IOE | IFAD
Investing in rural people

Independent Office of Evaluation

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Evaluating the process of targeting in development projects

Lessons from a multi-country evaluation of targeting practice in the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

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Introduction

- Gap in evaluation research
  - Few evaluations of targeting practice in multi-faceted development projects
- IOE evaluation objective
  - Rapid evaluation synthesis of targeting in IFAD-supported projects to help update IFAD targeting policy
- Targeting in IFAD-supported projects
  - Targeting is a principle of engagement, a process and intended to be empowering
  - The target group is poor and/or vulnerable rural people, including the poorest

Methodology

- Theory of change – in-depth review of IFAD policy & guidelines and wide consultation in IFAD

- Literature review (Rahman 2022)

- Review of external evaluations of targeting practices in other agencies

- Sample of case studies (2018 – 2021, from different geographic regions, country income status and with different project interventions): IOE project-level evaluations (13) and IFAD design reports (10)

- Review of IOE higher-level evaluations covering diverse topics

- Engagement with IFAD staff and consultants

  - Key informant interviews

  - 2 internal workshops

- Rapid evaluation synthesis to provide quick timely input into policy

  - Restricted breadth and depth but saturation reached

  - No field missions but mission conducted in each original case study

- Lack of external evaluations for comparative purposes

- Lack of IFAD project monitoring and cost data for analysis and comparability (a finding!)

Underlying theory of change
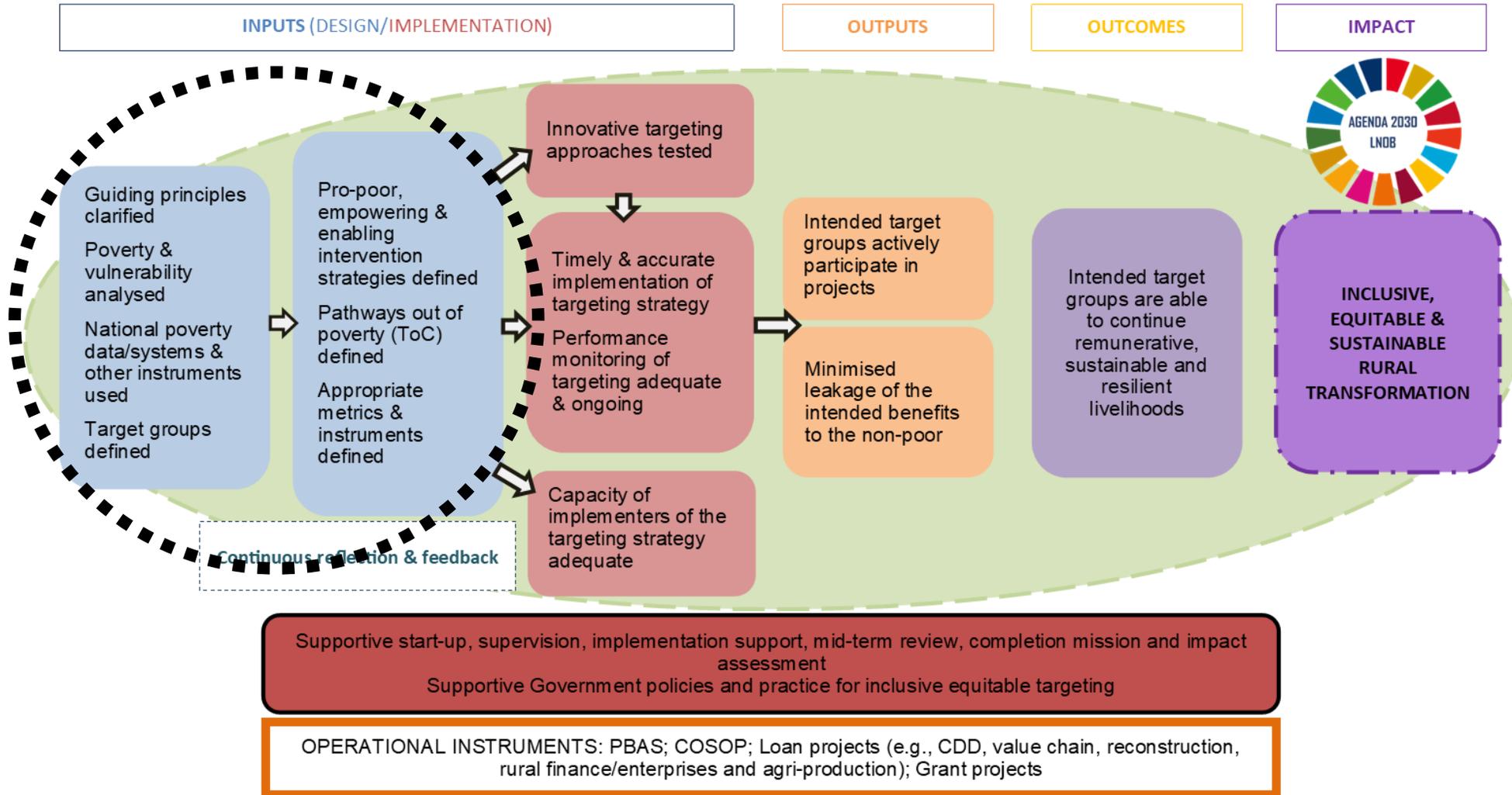
- **Clearly defined target groups**
  - Terminology unclear, inconsistently applied
  - Lacks distinction between intermediaries and poor rural people (e.g., value chain support projects)
  - Assumptions about categories (e.g. women headed households, youth, indigenous groups)
- **Useful poverty and vulnerability analysis**
  - Often descriptive, sketchy rather than analytical, unclear representativeness of sample observations
  - Delayed to implementation
  - Lacking contemporary participatory research
- **Good use of national data systems**
  - Risks often overlooked (e.g. data out of date, exclusion errors)

