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Evaluation synthesis note on targeting in IFAD-supported projects

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Revised IFAD Evaluation Policy (2021) EB 2021/132/R.5/Rev.1,

Multi-year Evaluation Strategy of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD EB 2021/134/R.36.

Action: The Executive Board is invited to review the Evaluation synthesis note on targeting in IFAD-supported projects.

Technical questions:

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For more information on targeting please visit the IFAD (2008) Policy on Targeting and the IFAD (2019) Revised Operational Guidelines on Targeting.

International Fund for Agricultural Development – www.ifad.org

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Executive summary

Introduction

1. **Background and rationale.** IFAD's 2008 Policy on Targeting provided a framework for investing in rural people and their agriculture-based livelihoods to contribute to poverty reduction and economic development. In 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, pledging that "no one will be left behind." In this context, the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) produced an issues paper on targeting that helped to inform IFAD's 2019 Revised Operational Guidelines on Targeting. This evaluation synthesis note (ESN) provides a rapid, timely and independent assessment of recent targeting performance that can inform the 2022 IFAD internal review of targeting to update its Policy on Targeting.

2. **Terminology and documentation.** IFAD's Policy on Targeting provides a definition of targeting and identifies the targeting principles and target group. The principles and target group were subsequently updated in the 2019 guidelines. In the 2008 policy, IFAD's target group is made up of rural people living in poverty and food insecurity who are able to take advantage of opportunities. The 2019 guidelines define the target group as rural people who are poor and vulnerable and have the potential to take advantage of improved access to assets and opportunities for agricultural production and rural income-generating activities. The definitions of the target group in both documents also include marginalized and disadvantaged groups but vary in terms of how they relate to food security, the poorest people and vulnerability. The explicit identification of young men, young women and persons with disabilities as target groups was added in the 2019 guidelines.

3. **Objectives and scope.** The main objective of this ESN on Targeting in IFAD-supported Projects is to provide evaluative evidence to guide the updating of the IFAD Policy on Targeting in 2022. Specifically, the ESN:

   (i)   Consolidates evaluative evidence on targeting achievements and challenges in IFAD operations since 2018, building on the IOE issues paper on targeting in the 2018 Annual Report on Results and Impact; and

   (ii) Reviews the main changes in the design of targeting strategies in IFAD projects designed (and approved in 2021) since the introduction of the 2019 guidelines.

4. **Methodology.** The synthesis methodology comprised: (i) a background literature review and seminar; (ii) the development of a theory of change (ToC) to formulate questions, analyse projects and present findings; (iii) a rapid review of external evaluations on targeting; (iv) a sampling framework that identified 23 case studies of project performance evaluations (10), impact evaluations (3) and project design reports (10); (v) analysis of evaluative evidence and project designs; (vi) key informant interviews with IFAD staff and consultants; and (vii) a workshop to present and discuss emerging findings with IFAD Management in April 2022.

Main findings

Findings from the literature review and external evaluations on targeting

5. The IOE commissioned a literature review on targeting (Rahman, 2022) and the complementary ESN review of targeting evaluations in other development organizations found that evidence of what works, for whom, where and when is sparse. The few existing evaluations mostly concern social protection rather than development programmes. Development programmes largely rely on assumptions that geographic targeting and direct targeting (categorical) work well when the approach and target groups are narrowly and transparently defined and measures are put in place to reduce leakage to the non-poor. Yet, there is inconclusive

evidence of the effectiveness of combined targeting approaches (such as geographic and direct targeting). What is clear is that targeting decisions entail trade-offs between impact and equity (tackling poverty).

Relevance of targeting principles and guidance

6. **Targeting principles and guidance.** IFAD's comparative advantage is its engagement in targeting poor rural people, distinguishing it from other financing institutions. Governments and other development partners echo this value and request IFAD to work in poor, remote and fragile locations. For example, the design of the World Bank-initiated Agriculture and Livestock Competitiveness Program for Results (PCAE-PforR) project in Senegal, co-financed by IFAD, explicitly intended IFAD's involvement to lead to a targeting strategy more inclusive of poor rural people.

7. Some governments have indicated that they will only take out loans for infrastructure development, but interviews and project design reports show that this is not necessarily at odds with IFAD's poverty focus where it adds value. In the Climate Smart Agriculture Transformation Project in the Mekong Delta (CSAT) in Viet Nam, IFAD only finances infrastructure investments, but the project design indicates that it still exerts a strong influence on the poverty targeting of the entire project and is intended to measure disaggregated outcomes.

8. IFAD's targeting principles in the 2019 guidelines bring them more into line with the 2030 Agenda and the pledge to leave no one behind. However, staff and consultants have not followed the indications in the many new operational documents on targeting since the 2008 policy, which has led to distortions/received wisdom about common terms and approaches. Most notably, the perception that targeting will be different for different situations has diluted the intention of making targeting principles universal across all IFAD activities.

9. **Target groups.** There was a shift in the interpretation of IFAD's target group between 2008 and 2018. IFAD projects focused more on targeting the "active or productive poor" and less on targeting poorer and extremely poor people (defined, as appropriate, in each country and/or by daily income). The 2019 guidelines revitalized efforts to reach poorer people, stating that for those who cannot take advantage of IFAD investments immediately, IFAD will promote a gradual approach to facilitate their access and enable them to benefit from interventions.

10. Target groups are sometimes unclearly defined and/or defined in multiple ways. Categorical targeting ("women, youth, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities") is easily understood and intuitive, but, without adapting it to the local context based on empirical study, it can lead to leakage to, and even co-option by, non-poor people. Guidance on these specific groups has also been interpreted to mean that all these groups should be priorities in all projects, rather than identifying priority target groups in each project based on critical analysis.

