

## Overview of IFAD priority groups

1. IFAD's comparative advantage in working with **women, indigenous peoples, youth and persons with disabilities** underpins its core mission of targeting and empowering the poorest and most vulnerable rural people. This is supported by its targeting and people-centred approach, which also takes into account the differentiated and context-specific conditions of poor rural people.
2. Poverty-reducing structural transformation has often been accompanied by an agricultural and rural development process that leads to rural transformation. The latter process is characterized by increases in agricultural productivity and marketable surpluses, along with the diversification of production patterns and livelihoods. However, despite all the benefits to be derived from rural transformation, it may also have negative effects, including the exclusion of sectors of the population whose initial asset base does not allow them to benefit from this dynamic process.
3. As one of IFAD's principles of engagement, targeting design and approaches play a major role in ensuring the inclusiveness of both rural and structural transformation. IFAD target groups reflect the intersecting inequalities that make the pathway out of poverty particularly steep for socially excluded and disadvantaged groups such as the indigenous population, ethnic minorities, women, youth and persons with disabilities. Evidence shows that women, indigenous peoples, youth and people with disabilities are much more vulnerable to the five dimensions of marginalization that are identified in the LNOB framework, namely, poverty and socio-economic status, social exclusion, geographic location, governance, and vulnerability to stresses and shocks.
4. **Gender, ethnicity, age and disability** are factors that feed into prevailing determinants of people's social identities. A person's social identity, as based on social norms, forges his or her ability to claim access to assets and decision-making positions. Unequal power relations along the lines of gender, age, ethnicity and disability can be critical drivers of social, economic and political exclusion and the underlying causes of extreme poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition. People living at the crossroads of multiple intersecting inequalities tend to be overrepresented among the poorest strata. The root causes of exclusion are often found in historical and political patterns that influence inclusion and exclusion dynamics at different institutional levels, starting within the household and the community and then moving on up to the broader policy level. If not properly informed by priority-group considerations, agricultural policies and interventions may also reinforce existing inequalities by channeling investments into areas or crops that are thought to contribute to growth but that have limited positive spillover effects on women, youth and indigenous peoples. A reliance on market forces may unwittingly foster land and resource concentration, which often undermines the asset positions and livelihoods of women, indigenous peoples and youth.
5. **Rural women** are identified as a key target group in IFAD's 2006 targeting policy, which recommends that there be a special focus on women within all identified target groups. Conducting gender-sensitive poverty and livelihood analyses that incorporate the distinctive views of poor women and men is one of the pillars of IFAD's targeting approach. Households headed by women, including widows and abandoned and single mothers, have traditionally been singled out as a particularly vulnerable group under IFAD-supported projects. This is because, in many contexts, these women tend to live in extreme poverty, to have few job skills and to have to cope with excessive workloads, time poverty and limited mobility.
6. Women are major players in the agricultural 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 family workers, without pay or with very low incomes, and are stereotyped into low-value activities – unless this is addressed in project interventions. They also engage in a mix of non-farm activities to diversify their livelihood options and are responsible for doing the majority of household tasks.<sup>1</sup> Women tend to experience multiple forms of marginalization in terms of access to and control over critical resources (land, credit, technologies etc.); access to income, food and benefits; a low level of well-being and exposure to domestic violence; excessive workloads, as they are called upon to carry out both reproductive and productive activities; and very limited participation in decision-making at different institutional levels.

7. IFAD has accumulated a notable degree of experience with regard to gender targeting by experimenting with different context-specific tools and approaches and disseminating knowledge on the topic. One of the key lessons that IFAD has learned is that targeting and empowering women invariably require engaging with men. In working with a relational approach to gender, it is important to do away with discriminatory norms, avoid gendered conflicts and ensure more equitable and sustainable benefits.
8. **Indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities** tend to be overrepresented among poor and disadvantaged societal groups, and they are often marginalized. They represent 15 per cent of the world's poor 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 by business encroachments on natural resources. Climate change, too, alters the productivity of land and impacts many species.
9. Self-identified indigenous peoples are estimated to number over 370 million, or about 5 per cent of the world's overall population. An estimated 70 per cent live in Asia and the Pacific. In Latin America alone there are more than 826 different indigenous peoples (and another 200 are estimated to be living in voluntary isolation), each with a distinct language and culture. One quarter of the Latin American population is made up of Afrodescendants. These people make up a distinct group that is experiencing severe human rights violations and rampant poverty.

**Box 1**  
**Afrodescendants**

Around 200 million people who identify themselves as being of African descent live in the Americas. Whether as descendants of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade or as more recent migrants, they constitute one of the poorest and most marginalized groups. Like other excluded groups, Afrodescendants face cumulative disadvantages, unequal opportunities and a lack of respect and recognition, all of which leads to differentiated social and economic outcomes. For instance, Afrodescendent households fare, on average, worse than white ones, and Afrodescendent households headed by women fare worse than those headed by men. Some Afrodescendent groups —such as the Palenques in Colombia, the Garifuna in Central America and the Quilombolas in Brazil — have characteristics that align with those of the indigenous population, especially in terms of their historical connection to particular territories, their distinctive political and decision-making institutions, and their demands for the protection of communal land tenure systems.

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<sup>1</sup> IFAD, "How to do note on poverty targeting, gender equality and empowerment during project design: Gender, targeting and social inclusion" (2017).