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Investing in rural people

## Update on New Financing Facilities: Professional Pathways Programme

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For: Information

# Update on New Financing Facilities: Professional Pathways Programme

## I. Introduction

1. As presented to the Executive Board in December 2016,<sup>1</sup> Management has created three new Financing Facilities to encourage closer engagement with development partners beyond IFAD Member States. Among these, the Professional Pathways Programme (PPP) is progressing well; this paper provides an update on its development.

## II. Background

2. Developing countries are facing a host of challenges related to sustainable development, climate change and employment – particularly for young people – and tackling them will require strong national leadership. Access to quality education, training and professional experience is critical to help build the skills and capacity of young people to enable them to become the next generation of leaders in developing countries.
3. At the same time, a number of important philanthropic-led efforts are providing university scholarships to young people from developing countries who have demonstrated academic talent and strong leadership potential. These programmes are providing vital education opportunities in an effort to foster the creation of a dynamic pool of professional talent that can serve the public and private sectors in developing countries in the future. Often however, graduates return home with excellent academic qualifications and perhaps internship experience, but with little or no professional work experience; and this makes the transition to a job challenging. All too often, career-development support received at university is disconnected from the home-country context and the relevant gaps in the local job market. The public sector, specifically, needs strong candidates who are ready to tackle the urgent triad of rural development, food security and climate adaptation, as evidenced by growing demands in the implementation units of IFAD-financed projects. To help meet this challenge, IFAD is leveraging its rural investment programmes to create a new collaboration model that will help connect university scholars more effectively to public-sector career paths in developing countries, and thus build national capacity.

## III. Professional Pathways Programme: creating a pathway for future leadership

4. Through the PPP, IFAD is taking the opportunity to further help expand the pool of local professionals with experience in managing critical public-policy and operational issues related to rural and agricultural development, by leveraging the position of its IFAD Country Offices (ICOs). The PPP will seek to recruit high-potential recent graduates from global tertiary scholarship programmes, into constructive and challenging two-year professional positions in countries where there are ICOs. To take this work further, IFAD is in dialogue with select partner foundations that are also devoted to increasing access to education and employment for young professionals from developing countries. The PPP would represent a partnership between IFAD and one or more foundations, to effectively create the continuum of training, networking and professional experience needed to nurture the next generation of leaders in developing countries.
5. The PPP would implement a selection process to fill designated positions with recent graduates from a foundation partner's scholarship programme. IFAD country-programme teams will draw up terms of reference for the specific

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<sup>1</sup> EB 2016/119/R.31.

professional skills needed, relative to each country context. These may be technically focused (agronomy, irrigation, climate adaptation, finance, market access, or other), or broader-based (policy specialists, communications, project management). Applicants would apply through a framework based on IFAD's existing recruitment and selection process.

6. It is envisioned that selected PPP candidates would be recruited for positions based in their home countries, as National Professional Officers working with ICOs to gain an expert understanding of the national context and to build and harness local networks for future career transition. Exposure to the diversity of operational, programmatic, technical, legal, financial and relational issues afforded by IFAD's daily operating environment will help PPP participants to eventually move into a variety of professions across the public, non-profit and for-profit sectors in their home countries. Nonetheless, special emphasis will be placed on providing exposure to public-sector processes, as the programme aims to create a pipeline of young, innovative professionals ready to transition into the public sector. Efforts will also be made to align PPP participants with IFAD-financed projects targeting rural youth employment specifically – closely integrating them into new project design and the supervision of ongoing programmes. This alignment may also boost project impact by providing a particularly relevant perspective to the youth employment challenge.
7. Timeline. Management is currently in discussions with foundation partners that are interested in launching the programme in 20 sub-Saharan African countries in late 2017. Management is expected to return to the Executive Board later this year to request authorization for the President to negotiate and accept supplementary fund contributions from one or more foundation partners for the PPP. IFAD will also engage with its national government partners on implementation of the programme, as these partners will be crucial for achieving its ultimate objective, which is to create a strong pool of young professionals interested in, and trained for, employment in the public sector.
8. Management will allocate US\$2 million from accumulated reserves from supplementary fund fees, to attract additional contributions from one or more foundation donors, for programme start-up in the East and Southern Africa, and West and Central Africa regions. This allocation will be spread over the first five years of the programme, to co-fund Pathway participants alongside foundation partners. These seed funds are expected to finance eight-10 PPP participants over five years. The foundation partner's contribution is projected to expand the programme, ideally to cover all 20 countries in which IFAD has ICOs and where there are national programmes that can benefit from the added capacity in these regions. As per procedure, Management will return to the Executive Board to seek approval to receive such supplementary funds. Should a foundation donor not be secured, the available funds would allow for a smaller pilot programme to be run while additional donors are sought. The Partnership and Resource Mobilization Office is currently leading outreach to a wider range of foundations to pursue a similar roll-out in all five of IFAD's regions, allowing seed funds to leverage additional foundation resources.