11. The guidance suggesting strategic inclusion of "better-off" people as a target group has led to confusion. Investment in "better-off" farmers or market actors is designed to stimulate the participation of poorer farmers, so the former are intermediaries (means to an end), not target groups. They are important actors in market systems and potential recipients of capacity-building and technical and financial support. The project designs of PCAE-PforR Senegal and CSAT Viet Nam make this important distinction between investment beneficiaries and target groups so that projects are designed to benefit poor rural people.

Relevance of targeting in project designs

12.   Poverty, vulnerability and livelihood analyses are essential in project design, but they lack key information and analysis. The lack of budget and time in the current design process prevents them from being done properly. Analyses are often descriptions of current conditions rather than actual analyses that consider target group capability, opportunity and motivation for change. The quality of analysis has deteriorated with the replacement of detailed social assessments with the social component of the Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP) of IFA. Newer project design reports use broad categories to demonstrate response to corporate requirements, but this does not take intersectional differences into account. The lack of contemporary analysis has also led to assumptions about certain types of target groups. This is also a result of the diminished opportunities to base targeting decisions on listening to poor people through participatory approaches, as proposed in the 2008 policy.

13.   The timing of poverty, vulnerability and livelihood analyses is also important. Delaying them until after project design is too late and at odds with IFAD guidance. Resource constraints that limit the quality and timing of analysis need to be weighed against the significant risk to the effectiveness and impact of IFAD projects on poor rural people.

14.   **National poverty data/systems.** Most projects adhere to targeting guidelines by using national socio-economic databases in a bid to enhance ownership, coherence and relevance for governments. In Rwanda, IFAD has designed targeting strategies using the Government-adopted *Ubudehe* system, which divides households into five categories by income. However, there is no evidence to show that project designs use a critical eye to review the rigour or validity of government instruments. Where government data are unavailable, IFAD has adopted a recognized alternative, such as the expert-based poverty scorecard in China.

15.   **Targeting instruments.** Geographic targeting is widely used in IFAD projects and endorsed and requested by governments. Moreover, it has led to the targeting of areas with high numbers or proportions of poor rural people. There is evidence of greater use of climate vulnerability, sometimes in addition to rural poverty, as a determinant of target areas, which is in line with the 2019 guidelines. In fragile contexts, successive investments in the same geographic area also make learning and implementing lessons easier.

16.   Community-based targeting, such as participatory wealth ranking, continues to be used where there is precedence and experience (in Nepal and Tajikistan, for example) and enjoys high levels of social acceptability within communities. It remains relevant where government data is out of date and/or exclusion errors are persistent, but context-specific risks of local elite capture must still be mitigated.

17.   **Intervention strategies.** The "leave no one behind" mandate has raised concerns among some IFAD staff about a departure from its targeting policy, and yet, the policy is clear on IFAD's focus on extremely poor people. Evaluative evidence also shows that IFAD has the experience to achieve this mandate through graduation (Kenya) and labour-intensive approaches to create waged employment (Bangladesh). Partnerships have also been forged to fill gaps where IFAD has limited capacity and/or resources or where governments have restricted the use of loans to infrastructure. In addition, there are examples of IFAD advocating for inclusive policy and practice in government programmes – for example, in Mexico, Nepal and Viet Nam.

18.   The customization of interventions to local target areas and groups is mixed. Weak analysis of target groups, combined with fewer opportunities for their direct engagement during design, limits customization and ultimately, the effectiveness of interventions. Products and services have been promoted that are not priorities or

appropriate for target groups. Still, there are project designs (Tunisia, Morocco, Viet Nam) that optimize the use of available resources (including grants) and customize interventions for particular contexts and people. Some projects (Pastoral Water and Resource Management Project in Sahelian Areas, Chad; Rural Kenya Financial Inclusion Facility Project [RK-FINFA]) have also used dedicated budgets to ensure that interventions can be directed to specific target groups.

19. Specific interventions for priority groups are not always well-integrated in project designs and appear to be "add-ons." For example, activities to target poor women, such as the promotion of improved cooking stoves, kitchen gardens and craft activities, are justifiable in themselves but do not alter the main project focus and are outside the core pathways of change.

20. **Pathways of change.** Existing targeting and value chain guidelines advise design and implementation teams to define clear pathways of change for different target groups. However, few of the schematics and/or narratives of ToCs in project design case studies meet this expectation.

Effectiveness of targeting in IFAD-supported projects

21. **Metrics and instruments for measuring targeting performance.** The assessment of targeting performance in completed projects is constrained by several factors. First, there is a lack of disaggregated data from which to deduce outreach and especially outcomes by target group. The study found that more recent projects disaggregate data by gender, and there are intentions in new project designs to disaggregate by age and, where appropriate, ethnicity. Second, the lack of clarity in pathways of change for target groups leads to weak articulation of change indicators. It is noted that the IFAD 2021 Core Outcomes Indicators Measurement Guidelines includes intentions to measure behavioural change outcomes. Third, some projects, especially in infrastructure and rural finance, focus more on outputs than on the outcomes for people. Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural Transformation Project design includes a ToC that is clearly target-group-led, in contrast to Kenya's RK-FINFA, which is financial services-driven.

22. In addition, large-scale quantitative surveys to assess targeting outcomes are expensive, often substandard and too late for corrective action. Instead, the study notes the promising experience of target group-driven/managed monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and small-scale qualitative evaluations during projects that may provide more useful and timely insights.

