

insights



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COUNTRY STRATEGY AND PROGRAMME EVALUATION – REPUBLIC OF TUNISIA

Innovative development approaches in Tunisia for rural poverty reduction

IFAD financing promotes innovative approaches to meet the complex challenges of rural poverty reduction. In Tunisia, the portfolio has innovated in terms of integrated, participatory and partnership approaches and has introduced a truly pioneering model for sustainable rangeland development. In general, the innovations identified are grounded in concepts already well-known in the development sector in Tunisia and elsewhere. What makes them innovative is their adaptation to different geographic and social situations and several improvements made in the course of implementation. This *Insight* provides a critical analysis of some key innovative approaches promoted by the IFAD-funded programme in Tunisia.

The main innovation in IFAD's portfolio in Tunisia was the introduction of an integrated, participatory

and partnership-based approach to the planning and implementation of interventions in regions and contexts where this approach was still novel. This approach was aimed at fostering widespread ownership by communities, encouraging them to take over management of socio-economic infrastructure and environmental management works, in a context of State disengagement. Specifically, it involved the design and implementation of interventions based on needs validated and prioritized by the population under formal partnership agreements, whereby numerous public and private stakeholders (public agencies, NGOs, design offices, research institutes) would work in synergy. This approach, propelled by the popular demands following the revolution of 2011, translated into a real change in position on the part of the administration and development stakeholders vis-à-vis the beneficiary populations. It is now one of the

main intervention modalities for integrated development projects and included in rural subsector development strategies. Nonetheless, the approach has not yet been put in practice outside development projects, limiting its scaling up.

In the South, the major innovation in IFAD's portfolio is the development, still in progress, of a broader concept of pastoral development aimed at the rational and sustainable use of rangeland. The approach combines deferred grazing (periodically interdicting grazing to enable rangeland to regenerate), with the development of pastoral infrastructure (rural roads, pastoral wells and watering troughs, shade roofs and shelters, etc.), in close consultation with livestock and land owners, and in collaboration with a research institute for scientific monitoring. Several mechanisms to compensate for deferred grazing have been tested (compensation in the form of animal feed or pastoral infrastructure) to make the practice more acceptable and sustainable, but every formula tested includes a substantial and continuing external subsidy. Even if there were a consensus among stakeholders that the losses from deferred grazing are well compensated for both economically (rangeland productivity) and environmentally (restoration of plant and animal biodiversity, erosion protection, fight against desertification, carbon sequestration), it would be useful to conduct a more scientific analysis of the impact and obstacles to deferred grazing, to better inform decision makers. Moreover, public rangeland is not managed by an official institution, and the authority of grassroots organisations to enforce agreements in this regard is limited. This was demonstrated by the near total abandonment of the practice at the time of the revolution in 2011.

IFAD projects in Tunisia did not succeed in scaling up effective approaches for targeting, providing support and monitoring to help the poorest and most vulnerable rural population groups overcome poverty. Eliminating the remaining pockets of poverty in rural Tunisia is a major challenge, and the Government is expecting IFAD to provide innovative solutions for targeting and support that will enable the remaining poorest and most vulnerable rural populations, including women and young adults, to sustainably exit poverty. At a limited scale, IFAD's portfolio directly targeted the poorest and most vulnerable populations through support for income-generating activities (IGA) and rural microenterprises (RME). This type of support was already provided by national programmes and numerous NGOs in Tunisia, but the originality of IFAD's approach lay in integrating that support into the participatory, partnership-based approach mentioned above. However, support for IGAs and RMEs has been poorly capitalized and has not given adequate attention in the areas of access to financing and

Key recommendations of the evaluation

IFAD financing should further strengthen and scale up innovative interventions for the reduction of rural poverty, in coordination with a wide range of stakeholders.

- The IFAD portfolio should develop and promote scaling up of methodological and technical innovations that permit better targeting of the poorest rural population groups, especially very poor family farmers and rural women and young adults. These innovations should bring tailored solutions to increase the economic capacity, empowerment and resilience to economic and climate shocks of those target groups.
- Projects should pursue support for pro-poor value chains so as to develop greater local value added, diversify sources of income and multiply employment opportunities in rural areas. Greater private-sector involvement appears to be key in this regard.
- To support the financing of rural value chains, projects should forge closer partnerships with financial institutions to develop appropriate financing services.
- It is also important to expand partnerships between the projects and research institutions to pilot test methodological and technical innovations, and improve monitoring and evaluation and dissemination of innovations.

coaching of microenterprise owners; hence, their limited effectiveness and scaling up.

Support for the development of agropastoral value chains is a more recent intervention approach in IFAD's portfolio, aimed at strengthening the local economic base by valorising local products and increasing access to markets. The purpose of promoting value chains in this case is to maximize the economic effects of production support by reducing post-harvest transaction costs and by ensuring a more equitable sharing of the economic fruits of the value chain between farmers and the other stakeholders in the chain. The novelty of the value-chain approach in IFAD's portfolio lies in its focus on stakeholders and the relationships among them, beyond the product flows which, for certain commodities, are already supported by the public services (e.g. olive oil, milk, etc.).

Further information:

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