

Targeting in rural infrastructure investments

I. DEFINITION

1. Rural infrastructure contributes significantly to poverty reduction by enabling increased connectivity, improved livelihoods and greater food and nutrition security. The provision of rural infrastructure is a core priority for many governments in their efforts to improve the welfare of rural populations and increase the productivity and value added of agriculture and other economic activities in rural areas.
2. Rural infrastructure includes a wide array of physical infrastructure, including energy and transport equipment, information and communications technologies, water and sanitation facilities, irrigation systems, and market and storage facilities. IFAD has a long history of providing a broad range of rural infrastructure.
3. It is beyond the scope of this short annex to provide detailed guidance on targeting for different types of infrastructure projects. The aim here is simply to provide a sample of some critical targeting issues that are common to infrastructure programmes and to provide general guidance on the type of infrastructure and targeting measures that can maximize benefits to the poorest and most vulnerable when adequate attention is given to priority groups (women, youth, indigenous peoples and people with disabilities).
4. Experience and lessons from IFAD-supported projects suggest that targeting is even more important where social rules do not systematically secure the inclusion of vulnerable groups in decision-making processes. A review of targeting issues in demand-driven projects (IFAD, 2004) shows that:
 - Public infrastructure generally benefits poor people more than private infrastructure does and can largely be self-targeting, without much being needed in the way of project-led measures (IFAD, 2004). However, there are differences even among various types of public infrastructure.
 - Some types, such as water supply infrastructure (community wells, publicly accessible standpipes), can be broadly inclusive of everyone who does not have a well or standpipe of their own.
 - Tertiary road improvements, however, may serve poor people less well, unless they can afford transport and have something to take to market.
 - Private infrastructure, such as processing equipment or housing improvements, is much more likely to be captured by less vulnerable groups unless special measures are taken.

II. OVERVIEW OF TARGETING MEASURES FOR RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

(i) Geographic targeting to address the infrastructure needs of the poorest communities

5. Transport infrastructure, such as roads and energy networks, are of key importance in addressing remoteness, isolation and climate vulnerability. Many IFAD-supported projects address the spatial inequalities affecting rural communities by building feeder roads and devoting attention to climate issues. Under the Haor Infrastructure and Livelihood Improvement Project (HILIP) in Bangladesh, for example, a large majority of the project's beneficiaries indicated that their lives had significantly improved following the construction of roads in their area.

(ii) Use of participatory processes and poverty considerations to inform decisions about the type and location of infrastructure

6. The use of participatory methodologies can help balance out unequal opportunities to participate in decision-making concerning the choice and/or location of infrastructure, both within households and within communities. Key stakeholders at the local level, especially local government institutions, should also be adequately consulted (see box 1).
7. Participatory processes are particularly important when planning for infrastructure that is more likely to attract the better-off, such as irrigation systems and market infrastructure. For example, although markets generate more and immediate benefits for the better-off, measures to enhance access for the poorest social groups will go a long way towards providing them with more equal opportunities to benefit from the common infrastructure. This may include the construction of special spaces and separate toilets for women traders and special facilities for people with disabilities.

Box 1

Conducting participatory workshops to select the sites for road construction in Bangladesh

Under HILIP in Bangladesh, about 250 km of upazila (administrative subdistrict) and union parishad (rural ward) roads, including submersible roads, were built. This infrastructure is key for the economic growth and development of the region. The selection of specific roads was undertaken through participatory workshops in project districts that were attended by the staff of local government engineering departments at the upazila level and by representatives from each union parishad. The main selection criteria, apart from technical feasibility and environmental considerations, was the potential for benefitting a large number of households and having a strong impact in terms of economic growth and livelihood improvement.

8. For the participatory process to be effective and genuinely inclusive, it is important to implement specific measures, starting at the design stage, aimed at mobilizing the poor and disadvantaged to participate in the consultation process. Such measures may include:
 - Conducting participatory needs assessments and interviews with members of poor and disadvantaged groups during the project design stage in order to obtain a thorough understanding of constraints and infrastructure needs.
 - Disseminating project information in local languages at popular locations, such as local markets and bus stops. The use of mass media (television, radio and newspapers) to disseminate project information is also a valuable option.
 - Providing incentives and introducing quotas to ensure the active participation of the poorest in the selection of infrastructure during implementation.

Table 1

Priority needs identified in poverty and gender analyses in Bangladesh under HILIP

Priority needs	Priority needs identified, by socio-economic group (✓ marked)						
	Farmers	Fishers	Female-headed households	Agri./ day labourers	Rickshaw pullers	Boat operators	Businesspersons
Roads linking villages to the corresponding union parishads and upazilas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Construction of submersible roads	✓						
<i>Hati</i> protection	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Construction of market facilities (sheds)		✓					✓
Access to bodies of water for fishing	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓

(iii) Self-targeting to address the infrastructure needs of the poorest and most vulnerable

