

# Executive summary

## I. Introduction

1. The objectives of this evaluation synthesis are to: (i) summarize findings from past evaluations, draw lessons and identify factors of success, good practices, risks and potential limitations in IFAD's support to scaling up of results; and (ii) formulate recommendations at a strategic level that can further strengthen the design and implementation of IFAD policies, strategies and operations that have scaling-up potential.
2. IFAD's most recent definition of scaling up is provided in its Operational Framework for Scaling Up of Results (2015): "expanding, adapting and supporting successful policies, programmes and knowledge, so that they can leverage resources and partners to deliver larger results for a greater number of rural poor in a sustainable way". The emphasis is thus on scaling up "results" rather than on approving larger loans.
3. **Time frame.** The time span of this synthesis extends from 2002 to 2015. Scaling up as an institutional priority emerged at IFAD in 2002. However, this synthesis devotes special attention to the period 2010-2015. In 2010, the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) completed a corporate-level evaluation (CLE) on IFAD's capacity to promote innovation and scaling up. In the same year, Management commissioned the Brookings Institution to conduct an institutional review of IFAD's capacity for scaling up.
4. **Sources of information and data.** Evaluation syntheses are typically based on secondary sources. In this case, these comprised Management documents and independent evaluations. The former included: (i) strategic-level documents (e.g. strategic frameworks, replenishment consultation reports); (ii) technical documents and working papers; (iii) country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs); and (iv) self-evaluation material, such as project completion reports and the annual Reports on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE). Independent evaluation reports included: (i) Annual Reports on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations (ARRI); (ii) CLEs; (iii) country programme evaluations (CPEs); (iv) project performance assessments (PPAs) and impact evaluations; (v) previous evaluation syntheses; and (vi) the database of ARRI ratings from project completion report validations (PCR), PPAs and CPEs.
5. Secondary sources were triangulated through: (i) interviews with IFAD staff; (ii) key external informants; and (iii) an electronic survey of operational staff in the Programme Management Department (PMD). Content analysis of documents and coding of key information were performed, in part with the assistance of qualitative analysis software (NVivo).
6. A typical constraint faced in conducting an evaluation synthesis is the reliance on past evaluations, which may not provide all the desired contextual and explanatory elements. In this case, a specific constraint was that the projects evaluated were approved well before the 2010 Brookings review and the formulation of the 2015 Operational Framework for Scaling up. Only in the future will it be possible to evaluate the outcomes of the review and operational framework. In addition, past evaluations analysed pro-poor innovation and scaling up but assigned a single rating for the two, rendering it difficult to isolate specific findings on scaling up: this required specific content analysis of the evaluation reports.

## II. Scaling up at IFAD

7. In 2002, IOE completed a CLE on IFAD's capacity as a promoter of replicable innovations. One of the recommendations was that IFAD should multiply its efforts to identify capable actors and develop "strategic alliances and partnerships to support the promotion and scaling up of innovations." Thereafter, IFAD placed engagement in scaling up at the heart of its Strategic Framework for 2002-2006 and upheld this commitment in its Strategic Framework for 2007-2010. The 2007 Innovation Strategy specified three routes for scaling up: (i) integrating an IFAD-funded project, or programme, into a broader public one; (ii) appropriation by partners (e.g. donors, governments, the private sector providing additional funding); and (iii) informing public policies through project experiences. The 2007 Knowledge Management Strategy set support to scaling up as one of its objectives.
8. Corporate targets on scaling up were introduced for the first time during the Consultation for the Eighth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD8), covering the period 2010-2012. One of the main targets was that, by 2012, Management's self-assessment would rate 80 per cent of projects moderately satisfactory or higher for scaling up at completion.
9. In 2010, IOE published a CLE on IFAD's capacity to promote innovation and scaling up. The evaluation found that, while performance in innovation in IFAD-funded operations had improved over time, performance vis-à-vis scaling up had not made progress to the same extent. Scaling up had been left to individual initiatives and skills of country programme managers.
10. Also in 2010, IFAD commissioned the Brookings Institution to undertake an institutional review of its scaling-up approach. The review reaffirmed that scaling up was "mission critical" for IFAD but noted that it required more explicit attention and a more comprehensive and systematic approach. The review also highlighted the need for significant changes in operational processes and practices, including operational instruments, human and financial resources management, and knowledge management. It was suggested that the three concepts of innovation, learning and scaling up – which had been previously conflated by IFAD into a single notion – be treated separately. The review emphasized that scaling up was not to be considered an objective per se but a means to achieve greater development impact.
11. The CLE on IFAD's institutional efficiency and efficiency of IFAD-funded operations, published in 2013, highlighted scaling up as an imperative for IFAD, particularly scaling up of impact. Two main arguments were put forth: (i) scaling up was needed to enhance coverage (geographical, number of beneficiaries) as well as size of results; and (ii) scaling up was necessary to improve the efficiency of IFAD's operations, as wider and larger results could be achieved with the same envelope of administrative costs. The CLE recommended that scaling up of impact and innovative approaches should be central to IFAD's business model.
12. The Report of the Consultation on the Tenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD10) stipulated higher targets (90 per cent of projects rated moderately satisfactory for scaling up at completion by 2018) and committed IFAD to have a strategy for innovation, knowledge management and scaling up in all project designs in the IFAD10 period (2016-2018). The IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025, prepared against the backdrop of Agenda 2030 and driven by the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the new global agreement on climate change, presented the triad of innovation, learning and scaling up as one of the principles for the Fund's engagement in a way that is "bigger, better and smarter".