23. Comparisons of the cost-effectiveness of different intervention strategies for different target groups cannot be made because of the lack of clarity in target group-specific pathways of change and disaggregated cost per beneficiary data. More generally, evaluative evidence suggests that some projects do not sufficiently reflect on the effectiveness of their targeting approaches or do so too late.

24. **Capacity of implementers of the targeting strategy.** The effectiveness of IFAD's programme depends heavily on implementation by government partners. Partnerships with different ministries and NGOs are often used to bridge capacity gaps, although performance can vary. In the Malawi Rural Livelihoods Economic Enhancement Programme, only a minority of the NGOs contracted adequately demonstrated pro-poor targeting, while in the Cameroon Youth Agropastoral Entrepreneurship Promotion Programme local NGOs successfully promoted the participation of poor rural young men and women, including ethnic minorities, in core project activities.

25. Targeting is often insufficiently explained to key implementers during project start-up. Moreover, with high levels of staff turnover, new IFAD staff are often unfamiliar with targeting principles and less able to explain and negotiate them with governments. The recruitment of a senior technical specialist in targeting will

be important for improving targeting in general, including in missions to better support implementing partners.

26. **Innovative targeting approaches.** IFAD has piloted and increasingly adopted targeting innovations in and alongside its loan programmes. Notable examples include household-focused interventions, such as the Gender Action Learning System and household mentoring and personal financial mentoring (Belize Rural Finance Programme). Finally, there are promising ideas to advance targeting from inside and outside of IFAD, from which it can learn. These include combining social protection with agriculture, revisiting community-based targeting, moving from linear value chains to the use of a wider systems approach that increases opportunities for targeting and inclusion, phone-based targeting and participatory geographical information system.

Conclusions

27. **Targeting is central to IFAD's mandate and to realizing its recognized comparative advantage.** The 2008 policy and 2019 guidelines endorse the centrality of targeting and provide a strong rationale for targeting as a key principle of engagement, explicitly stated in past and present strategic frameworks. The 2019 guidelines update the targeting principles, bringing them more in line with the 2030 Agenda and the imperative of leaving no one behind.

28. **Three important issues concerning target groups in the policy and guidelines confuse the discourse on targeting in IFAD.** These are the lack of:

   (i)   A clear distinction between target groups (poor rural people) and others who may benefit from IFAD investment (input suppliers, service providers, etc.).

   (ii) A distinction between target groups and the principle of inclusion. Target groups are those that the project is mainly intended to benefit. Inclusion is a principle that can be applied across project interventions and addresses the issues of access and equity. Project design and implementation can make core activities more inclusive, instead of creating parallel components for unreached groups as separate target groups.

   (iii) A common definition of the term "vulnerable."

29. **Furthermore, there is a gap between targeting theory and practice.** The inherent imperative in IFAD's claim to undertake "people-centred development" is not fully internalized and does not permeate project cycles and action. The quality of poverty, vulnerability and livelihood analyses is poor. IFAD-advocated participatory approaches are rarely used to refine definitions of target groups and sharpen interventions to respond to their needs. Likewise, few project ToCs define clear pathways of change for different target groups.

30. **Confusions and misinterpretations have been allowed to develop.** The most serious are those surrounding interpretation of the focus on the "active and productive poor" and the perceived corporate demand to address all priority groups in all projects. The study found that doubts exist about IFAD's capacity and opportunities to address the intention of leaving no one behind, which is strongly supported in principle by IFAD. Guidance on this is insufficient and has resulted in project designs establishing separate components rather than exploring ways for the core project intention to include and benefit priority groups and "those left behind."

31. **While targeting has improved in a number of ways, IFAD has not capitalized on the demands of the 2030 Agenda to reflect critically with governments on how to improve targeting further.** Achievements have been made with quotas, dedicated budgets for target groups and greater use of disaggregated data. Promising practices linking social protection with agriculture, graduation approaches and household-focused interventions exist inside and

outside of IFAD and can be built upon. This may necessitate partnering with other government departments, NGOs and international agencies with relevant expertise. Moreover, the project start-up period with government implementers is not used to the extent necessary to improve the understanding and implementation of targeting.

32. **The effectiveness of targeting as one of IFAD's core principles of engagement cannot currently be evaluated.** This is because target groups are not well- and unambiguously defined; situational analysis is weak; clear target group-specific pathways of change are not defined; context-specific indicators of change disaggregated by suitably segmented target groups are not consistently used and M&E resources used by projects are weak. Cost per beneficiary assessments cannot be compared. While these deficiencies remain, IFAD can record outreach but will continue to be unable to evaluate its targeting approaches.

33. **More effective use of resources is needed to make these vital improvements to targeting and to fill knowledge gaps.** Despite resource constraints, some IFAD staff have found innovative ways to maintain a strong focus on targeting by forging partnerships and using grants. The study raises the question of the need for large-scale quantitative surveys to demonstrate target group outcomes, when small-scale qualitative evaluations can provide useful, as well as timely, insights to improve targeting and assess outcomes.

Lessons

34. The main lessons from this ESN on targeting in IFAD-supported projects are:

    (i) **Universal principles of targeting can be applied across IFAD's diverse portfolio.** By re-emphasizing that targeting rural poor people is at the heart of all IFAD support to governments and using the imperative of leaving no one behind as leverage, IFAD can position itself as the financing institution to achieve this. Targeting principles and terminology for universal application can be articulated coherently across the portfolio regardless of project typology, thematic focus, country income status and non-sovereign arrangements.