- **Well defined pro-poor, empowering and enabling interventions strategies** to reach and benefit extremely poor:
  - Graduation and mentoring approaches
  - Labour-intensive wage employment
  - Removal of barriers to participation (e.g. financial contributions)
  - Dedicated budgets for interventions for specific groups
  - Quotas to reach specific groups
- **Well defined project pathways of change**
  - Description of target groups sometimes sketchy, not analytical
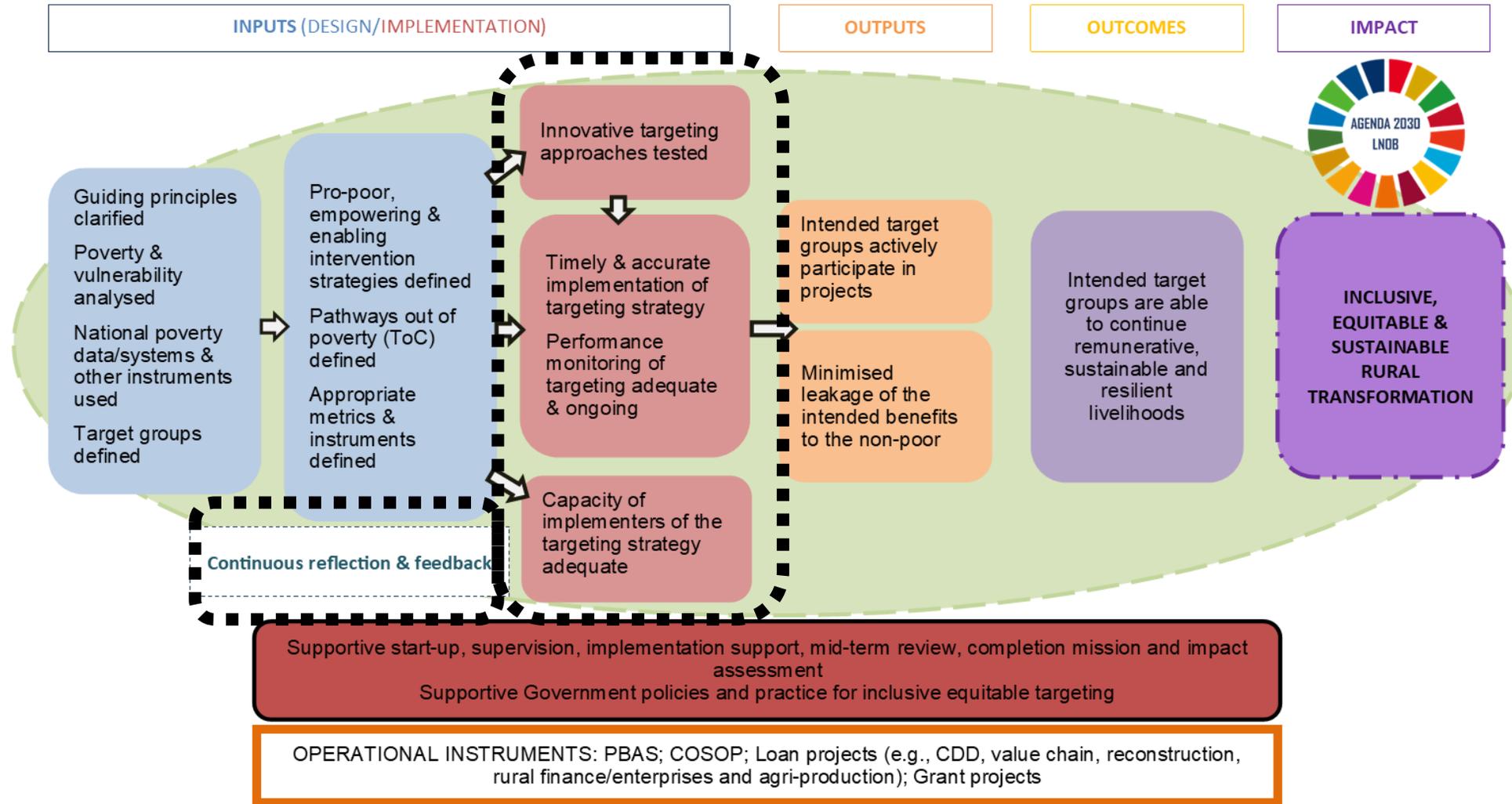
- Common targeting practice in IFAD projects - multiple approaches (geographic, community-based, self, direct-categorical)