13. The 2015 Operational Framework for Scaling Up was prepared by the Policy and Technical Advisory Division (PTA). Compared to the Brookings review, it presented an upgraded conceptualization of scaling up and a pathway articulated through a sequence of steps. The first of these is to pilot a new idea or a specific intervention. The second is to assess the quality and the potential of this intervention and extract the main lessons learned. The third step is to leverage additional resources from governmental agencies, private sector entrepreneurs, international development partners or community-based organizations. The objective is to achieve better results (additional, larger impacts or a broader area affected, or a higher number of beneficiaries) in a sustainable manner.
14. The above framework envisages both lending and non-lending activities as inputs to scaling up. In particular, non-lending activities would help extract lessons and experiences (knowledge management), reduce or remove policy obstacles, carry out policy dialogue/engagement and establish partnerships with key organizations. The 2015 operational framework reviewed key factors, or modalities, to engage main partners, as well as communities and beneficiaries' organizations.
15. **Other international organizations** such as the African Development Bank, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the International Food Policy Research Institute, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank have reflected on their scaling up experience. A common thread in their analysis was that scaling up required a long-term iterative process. Overall, five common elements have emerged: (i) plan for scaling up from the outset; (ii) start with well-designed, focused programmes and projects; (iii) ensure strong leadership commitment as well as institutional capacity to manage the transition; (iv) invest in continuous learning and in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to adjust pilot and programme design in light of the results; and (v) align incentives with the requirements of scaling up.

### III. Findings and lessons learned

#### A. Relevance of the conceptualization and operationalization of scaling up

16. As noted, the full development of the scaling-up concept only came in 2010 with the Brookings review and was further refined in the 2015 Operational framework. Both are to be credited for bringing better theoretical conceptual clarity to scaling up. They established the logical steps, assumptions and conditions that, starting from project results, would lead to scaling-up opportunities.
17. The 2010 review gave IFAD exposure to the existing knowledge and literature on scaling up and an opportunity to engage in international forums on this topic. IFAD was also one of the leading agencies in organizing an event in Washington, D.C. in February 2015 to discuss the creation of a cross-sectoral community of practice for thought leadership and professional networking related to scaling up. The event brought together some 20 organizations (bilateral and multilateral development organizations, think tanks, private foundations and consulting companies).
18. The issue of scalability is not explicitly addressed by the 2010 review and 2015 framework. However, not all interventions are scale-neutral: an intervention may function well at a low scale but face problems when brought to a larger scale (diseconomy of scale). Conversely, an intervention may not be performing (or its costs may be prohibitive) at a small scale but be successful at a higher scale.
19. **Scaling up, IFAD's business model and project cycle.** This synthesis reviewed how the IFAD business model and project cycle matched scaling-up aspirations. It identified critical junctures and potential challenges. At the design stage, the challenge for IFAD is to keep project designs focused while serving poor groups of clients in disadvantaged areas. Projects often have to address basic needs (e.g. sanitation, potable water, access to transportation infrastructure), productive

activities (e.g. through extension, rural credit, marketing) as well as post-production activities (e.g. processing, access to markets, value chains). Past evaluations have found examples of over-complicated design, particularly when too many objectives were pursued and multiple agencies had to coordinate among themselves.