    (ii) **The launch of the updated policy can serve as a rallying point** to motivate IFAD personnel and implementing partners to collaborate to improve the definition of target groups; undertake deep contemporary and critical situational analyses of target groups; develop target group-specific pathways of change; and ensure that outcomes for different target groups are adequately defined and measured. As some IFAD staff have proven, even with resource and time constraints it is possible to access grants, innovate and draw on the diverse expertise of partners to build robust knowledge of target groups and collaboratively evaluate what works for whom and how.

    (iii) **The drift away from people-centred development can be reversed.** Where there is attention to, and qualitative improvement of, participatory processes (in targeting and participatory M&E), there is greater social accountability for IFAD investments. A renewed focus on participatory development can help re-set mindsets about the centrality of targeting rural poor people and endorse IFAD's position as a leader in empowering poor people and leaving no one behind. Where governments own the idea of leaving no one behind and the importance of people-centred development to achieving this aim, better targeting outcomes are realized.

    (iv) **Compliance culture is replacing thoughtful analysis and critical review of targeting.** Documentation requiring compliance includes the SECAP, the application of core indicators and demonstration of complaints and grievance mechanisms. Furthermore, there is a widespread perception that projects must address all priority groups and mainstreaming themes.

This has supplanted critical engagement with the principles and application of good practice in targeting. Guidance, opportunities for critical analysis and the necessary skills and capacity for engagement of this kind need to be enhanced across IFAD and government implementing agencies.

(v) **Evaluation (self- and independent) of targeting needs to be rigorous, and recommendations for improved targeting need to be demonstrated.** As weak M&E systems and capacity are persistently critiqued as limitations to understanding targeting and the effectiveness of channelling benefits to target groups, it is imperative that resources be prioritized to redress this. By so doing, IFAD's claims to targeting as a comparative advantage can be substantiated. The forthcoming revised Evaluation Manual stresses the importance of social justice and intersectionality, thus providing impetus to bring this about.

Targeting in IFAD-supported projects

Evaluation Synthesis Note

Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms

ARRI	Annual Report on Results and Impacts of IFAD Operations
COSOP	Country Strategic Opportunities Programmes
ESN	Evaluation Synthesis Note
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IE	Impact Evaluation
IOE	Independent Office of Evaluation
KP-RETP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural Economic Transformation Project
PDR	Project Design Report
PIM	Project Implementation Manual
PPE	Project Performance Evaluation
PROHYPA	Pastoral Water and Resource Management Project in Sahelian Areas
RK-FINFA	Rural Kenya Financial Inclusion Facility
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SECAP	Social Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures
ToC	Theory of Change

Targeting in IFAD-supported projects

Evaluation Synthesis Note

I.   Introduction

A.   Background

1.   The Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) produces evaluation syntheses with the aim to facilitate learning from accumulated evaluation findings and lessons on selected topics. An Evaluation Synthesis *Note* (ESN) is to consolidate established findings from evaluations in a concise manner. In December 2021, IFAD's Executive Board agreed that an ESN on Targeting would be prepared in 2022.[1]

B.   Rationale

2.   IFAD has had a clear mandate, and built a good reputation, of investing in rural people and their agriculture-based livelihoods to contribute to poverty reduction and economic development. Its 2008 Policy on Targeting provided a framework to bring this about.

3.   Since then, the UN adopted Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development as a universal call for action towards an equitable and socially inclusive world. In total, 193 countries pledged that "*no one will be left behind*" and declared that "*we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first*". To achieve this, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focus on the multi-dimensionality of well-being and place a strong emphasis on tackling inequality and reaching marginalized groups. IFAD has explicitly reflected these principles and goals in strategic instruments, including the Strategic Framework 2016-2025 and IFAD11 and IFAD12 replenishments.[2]

4.   In this context, IOE produced an Issues paper on targeting (2018) to support learning in IFAD on targeting.[3] It helped inform IFAD's (2019) Revised Operational Guidelines on Targeting, but the learning has yet to be translated into policy. Furthermore, there has not been a review on the use of these Guidelines.

5.   IFAD is presently conducting an internal review of targeting to inform the updating of its 2008 Policy on Targeting, which will be presented to the Executive Board for approval in December 2022. The ESN therefore provides a rapid, timely and independent assessment of recent performance in targeting. It identifies evidence-based lessons on targeting in IFAD-supported projects and the implications these have on updating the Policy on Targeting. In addition, the ESN reviews current interpretations among IFAD personnel of targeting terminology and guidance and the extent to which the Revised Guidelines have been used.

6.   The rationale to promote social justice and contribute to putting inclusivity front and centre in the development agenda is also pertinent in light of current discussions in the UN and among partners pertaining to food systems (as a subset of wider agricultural market systems). Food system transformation to improve nutritional and environmental outcomes could further marginalize poor rural men and women unless explicit actions are taken to understand and address the

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[1] https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/134/docs/EB-2021-134-R-3-Rev-1.pdf
[2] The main messages from these replenishments include targeting the poorest countries and rural poor people, including the poorest (IFAD11&12), as well as doubling outreach (from 20 million to 40 million per year) and deepening impact (each beneficiary experiencing greater and more sustainable improvements in production, income, nutrition and resilience) (IFAD12).
[3] The Issues paper on Targeting was part of the IOE 2018 Annual Report on Results and Impact. https://www.ifad.org/documents/36783902/40280989/Chitra+Deshpande%2C+Senior+Evaluation+Officer%2C+IOE%2C+IFAD.pdf/ca54fc2a-2dd2-4304-9f86-acdc13c54a28

constraints they face.[4] Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic has stalled global progress on many of the SDGs. Inequality is rising, hard-won gains in poverty reduction are being reversed. Hunger continues to rise, exacerbated by the impact on global food security from the war in Ukraine. There is a pressing need to address the long-standing barriers from persisting deprivations affecting rural and marginalised people, and to do it well.

