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Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

Side events for the thirty-fourth session of the Governing Council

Note to Executive Board representatives

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For: Information

Side events for the thirty-fourth session of the Governing Council

Side events focusing on support for young people living in poverty

On the occasion of the thirty-fourth session of the Governing Council of IFAD, four side events will be organized to examine the issues facing young people living in poverty around the globe.

The global population of people aged between 12 and 24 is currently 1.3 billion. About 85 per cent of these young people live in the developing world, and around 55 per cent of them in rural areas.

Many young people in rural areas grow up in poverty and suffer its consequences: hunger and malnutrition, which contribute to poor health and increased morbidity and mortality from illness; limited access to education; and inadequate housing.

Poor young people also suffer from a dearth of resources such as land, skills, knowledge, capital and social connections, which leaves them with limited access to markets, employment and financial services. As a result, all too often they become victims of social discrimination and exclusion.

The Governing Council side events will examine how IFAD has been tackling these issues. The events aim to develop new and innovative ideas and programmes. The panel discussions will bring together stakeholders and experts, including delegates from Member States, youth leaders, the private sector, civil-society organizations, other international organizations and IFAD staff.

Asia and the Pacific Division side event: Opportunities and challenges of working with young people in rural areas of Asia and the Pacific

Focal point: Ms Martina Spisiakova (e-mail: m.spisiakova@ifad.org)

The Asia and the Pacific region is home to 61.5 per cent of the world's youth.¹ The global economic downturn has worsened an already tough situation for young people who live in rural areas. The lack of employment opportunities there means that many young people are either jobless or forced into informal, insecure and low-wage employment. Many move to cities or to other countries, where they often find themselves even worse off.²

Despite these constraints, given the right training and chances for professional development, young rural people can improve their skills and employment prospects both in agriculture and the non-agriculture sector.

This side event, organized by the Asia and the Pacific Division, will discuss the opportunities and challenges encountered in engaging young rural people in development activities in the region. The event will also outline a range of options for enhancing the skills and knowledge of young people involved in IFAD-supported projects and programmes to improve their chances of gaining rural employment.

The event will take the form of an interactive talk show involving experts in areas such as information and communications technology for livelihoods and rural microenterprises.

¹ Employment for Rural Youth in Asia and the Pacific, Jobs and empowerment on and off farm. Opportunities in the rural non-farm sector in India. Youth Entrepreneurship Sustainability (YES Campaign), <http://www.yesweb.org/docs/rdbook.pdf>.

² Making a difference in Asia and the Pacific, Issue 29, November-December 2009. IFAD, 2009, <http://www.ifad.org/newsletter/pi/29.htm>.

The event will subsequently be written up in a paper, which will serve as a background document for the development of a regional grant to focus on integrating youth-related activities into ongoing IFAD-supported projects and programmes in Asia and the Pacific.

Near East, North Africa and Europe Division side event: Unleashing the potential of young rural people

Focal point: Ms Rasha Omar (e-mail: r.omar@ifad.org)

The Near East, North Africa and Europe Division will organize an interactive panel discussion focused on youth unemployment, underemployment and inactivity in order to share practices, strategies and lessons learned on how to empower rural youth.

The challenge is great and urgent: how can 31 million young people³ in the Near East and North Africa subregion and 9 million in the Central and Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) subregion gain access to decent job opportunities? The panel will discuss how agriculture and agribusiness can be part of the solution and reflect on how to overcome current obstacles ranging from low productivity to market deficiencies, water and land scarcity, inadequate education and gender inequity.

The discussion will feature country experiences from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt and Yemen. It will also consider the investments made by the private sector to create jobs and the business environment that has made this possible. Regional integration efforts and the opportunities they create for rural youth will be examined, as will the advocacy role civil society plays in shaping a vision for youth development and empowerment.

Sub-Saharan Africa regional side event: Rural youth - Investing today for a better tomorrow

Focal points: Mr Moses Abukari (e-mail: m.abukari@ifad.org) and Mr Geoffrey Livingston (e-mail: g.livingston@ifad.org)

This event will focus on how smallholder agribusiness and vocational training can help rural youth to achieve more secure livelihoods in the rural economies of sub-Saharan Africa.

A moderated panel discussion will be organized by the West and Central Africa, and East and Southern Africa Divisions to examine how more effective and more targeted agricultural and vocational training can help rural young women and men towards a better tomorrow. The challenges, successes and options faced in this regard will be discussed, with a particular focus on the need for a broad-based consultative process led by rural young women and men to sustain rural economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa.

The gender-balanced panel will include activists, champions, experts and advocates for rural young people's issues from across Africa. They will share experiences from countries such as Benin, Madagascar and the Niger and provide different perspectives on how IFAD and its partners are supporting the aspirations of rural young women and men. These field experiences will also demonstrate how some of these rural young women and men are increasingly bringing real change by advocating, inspiring and mentoring others to unleash their potential in diverse ways for the collective benefit of their communities and societies.

³ This figure includes working poor youth, unemployed youth and demotivated youth. The calculations are based on 2007 data available in the Global Employment Trends for Youth, International Labour Organization (ILO), 2008.

Latin America and the Caribbean Division side event: Supporting rural youth microenterprises

Focal point: Mr Roberto Haudry (e-mail: r.haudry@ifad.org)

In the Latin America and Caribbean region, almost 120 million of the population are young people; 30 million of these live in rural areas and a large percentage are poor.

This event will broaden IFAD's vision and develop innovative practices to be implemented in future funding to support rural youth involved in microenterprises and agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean, and across the globe.

There will be a moderated panel discussion to consider innovative alternatives and practices featuring young entrepreneurs and private-sector representatives currently investing in social development and entrepreneurship. The discussion will focus on identifying effective routes for future public-private collaboration and appropriate support for rural young people to pursue entrepreneurial initiatives, for instance by providing such assets as knowledge, financial services and market access.

Topics will include direct capitalization, education, productive alliances and cooperation.

The Latin America and the Caribbean Division will hold discussions with rural young entrepreneurs to listen to their opinions and experiences and find out what has worked for them. This will provide an insight into young people's demands, needs and aspirations and also a better understanding of how microenterprises play a key role in rural youth empowerment. This information will form the base for creating new tools and mechanisms for rural young people to succeed in their own initiatives.