20. A key enabler of scaling up is regular assessment, starting from the early implementation stage, of the performance and results of project interventions and approaches. However, past evaluations have highlighted two constraints during implementation: (i) the slow pace of execution of activities during the initial years and (ii) weak M&E system. These constraints may lead to crucial information not being available until the project moves towards completion.
21. According to the Brookings review and the operational framework, IFAD should engage throughout the project cycle with development partners in non-lending activities – knowledge management, partnership development and policy dialogue. Compared to the past, IFAD now considers non-lending activities as a part of its business model. The challenge is to allocate commensurate human and financial resources.
22. Finally, the post-completion phase of a project is an important one: at this stage results tend to be more appreciated, project staff have acquired experience and champions may have emerged. However, without adequate engagement in knowledge management, partnership and policy dialogue, the project risks having no clear vision and plan for scaling up at the time of closure.
23. **Staff perceptions.** According to the interviews, managers believed that scaling up was well defined and that there were clear expectations of what IFAD staff were supposed to accomplish, in terms of both lending and non-lending activities. Staff members agreed that conceptual clarity on scaling up had improved compared to the past. However they also perceived three potential risks: (i) maintaining the scaling-up concept at a rather theoretical level without reflecting adequately on the implications for operationalization; (ii) emphasizing compliance with the procedures (e.g. having to write a mandatory section on scaling up in all project designs) rather than reflecting on the conditions for scaling up and focusing on demonstrated opportunities for scaling up; and (iii) reducing attention to innovation.
24. **Indicators for assessing scaling up: potential versus actual progress.** Targets for scaling up have been introduced since IFAD8. These focus on: (i) quality-at-entry of IFAD interventions; and (ii) project completion report ratings. Even at completion, Management's self-assessment is based on scaling-up "potential". However, the notion of potential is prone to subjective judgement and needs to be complemented with evidence on the type of scaling-up commitments made by development partners and on the measures taken by IFAD to promote scaling up. The bar for self-evaluation has also been set somewhat low, at "moderately satisfactory and higher".

## **B. Evidence of effectiveness: results achieved, common patterns and factors**

25. **Almost all COSOPs since 2010 have made reference to scaling up, but few have articulated a strategy for it.** COSOPs showed good intentions and compliance with requirements, but few presented dedicated analysis of scaling-up opportunities and specific plans. Only two – Liberia and Viet Nam – included fully developed scaling-up strategies.
26. The 2011 Liberia COSOP included a framework defining the scaling-up vision, drivers, spaces, pathways and IFAD's role. The 2012 Viet Nam COSOP laid out a scaling-up strategy for the entire country programme, focusing on three ideas/innovations: market-oriented institutional capacity-building, empowerment of

poor farmers, and private sector development. The subcomponents and their vision were specific and quantifiable. They ranged from the introduction of value chains to local agencies (with a desired scale of 15,000 farmers in each IFAD-supported province) to public-private producers' platforms (with a desired scale of these platforms operating in every participating province and involving key stakeholders from multiple sectors). The drivers for these activities included government entities (national and local), district/commune and worker representatives, and private entities. IFAD's role was defined to include a variety of activities, such as carrying out impact evaluations, cost-benefit analyses and client surveys, maintaining policy dialogue with the Government, monitoring results and sharing lessons learned.

27. **Scaling-up targets are being met according to IFAD's self-assessment.** The 2012 RIDE, referring to the IFAD8 period, noted that ratings for scaling up in the period 2011-2012 were moderately satisfactory or above in 84 per cent of projects completed (better than the 75 per cent target for IFAD8). The 2016 RIDE, based on project completion report (PCR) ratings for the period 2012-2014, found that 97 per cent of ratings for scaling up were moderately satisfactory or higher, above the target of 90 per cent established for the Ninth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD9). As noted, the self-assessment hinges upon the notion of potential for future scaling up rather than actual scaling-up cases.
28. Comparisons between IOE and PCR ratings show that the former's are generally lower and that differences tend to be statistically significant. However, IOE evaluations provide a single rating combining innovation and scaling up; thus there is a limitation in the comparability between the PMD and IOE time series.
29. **About half of the CPEs and PPAs conducted since 2010 report cases of scaling up.** While in some of these cases (about a quarter) IFAD appeared to be the main driver of scaling-up initiatives (e.g. "auto-scaling", not entirely in line with the IFAD definition of scaling up), in the large majority of the reported scaling-up cases external partners had taken the initiative, mostly the government and other development partners. In a few cases, also private sector actors (e.g. for rural finance activities) took the initiative.
30. Most of the scaling-up cases observed (95 per cent) consisted of an attempt to broaden project geographical coverage to new areas. Other forms of scaling up were also observed. In fact, in 41 per cent of the recorded scaling-up cases, there were examples of project interventions informing public strategies or policies. Finally, in 16 per cent of the cases, an IFAD-funded project had been adopted by a larger programme, funded either by the government or a donor.
31. According to the evaluations reviewed, scaling up was three times more prevalent in countries where IFAD had an office: scaling up featured in 62 per cent of the evaluations in countries with an IFAD presence, compared to only 21 per cent in countries without one. Country offices may have enhanced IFAD's visibility and the quality of interactions with development partners, leading to greater interest from the government and international donors in supporting and reinforcing the results achieved by IFAD-funded projects. Similar findings came from the 2016 CLE on IFAD's decentralization experience, which showed that the opening of country offices helped promote partnership with governments, mobilized public funding and enhanced opportunities to participate in donors' thematic coordination groups.