C. Terminology and documentation

7. IFAD's Policy on Targeting (2008) refers to targeting as *"a set of purposefully designed, demand-driven and mutually agreed upon actions and measures that ensure, or at least significantly increase the likelihood, that specific groups of people will take advantage of a development initiative."*

8. Box 1 provides an overview of the definitions of IFAD's target group that are provided in the Policy on Targeting then subsequently in IFAD's (2019) Revised Operational Guidelines on Targeting. A comparison of the definitions used in both documents is provided in annex I.

Box 1
Definitions of IFAD's target group

> *The 2008 Policy identifies IFAD's target group as rural people "living in poverty and experiencing food insecurity and who are able to take advantage of opportunities". The 2019 Revised Operational Guidelines defines the target group as rural people "who are poor and vulnerable and have the potential to take advantage of improved access to assets and opportunities for agricultural production and rural income-generating activities". Both documents also state that the target group includes marginalized and disadvantaged groups, including the extremely poor/poorest, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, women and sometimes the better-off.*
>
> *The definitions have changed slightly overtime in terms of how they relate to food security, the poorest, and vulnerability. For instance, the 2008 Policy identifies "extremely poor people who have the potential to take advantage of improved access to assets and opportunities for agricultural production and income-generating activities" as a target group, while the 2019 Revised Guidelines state that "for those who cannot take advantage immediately, IFAD will promote a gradual approach to facilitate their access to resources and enable them to benefit from interventions…". The explicit identification of young men, young women and persons with disabilities as IFAD target groups were added in the 2019 Revised Operational Guidelines.*

Source: IFAD (2009) Policy on Targeting; IFAD (2019) Revised Operational Guidelines on Targeting

9. The principles of targeting were put forward in the Policy on Targeting and updated in the Revised Operational Guidelines on Targeting, see annex II.[5]

10. Figure 1 provides a timeline of the key IFAD documents (and events) relating to targeting in IFAD since the Policy in 2008. Recently, IFAD produced an online Targeting Toolkit to provide practical help on how to implement the Policy and Guidelines from COSOP to project completion.[6]

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[4] Davis, Lipper & Winters, 2022.

[5] The principles concern five key areas: the target group, mainstreaming themes, nature of poverty, targeting the better off and the value and types of partnerships and engagement with the rural poor people, Governments and other stakeholders.

[6] IFAD Targeting toolkit https://www.ifad.org/targetingtoolkit/

Figure 1.
Timeline of IFAD documents and key events related to Targeting
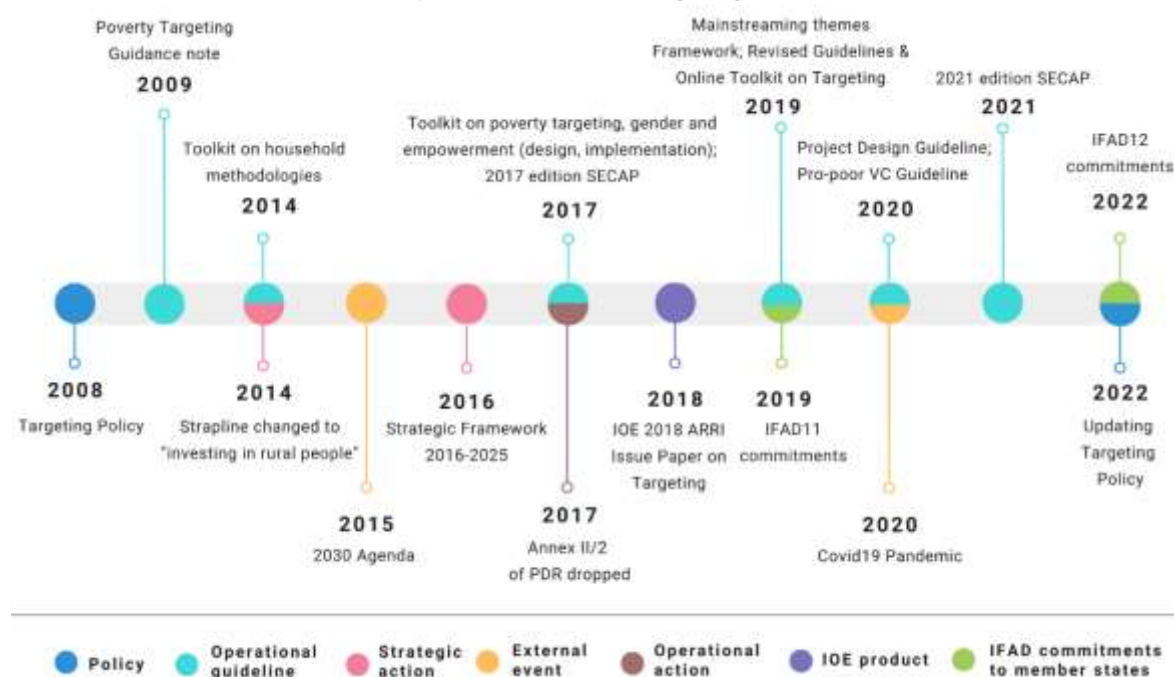
Source: ESN Team Elaboration

D.   Synthesis objectives and scope

11.   **Objectives.** The main objective of this ESN on Targeting in IFAD-supported projects is to provide evaluative evidence to guide the updating of the IFAD Targeting Policy in 2022. Specifically, the ESN will:

   (iii) Consolidate evaluative evidence on achievements and challenges of targeting in IFAD operations since 2018, building on the IOE (2018) Issues paper on targeting;

   (iv) Review the main changes in the design of targeting strategies in IFAD projects designed since the introduction of the revised Operational Guidelines in 2019.