9. There are major differences in access to rural infrastructure across different communities and socio-economic groups and between men and women, including differences in terms of their needs and priorities in relation to the type and location of physical infrastructure. As already pointed out, there is an element of **self-targeting** involved in certain types of infrastructure that are more likely to benefit the poorest and most vulnerable. Some examples include:
- **Water and sanitation.** Access to water and sanitation is of key importance in addressing the basic needs of the poorest and of women. Improved access to water infrastructure reduces the drudgery of water collection for all women and for the children who often help their mothers with domestic tasks. Access to sanitation facilities also helps to improve the general health conditions of the poorest.
 - The [multiple-use water services](#) (MUS) approach should be prioritized, as it is effective in helping to meet the domestic and productive needs of different vulnerable groups. This approach provides a way of addressing the different priorities of women and men while making the most efficient use of water resources and taking into account the different water sources and their quality, quantity, reliability and distance from the point of use. The MUS approach can provide the more vulnerable users with low-cost access to a domestic *water* supply, *water* for irrigated and rainfed agriculture, water for homestead gardening use, *water* for cattle, habitats for fish and other aquatic resources and rural enterprise *water* supplies.
 - **Labour-saving technologies.**¹ Technologies such as public taps, fuel-efficient stoves, manually operated strippers and shellers, etc. are of key importance in empowering women, especially the poorest among them. There are also clear benefits in terms of the environment and climate change mitigation, as their use can, for example, reduce the use of firewood for cooking and make available more efficient and cleaner cooking methods.

Box 2

Examples of water and sanitation programmes that benefit poor rural women

Under the Pastoral Water and Resource Management Project in Sahelian Areas (Chad, 2018), the rehabilitation of water points helped to drastically reduce the amount of time women spend collecting water and firewood. This has enabled them to engage in income-generating activities and to diversify their incomes.

Under a programme funded by IFAD and the Belgian Survival Fund (BSF) in Kenya, the provision of piped water and other water supply improvements directly increased women's involvement in productive activities thanks to the time that they saved. An overall assessment of the targeting performance of the project also found that activities related to health, sanitation and the water supply definitely expanded the beneficiary population to include the poorer and more vulnerable.

(iv) Promotion of the participation of the poorest and most vulnerable in infrastructure committees and user groups

10. A combination of empowerment and direct targeting measures may be needed to promote the participation of the poorest and most vulnerable groups in the implementation of infrastructure programmes through their involvement in road construction committees, water user associations dealing with water for irrigation, drinking water supplies or watershed management, etc.
11. Water user associations tend to be predominantly composed of better-off male farmers. Generally speaking, women's involvement in the implementation of infrastructure projects tends to take the form of voluntary labour inputs. Both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the participation of women and other

¹ See M. Carr and M. Hartl, *Lightening the Load: Labour-saving technologies and practices for rural women* (IFAD, 2010).

vulnerable groups in infrastructure committees need to be improved by providing special training in leadership skills, confidence-building and communication, along with training in the technical aspects of operation and maintenance. Better monitoring of maintenance systems, including their economic and social costs and benefits for the people involved, is also called for.

(v) Targeting the poorest to ensure that they benefit from employment generation in the areas of construction and maintenance

12. Construction, maintenance and rehabilitation work generates wage employment for the poorest and most vulnerable, including women and youth. However, specific measures should be envisaged to ensure that, beyond the immediate benefits of wage work accruing to the poorest, the rural poor are also enabled to invest in the improvement of their own livelihoods and gradually move into sustainable employment. This objective is in line with IFAD's graduation approach and can be pursued by:

- Organizing the poorest, women and youth into groups of contractors. Clear eligibility requirements are usually established for the formation of such groups, with priority being given to the most vulnerable, including women heads of household and/or youth;
- Providing training in construction and maintenance;
- Providing additional support in terms of business development and access to credit.

Box 3

The experience of women and youth contractors in Sierra Leone and Bangladesh

In Sierra Leone, the Rural Finance and Community Improvement Programme (RCPRP) engaged unemployed youth in gainful employment by encouraging young people to train as "youth contractors" for the rehabilitation of tree plantations, inland valley swamps and rural roads. One group of these youth contractors has, with encouragement from the RCPRP trainer, decided to establish a rice trading cooperative and has obtained credit from community banks to start their rice procurement activities. The cooperative is doing very well and providing a much-needed outlet for farmers in the inland valley swamp areas to sell their surplus rice at a fair price.

IFAD and other development partners in Bangladesh have supported the formation of labour contracting societies as a pro-poor cash-for-work scheme targeting ultra-poor women. These societies are made up of groups of disadvantaged rural people, including ultra-poor women, living near small-scale infrastructure construction sites. Different development actors are helping them to organize so that they can undertake designated construction and maintenance works. The objective is to alleviate the poverty of the targeted households. More recently, these groups have become an entry point to provide support to LCS members in developing income-generating activities and accessing financial services.

(vi) Monitoring the targeting performance of infrastructure projects

13. Monitoring the poverty outreach and targeting performance of infrastructure projects is critical in order to ensure that the poor and most vulnerable are actually benefitting from these projects and that the risk of elite or male capture is being avoided. Monitoring and evaluation should be seen as a participatory process that involves project workers and community members, including women and other vulnerable groups, as both recipients and participants. Specific indicators are needed to monitor the level and quality of the participation of different groups in infrastructure projects while also making sure that specific outcome indicators (e.g. employment generation, improved nutrition, time savings, etc.) are developed to assess the benefits provided to the poorest and most vulnerable.