  - Lack of definition of pathways of change inhibited comparability

- **Innovative targeting approaches tested**

  - Combining social protection programmes with agricultural development (Kenya, Tunisia)

  - Household mentoring to help address the root causes of inequality (Uganda, Malawi)

  - Adopting a market systems approach to identify wider opportunities for including poorer people (USAID & World Vision)

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- **Adequate capacity of project implementers**
  - Agriculture line ministries can have limited technical knowledge of, and experience in, targeting
  - Decentralized / deconcentrated governments have proximity to end-users but limited resources
  - NGOs can provide expertise
  - Insufficient support to implementers at project start-up
    - Need to support the principles, intentions and mechanics of targeting

- **Adequate monitoring of targeting performance**

  - Focus on outreach (i.e., large numbers) vs poverty depth

  - Lack disaggregated data, especially at outcome and impact levels

  - Measurement of change *in things* (length of roads, market infrastructure built) rather than *for people* (time savings, security of access to market)

  - Learning and reflection by project management focused on efficiency rather than effectiveness (outcomes) for poor people

  - Large quantitative surveys versus small periodic qualitative evaluations

Main conclusions

- Multi-faceted development programmes target poor people in complex and messy realities

- Development agencies need to embed targeting as a value throughout the project cycle – especially in project design and implementation - backed up by commensurate resources (time, staff, funds)

- Development agencies need to support capacity for targeting of national (and local) implementation agencies, cooperating NGOs and communities

- Evaluations can frame targeting as a process and examine project cycle steps