#### **IV. Factors enabling or constraining scaling up**

32. **Government ownership.** According to the evaluations reviewed, government support was always crucial. While fiscal space appeared to be an important factor to open scaling-up opportunities (e.g. in Brazil and India), it was not a prerequisite. In fact, evaluations found several instances where governments were able to encourage and facilitate support, notably funding, from external donors when their own resources were not sufficient. Government ownership sometimes came under

the form of establishing a central unit in a ministry or public agency, specializing in smallholder agriculture or a sub-sectoral theme of pertinence to IFAD-funded projects (e.g. Uruguay), and also helping negotiate additional donor funding. Government ownership was often the result of the support of like-minded individuals acting as champions. Networking and partnership-building undertaken by IFAD staff, or sometimes project coordinators, were crucial in identifying and creating champions.

33. **IFAD leadership and extended engagement.** While in IFAD's definition scaling up is expected to happen through the support of development partners, in many instances it needed to continue to support a project through two or more phases before other partners could recognize the validity of a given development approach. Particularly when innovative approaches were introduced, it was clear that they needed further testing, development and fine-tuning.
34. Some evaluations also hinted at another reason for IFAD to remain engaged as its approaches were scaled up by other partners. That reason was design and implementation "fidelity". When larger publicly-funded programmes adopted approaches developed through IFAD projects, a risk emerged that the political pressure to achieve high coverage rates could affect the quality of targeting, preparation and eventually implementation results (e.g. scaling up of the self-help group approach in India). Another problem that emerged from some of the evaluations was the change of strategic priorities once a new government came into office. These elements militated towards IFAD's continued engagement.
35. **Non-lending activities.** The importance of partnership-building, knowledge management and policy dialogue was confirmed through evaluation experience. Partnerships were important to build interest and ownership by the government and other development actors. Conversely, without strong partnerships with national and local governments, even successful projects tended to work in isolation, as key decision makers in public organizations were not familiar with their experiences (e.g. Lao People's Democratic Republic, Dominican Republic).
36. Knowledge management was instrumental in providing evidence (including scalability analysis) to partners that a given intervention deserved being scaled up. Conversely, when little analytical work had been done or insufficient data were available on project benefits, it was more challenging to engage partners (e.g. in the Plurinational State of Bolivia with municipal governments).
37. **Policy dialogue.** Evaluations and case studies in India and Peru show that the approaches promoted through IFAD-funded projects informed state- or country-level legislative initiatives and sectoral policies. Conversely, in the Republic of Moldova, a non-conducive policy environment (banks being discouraged from offering long-term deposits) made it difficult for the financial system to scale up successful long-term credit and revolving funds established by IFAD-funded projects.
38. **Positive experiences in India, Peru and the United Republic of Tanzania are concrete illustrations of the factors involved.** Peru is often cited as a case of successful scaling up, where the Government, inter alia, passed legislative initiatives to facilitate the transfer of public funds to collective beneficiary organizations. The main drivers for scaling up were project ownership by government officials and communities, highly-committed project staff and limited turnover in the project management teams.
39. The case of India provides examples of three different scaling-up modalities: (i) expanded geographical coverage; (ii) shift of intervention packages from the project to the policy level; and (iii) adoption of project-level approaches by larger public programmes. There is little doubt that in India the presence of relatively abundant funding for public programmes (fiscal space) has been a positive factor,

but so has been the support and buy-in by state governments and local champions that have witnessed two or more phases of IFAD-funded interventions.

40. The United Republic of Tanzania is a special case in that IFAD has participated in a sector-wide approach to support the agricultural sector. This has opened up opportunities to fund farmer field schools and participatory planning at the district level – approaches that were relatively new to the country – through financial resources from other development agencies (the African Development Bank, Government of Ireland, Japanese International Cooperation Agency and World Bank).

