

EVALUATION SYNTHESIS ON NON-LENDING ACTIVITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

Enhancing partnerships in development: IFAD support to South-South cooperation

South-South Cooperation (SSC) has gained recognition as an important element in international efforts to enhance development effectiveness. SSC first appeared as an explicit corporate agenda item around 2008, during the consultation process of the Eighth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources. In reality, IFAD was already supporting SSC-type initiatives, mainly in the form of knowledge-sharing and peer-learning, without necessarily labelling them as such. Still, there are opportunities for IFAD to support South-South cooperation in a more systematic, innovative and effective manner.

The “Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation” (2012) suggested the definition of SSC as “a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how, and through regional and interregional collective actions, including partnerships involving Governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector, for their individual and/or mutual benefit within and across regions.”

The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) conducted a review and analysis of IFAD's support to South-South cooperation between 2009 and 2015. It was informed by literature review, findings in other IOE evaluations including those that were undertaken in 2015 specifically incorporating the SSC perspective (e.g. the Brazil and Turkey country programme evaluations and a project performance assessment of a loan-financed project in Mauritania), an in-depth look at nine initiatives (mostly grant-financed projects, but also including two loan-financed projects), as well as interviews and discussions with IFAD staff, stakeholders of SSC initiatives and other

multilateral institutions, including the Rome-based agencies, i.e. the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

IN BRIEF: SSC AND IFAD

- IFAD initially used the term South-South Cooperation (SSC) and more recently, the acronym SSTC, which refers to both SSC and triangular cooperation. For conceptual clarity, it is important to distinguish between SSC and triangular cooperation.
- IFAD's support to SSC can be grouped, generally speaking, into three categories: First, mutual learning and horizontal SSC (e.g. farmer-to-farmer support or exchanges between practitioners or government staff/policy makers); second, the SSC provider-led model, to help strengthen the knowledge-sharing capacities of some middle-income countries and, third, the solution-seeker-driven model, often related to the demand for concrete solutions to specific issues in investment projects.

Main evaluation findings

Country ownership. IFAD responds to two levels of country ownership. On the one hand there are central government institutions, particularly ministries of agriculture, and occasionally other line ministries and ministries of foreign affairs. On the other hand there are grass-roots organizations such as farmers' organizations. National policies

and strategies related to SSC are usually led by ministries of foreign affairs and their dedicated cooperation agencies, which are not immediate partners of IFAD and sometimes do not have an agile relationship with sector-level implementation partners, let alone with rural poor people. Therefore, a key value of IFAD's SSC support is the responsiveness to the demand of its target group (rural poor people). At a broad level, such demand is often addressed in IFAD's support to mutual learning on a subregional or regional scale. On the supply side, country grants support a number of emerging economies in capturing and sharing their rural development solutions. Both demand and supply are critical to successful SSC, but need to be fully anchored in the needs and potential of the rural poor.

Relevance to IFAD's business model. By focusing on rural champions, SSC supported by IFAD has followed in spirit and practice the overarching goal of the IFAD Strategic Framework 2011-2015, which aimed at "enabling poor rural people to improve their food security, raise their incomes and strengthen their resilience." However, strategic mainstreaming of SSC into country programmes remains incipient although there is clear awareness that SSC can accelerate the impact of IFAD projects and should therefore be integrated into operations more consistently.

Effective implementation. In terms of planning and implementation, IFAD's support to SSC falls into two groups: initiatives specifically promoting SSC as the main focus and cases where SSC is being used under larger programmes, grants or investment projects. Overall, project documentation and review reports indicate that most of SSC planning and implementation tend to focus on outputs (e.g. number of workshops held) and occasionally intermediate outcomes (e.g. cooperatives strengthened), rather than projecting eventual contribution to development impact (e.g. income improved).

Sustainability. Overall, planning, implementation and monitoring of SSC activities are still not sufficiently structured and oriented to results. However, it is possible to identify a number of key elements that are crucial for ensuring that knowledge and technologies are transferred effectively and generate individual and institutional change that can be maintained, and even scaled up over time, for example: (i) Pre-existing partnerships and evolving networks

constitute a strong ground for sustainability; (ii) Results from exchanges are more likely to be tangible and have better chances for sustainability if they are directly linked to ongoing IFAD operations on the receiving side; and (iii) Sustainability can also be rooted in the replicability of South-South solutions within IFAD's core business.

Key recommendations

- **Provide conceptual clarity and guidance at corporate level.** A short document should be developed to clarify objectives, financing, operational pathways and staff incentives for integrating SSC in IFAD operations. The document should also clarify what is considered to be SSC in the context of IFAD's work, and which support options the Fund will offer.
- **Better mainstream SSC into country programming.** This may involve gathering more specific and consistent information on countries' interests, and should be accompanied by staff capacity building and more systematic monitoring of activities.
- **Catalogue rural development solutions and provide a platform to make them accessible.** Create a "living repository" to enhance the quality, quantity and accessibility of the available knowledge IFAD Member States have to offer.
- **Clarify and strengthen in-house coordination and inter-divisional collaboration.** Given that the Programme Management Department is the key player in mainstreaming SSC into country programmes and capturing knowledge from the field, consideration should be given to how the Strategy and Knowledge Department, as well as the Partnership and Resource Mobilization Office could best support such efforts.
- **Continue pursuing opportunities for collaboration with the Rome-based agencies at corporate and country levels.** Seek out "quick wins" like joint staff training with FAO and WFP, in-country pilots to capture knowledge, solutions and information-sharing on strategic and operational approaches.

Further information:

Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD, Via Paolo di Dono, 44, 00142, Rome, Italy. www.ifad.org/evaluation; email: evaluation@ifad.org.