

# Bolivia

René Soto Vadillo shows a member of his Chojñacota community how a new solar panel water pumping system works.

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# Providing IFAD's staff with what they need to succeed

As an organization with a people-focused mandate, we understand that our strength lies in our people. With this in mind, we continue our efforts to provide our staff with the working environment they need to thrive.

## Continuing progress on decentralization

Part of this is getting IFAD's workforce closer to the rural people we serve, and our decentralization process continued to progress in 2023.

**During the year, we reached the 2023 target of 40 per cent of staff in field duty stations and are on track towards achieving the 45 per cent target of staff positions by the end of 2024.**

To realize the benefits of decentralization, we need to ensure that staff have the skills and knowledge required to succeed in the field. In 2023, we integrated the D2.0 Field Staff Upskilling Programme into our corporate training framework. The programme is aimed at field staff with programme and administrative support responsibilities, providing them with relevant expertise, expediting their onboarding, and accelerating their learning curves. The programme encompasses a comprehensive array of subjects, including IFAD's programme and administration policies, procedures, systems and knowledge-sharing practices. In total, 605 training sessions were completed by 80 staff members – the vast majority being General Service staff in the field.

Decentralization needs to be supported by field offices tailored to IFAD's needs, and by high-quality service provision across all duty stations. In new regional offices, our client-oriented service centre approach is helping us to deliver the services required in coordination with our headquarters. In 2023, we filled all new field support positions in the East and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa regional offices, and we established service standards for administrative pools. In East and Southern Africa, we implemented a new system for streamlining service requests, which will soon be rolled out in all decentralized regional offices, including the new ones set to open in the regions of Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean in 2024.

IFAD is also actively engaged in supporting and implementing the United Nations reform agenda, and in realizing its efficiency improvements. Many IFAD field offices benefit from pooled business operations services among United Nations entities. In total, the participation of IFAD field offices in United Nations reform initiatives has resulted in costs avoided of over US\$1 million over the past five years. Our service centres in regional offices also act as bridges with United Nations agencies in countries that provide common services.

Overall, our efforts to ensure high-quality and efficient services for field staff have been appreciated. The 2023 decentralization effectiveness survey indicated that satisfaction with services provided to field staff and offices was 86 per cent, exceeding the IFAD12 target of 80 per cent.

## Meeting targets on vacancy rate

In 2023, we completed 120 recruitments, bringing IFAD's vacancy rate down below the 12 per cent threshold indicated in our corporate risk dashboard. This achievement was possible thanks to streamlined recruitment practices, increased collaboration across the organization, and better planning and prioritization of recruitments.

Through the new recruitments, we were also able to reach overall gender and geographical targets. By the end of 2023, the proportion of women in senior positions (P-5 level and above) was more than 45 per cent. We have also reached 55 per cent staff representation of List B and List C countries. To date, there are over 110 different nationalities represented across IFAD.

## More people-friendly processes and better work–life balance

An important way to support greater diversity and equity within IFAD's workforce is through greater work–life balance and flexibility.

An important milestone in this regard was the introduction of a unified parental leave framework. The framework grants 16 weeks of leave to both birth and non-birth parents, and an additional 10 weeks to birth parents for pre- and post-natal needs.

Fostering work–life harmony is also a priority, and in April 2023 IFAD formally adopted the revised flexible working arrangements, which superseded the teleworking pilot initially designed and adopted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The flexible working arrangements include teleworking provisions and grant flexibility to staff while still recognizing the importance of ensuring business continuity. The new arrangements distinguish between regular teleworking at the assigned duty station and exceptional teleworking of a non-recurring nature, including outside the duty station.

We are also finding ways to make the processes associated with reassignment more predictable and sensitive to the needs of staff and their families. The 2023 reassignment exercise retained successful elements from previous years while implementing changes designed to benefit both staff and the organization. This included the establishment of a fixed timeline – which enables staff to plan in advance, reducing uncertainty and stress – and the consideration of personal and family situations when it comes to relocation.

We have also been looking to further improve the way IFAD works with its Executive Board. In 2023, we designed and had approved procedures for new modalities for the work of the Executive Board, which will ensure a more efficient decision-making process by IFAD's executive governing body.

Another example of our efforts to move to more efficient and people-friendly processes was the revision of the Financing Procedures for IFAD Regular Grants. This revision was a strategic move towards streamlining the desk review process, aiming to reduce the number of memos and to create a more efficient clearance process. This is just one of the ways we are upgrading our internal processes for greater efficiency and to reduce bureaucratic burdens on staff.

**The implementation of our Strategy on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is another way we are promoting a healthy work environment for all staff.**

To create awareness of the strategy throughout IFAD, a mandatory e-course was developed in-house and launched in September 2023, with uptake by 187 staff in the first two weeks alone.

During the year, we also launched a series of talks on diversity, equity and inclusion, with external speakers addressing this topic and workplace culture themes, and engaging staff in thought-provoking conversations.