## **V. Conclusions**

41. The scaling-up journey has been long and scaling up remains a work in progress. While IFAD has been emphasizing scaling up at least since 2002, conceptual clarity grew with the 2010 Brookings review and the 2015 Operational Framework for Scaling Up of Results. Since 2010, Management has continuously ratcheted up the emphasis on scaling up and IFAD has also gained better visibility and leadership through its continued engagement in international forums.
42. Overall, the current conceptualization of scaling up is sound and draws from evaluative evidence and past project case studies. Two qualifications can be made. First, scalability analysis deserves more emphasis (not all interventions may be successfully scaled up; or they may require specific conditions or additional interventions). Second, in the IFAD project cycle there are critical nodes and potential challenges to scaling up, notably: (i) keeping design focused despite the wide range of needs in the field; (ii) limited availability of evidence during the early stage of a project cycle; (iii) mobilizing adequate resources for non-lending activities; and (iv) the need to support scaling up after project completion, when attention typically concentrates on new lending opportunities.
43. Staff buy-in is essential to implement the operational framework on scaling up. Operational staff recognizes an improvement in conceptual clarity compared to the past. However, they also caution against three possible risks: (i) the risk of viewing scaling up as a theoretical exercise rather than something that can be put into practice; (ii) concentrating on universal, mandatory application of scaling up rather than focusing on fewer operations with the best prospects for and evidence of success; and (iii) the risk that a single-minded focus on scaling up might draw attention away from innovation, itself an important part of IFAD's mandate.
44. Ultimately, scaling up rests upon the decision of other development partners, notably governments. IFAD has the opportunity to draw the interest of development partners in its operations and to foster ownership and willingness to scale up. This is where non-lending activities are crucial. The review of the evaluations suggests that one of the most important risks to be avoided is that of projects working in isolation, without establishing a dialogue with local and national governments, non-governmental institutions and other international agencies operating in the same area or thematic subsector. Partnerships and policy dialogue are crucial when the policy and institutional environment is not conducive. These issues may be addressed and gradually mitigated by engaging in forums on sectoral policy reform and in donor working groups.
45. Scaling up takes place when other partners converge in supporting certain interventions and approaches. This requires the extended engagement of IFAD, often through several project phases. Partners need to be convinced of IFAD's own buy-in in the first place. Even when interventions seem promising, they may need fine-tuning or improvements, requiring further support from IFAD before they are ready to be scaled up. Moreover, IFAD needs to be engaged when it is necessary to maintain the quality of design and implementation in a context of political pressure for high disbursement and outreach.

## VI. Recommendations

46. **Recommendation 1. Strengthen the country programme and project cycle to enhance scalability.** This requires attention during the preparation of COSOPs, at project design, during implementation and after project completion.
  - 1 (a) Elaborate a scalability assessment and pathway to scaling up in COSOPs as well as in project designs. Until further insights into scalability and evidence of sustained benefits emerge, COSOPs and projects should be selective, prioritizing areas where the prospects for success and sustainability are considered high and are aligned with IFAD's strengths and comparative advantages.
  - 1 (b) Assess scalability conditions during implementation (including potential constraints deriving from project design and implementation and from public policies) and share findings with potential champions in the government and with other partners (e.g. donors, private entities, community organizations and their federations).
  - 1 (c) When there are promising scaling-up opportunities, continue IFAD engagement beyond project completion through further financing phases, partnerships and policy dialogue, so as to strengthen ownership by the government and other development partners, fine-tune the approaches and facilitate the adoption of proven approaches by larger programmes, public strategies and policies.
47. **Recommendation 2. Build stronger consensus and incentives in-house to support scaling up.** In order to clarify the concept of scaling up and motivate staff, IFAD should promote exchanges between operational staff and exposure to concrete scaling-up experiences (e.g. through country visits).
48. **Recommendation 3. Set targets based on evidence on scaling up pathway preparation rather than generic potential.** It will be important to make the assessment more objective. At the project completion stage, the assessment needs to focus more on the concrete steps (e.g. analysing evidence of scalability, sharing lessons, networking) that have been taken to encourage development partners' interest and commitment to scaling up, and on the agreements made with the partners and timeframe to implement them.
49. **Recommendation 4. IOE should rate innovation and scaling up separately.** To date, evaluation reports have assessed innovation and scaling up with a single rating for the two, in conformity with the past when IFAD merged the two notions. However, as noted in the Brookings review and in the 2015 Operational framework, the two concepts, though related, do not coincide. For better conceptual clarity and in order to enhance comparability between self-assessment and independent evaluations, there should be separate ratings for innovation and for scaling up.