12.   **Scope.** The evaluation synthesis focuses on evaluative evidence from 2018 and project designs from 2021. The 2014 Evaluation Synthesis on youth and the 2017 Evaluation Synthesis on gender equality and women's empowerment were included because of the relevance of the topics. The ESN focuses on targeting in IFAD-supported projects as the operationalisation of targeting intentions of COSOPs.

E.   Analytical framework and methodology

13.   **Analytical framework.** The theory of change (ToC) for this evaluation drew from IFAD policy, guidelines and practice to identify the key elements of targeting in IFAD-supported projects, see Figure 3. The ToC postulates that intended target groups will be able to actively define and participate in legitimate project activities to benefit fully in the gains obtained from inclusive and sustainable rural transformation. The Agenda 2030 value of equity is explicit. The ToC recognises that effective targeting is guided by clear principles and based on a contemporary understanding of the complex multi-dimensionality of poverty and vulnerability so that target groups can be unambiguously defined. It also requires the development of interventions that give preference to the poor and vulnerable. In turn, these are implemented and monitored in a timely manner by partners and IFAD personnel with adequate capacity.

14. The evaluation questions were structured under the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, rural poverty impact and performance of partners. The initial overarching evaluation questions were:

 (v) Relevance: How relevant and realistic were the targeting strategies within the institutional and policy context?

 (vi) Effectiveness: How effective was/were different approaches to targeting including comparison and use of high quality instruments to identify target groups?

 (vii) Efficiency: How efficient were the targeting strategies in reaching the target groups?

 (viii) Rural impact: To what extent have targeting strategies enabled optimization of benefits for the target groups and minimised leakage to the non-poor?

 (ix) Performance of partners: To what extent have the resources, policies and capacities of IFAD and the Governments supported effective and efficient targeting?

15. During data collection and analysis, it was found more practicable to develop evaluation questions from a review of the ToC constructed for this study together with insights from the background literature review (see below) and the IOE 2018 issues paper on targeting. The questions used to review project design reports were also derived from the Revised Operational Guidelines on Targeting.

16. In line with the main findings emerging from the ESN, the findings are presented in this Note in four main sections: Findings from the literature review and external evaluations on targeting; Relevance of targeting principles and guidance; Relevance of targeting in project designs; Effectiveness of targeting in IFAD-supported projects. Findings related to efficiency, impact and performance of partners are covered therein.

17. **Methodology.** The main elements of the evaluation methodology were as follows:

18. Background literature review and seminar. IOE commissioned a literature review on "Targeting of the Poor and Ultra-poor" to support this evaluation.[7] It covered targeting definitions, mechanisms and their limitations as well as a discussion on some of the main challenges facing IFAD. The review was presented in a seminar in February 2022 to an IFAD audience who shared their own views and experience in targeting. Discussions provided insights into the current challenges in targeting the poor and the poorest people in IFAD projects and some of the new approaches.

19. Rapid review of external evaluations on targeting. The ESN undertook a rapid review of recent external evaluations of targeting by other International Financial Institutions and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to identify methods and lessons related to targeting from outside IFAD.

20. Analytical framework. The analytical framework was presented in the approach paper for this synthesis. The ToC was central to formulating research questions, analysing projects and presenting emerging findings.

21. Sampling framework. There were two types of case studies: (i) Project Performance Evaluations (PPEs) and Impact Evaluations (IEs) since 2018 and (ii) Project Design Reports (PDRs) approved by the Executive Board in 2021 (with the assumption that sufficient time would have lapsed for the revised operational guidelines to be internalised). The sampling was purposive to select projects with diverse characteristics that would ensure variability within the data, see Figure 2. One-third of the projects were selected from each type: 13 out of 32 PPEs and IEs, and 10 out of 27 PDRs. From both types (PPEs/IEs and PDRs), a minimum of two projects were selected from each of the five regions, ensuring a mix of different types of investment projects as well as country income status (low, lower-middle

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[7] Rahman, 2022.

and upper-middle). The quality of the targeting strategies in the PDRs ranged from 4.5 (moderately satisfactory) to 6 (highly satisfactory), according to the "quality at-entry" ratings from IFAD quality assurance reviews.

Figure 2.
Number of project case studies by different characteristics

by Region	APR (4), ESA (6), LAC (4), NEN (4), WCA (5).
by Project type	Agricultural Development (6), Credit and Financial Services (5), Irrigation (1), Livestock (1), Rural Development (7), Storage, processing and marketing (3).
by Country classification	Low income (10), Lower-middle income (11), Upper-middle income (2).
by Fragility	Fragile and Conflict-affected country: Yes (5), No (18).
by QAG rating	Targeting rating of 4.5 (4), 5 (5), 6 (1). *(only available for PDRs)*

The project case studies are from PPEs, IEs and PDRs
Source: ESN team elaboration

22. <u>Analysis of evaluative evidence.</u> As mentioned above, the ESN assessed 10 IOE PPEs completed since 2018. In addition, the three impact evaluations (IEs) conducted in this period were reviewed. Recent Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation (CSPE) reports were also reviewed where they provided further interesting findings. Thirteen higher-level evaluations on a wide range of thematic areas were also reviewed for findings and lessons on targeting. See Annex III Tables 1, 2 and 3 for the PPEs, IEs and higher-level evaluation reports used.

