eradicate hunger and malnutrition and be serious with the Agenda 2030, we need to translate word into commitments. We also have to recognize the importance of working in partnership. We cannot move alone: we need to go hand in hand, programs and advocacy, CSOs and UN, Institutions and Research Centres. We have to **engage youth**, as well as partnering with grassroots organisations to campaign for better changes in laws, policies and behaviours to uphold girls' rights, and we have to advocate for stronger accountability at the international level. Such approach clearly requires continued and consistent commitments and looking forward partnerships.
14. I would like to leave you with a final quote from Malala Yousafzai: *"If one man can destroy everything, why can't one girl change it?"*
15. Thank you.