23. <u>Analysis of project designs.</u> The evaluation examined new project designs to assess the extent to which they have incorporated the intentions of the Revised Operational Guidelines on Targeting. As mentioned above, 10 PDRs were covered out of the projects approved by the Executive Board in 2021. See Annex III Table 4 for the list of PDR case studies.

24. <u>Key informant interviews</u> conducted with IFAD staff and consultants. The evaluation team identified staff and consultants to ensure coverage of the five regional divisions (through past and present work), diverse technical expertise, expertise in targeting and social inclusion, and both experienced and relatively new staff. Interviews probed the factors contributing to success or failure of targeting strategies and to identify any innovations. The occasion was also used to discuss some of the emerging findings. Consultants invited for interview were those who frequently go on mission for IFAD, but many did not respond to requests in part due to the short time frame. See annex VI for a list of key people met.

25. <u>Workshop on emerging findings</u> between IOE and IFAD management. IOE organised a workshop on the ESN emerging findings in April 2022 for the Gender & Social Inclusion team from the Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion division (ECG), members of the Policy Reference Group on Targeting from different IFAD divisions, as well as the Associate Vice-President, Jo Puri, from the Strategy and Knowledge Department (SKD). The event was useful to receive feedback on the initial findings and policy implications emerging from the evaluation. It also served to inform IFAD's own ongoing review of targeting to ultimately update the targeting policy.

26. **Limitations**. There were different types of limitations related to the availability of data and information. Most IFAD documents relate to targeting in some way, so the evaluation focused on the most direct and relevant documents linked to targeting in IFAD-supported projects. The lack of reliable and useful project monitoring and

evaluation (M&E) data on targeting restricted the evaluative data and information on targeting available, which in turn restricted the type analysis performed in this ESN. Outside of IFAD, there is also a lack of evaluations on targeting beyond those on social protection programmes, which do not reflect the different types of IFAD-supported programmes.

27. Time constraints were another challenge for this ESN. IFAD Management planned to have the updated Targeting Policy ready for review by the end of June, 2022. The bulk of the data collection and analysis therefore needed to be completed in two months, before the emerging findings were extracted and presented at the end of April 2022. As a result, the scope was limited to recent evaluations and project designs and interviews with IFAD staff and consultants. To maximise the benefit of this ESN, it built on the IOE 2018 ARRI issues papers on Targeting as well as findings from eleven higher-level evaluations. The rapid and focused ESN process was also designed to complement IFAD's own review and process for updating the targeting policy and avoid redundant analysis.

28. While it is important not to generalise the findings across IFAD, common, priority and recurrent issues did emerge from across the evaluative evidence, PDRs and interviews.

Key points

• IFAD is conducting an internal review of targeting to inform the updating of its 2008 Policy on Targeting. The ESN therefore provides a complementary, rapid, timely and independent assessment of recent performance in targeting. It identifies evidence-based lessons on targeting in IFAD-supported projects and the implications these have on the Policy on Targeting.

• Targeting in IFAD is defined as "*a set of purposefully designed, demand-driven and mutually agreed upon actions and measures that ensure, or at least significantly increase the likelihood, that specific groups of people will take advantage of a development initiative*."

• Definitions of IFAD's target group and targeting principles are provided in the 2008 Policy and updated in the 2019 Revised Operational Guidelines on Targeting. The definitions therefore vary slightly in detail.

• The ToC on targeting was central to formulate research questions, analyse performance and present findings.

• The ESN focuses on project level evaluative evidence from 2018 (bolstered by high-level evaluations on a variety of thematic topics) and project designs from 2021 (with the assumption that they had time to use the 2019 Revised Operational Guidelines).

• In total, 10 PPEs, 3 IEs and 10 PDRs were assessed as case studies. In addition, 13 recent higher-level evaluations were reviewed for their findings related to targeting. Findings from evaluative evidence and analytical review of PDRs were triangulated with findings from key informant interviews with IFAD staff and consultants.

• Emerging findings of the ESN and the policy implications were presented by IOE and discussed with Management at the end of April 2022.

Figure 3
Theory of change on targeting for inclusive, equitable and sustainable rural transformation
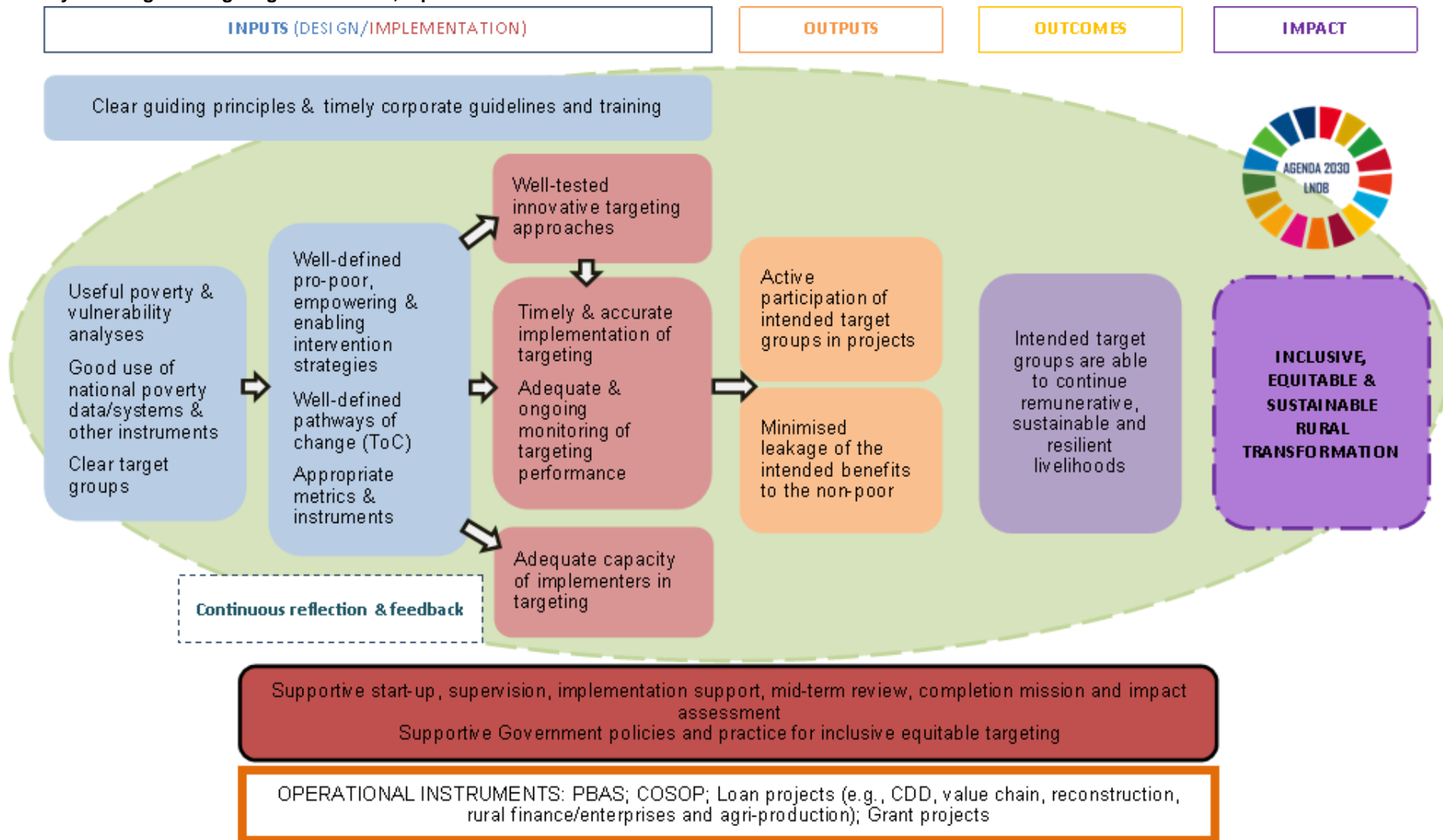
Source: IOE ESN team elaboration

II. Findings from literature review and external evaluations on targeting

29. **There is little evidence of comparative evaluations on targeting approaches except for social protection.** Both the IOE commissioned literature review on targeting (Rahman, 2022) and the ESN rapid review of evaluations of targeting in other development organisations found that evidence of what works, for whom, where and when is sparse. The few evaluations that exist mostly examine cost effectiveness and accuracy of targeting approaches intended to channel limited resources for social safety net and humanitarian aid programmes. Conclusions from these remain contested, particularly regarding the efficacy of proxy-means testing.[8] Evidence suggests that universal targeted programmes for social protection work best. Efforts to exclude better-off through affluence testing also show promise.[9]

30. **Targeting approaches in development programmes are largely based on assumptions**; Development programmes seek to achieve more than social protection and are underpinned by recognition of the multi-dimensionality of poverty and the need for empowering approaches to development.[10] The effectiveness of targeting in development programmes has not been evaluated in the same way as for social protection. It largely relies on assumptions that geographic targeting and direct targeting (categorical) work well when the approach and target groups are tightly and transparently defined and measures are put in place to reduce leakage to the non-poor. Existing evaluations are focused on proving benefits reach target groups and not on comparing approaches to improve targeting and benefits.

31. **Inconclusive evidence of effectiveness of combination approaches to targeting.** Combinations of targeting approaches are used by IFAD and are advocated in theory but the lack of comparisons of like for like situations makes drawing inferences risky. The work comparing use of CBT on its own or in combination with household survey data has been criticized because the CBT processes used were poorly facilitated and did not fairly represent how CBT should work in practice.[11] CBT has been shown to provide local legitimacy and higher rates of satisfaction than other approaches largely because communities take a wider lens to assessing poverty than reliance purely on econometrics.

32. **Targeting decisions entail trade-offs between impact and equity (tackling poverty)**. Phillips et al (2015) note that poor and socially marginalised farmers are most likely to be excluded in Farmer Field Schools and that assumptions about trickle down effects from inclusion of more educated, better resourced farmers (lead farmers) may result in no benefit at all reaching poor farmers.[12] Graduation approaches including what are sometimes termed 'big push' approaches that attempt to include poor farmers[13] have shown promise but have also been criticized. A long term impact study conducted nine years after a 'big push'

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[8] Demonstrated high inclusion and exclusion errors (48% inclusion of non poor, 81% of poorest excluded). Brown, C Ravillon, M and van de Walle D (2016) A Poor Means Test? Econometrics targeting in Africa. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 7915, Washington DC.

[9] Kidd, S and Diloa Athias (2020) Hit and Miss: An Assessment of targeting effectiveness in social protection. Summary version with additional analysis; Working Paper ACT/Development Pathways.

[10] OECD-DAC Framework of multidimensionality of poverty (including human capabilities, economic, socio-cultural and political dimensions as well as social protection) https://www.oecd.org/dac/POST-2015%20multidimensional%20poverty.pdf (accessed June 2022).

[11] Alatas, V.; A. Banerjee; R. Henna; B. Olken; and J. Tobias (2012). "Targeting the Poor: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia." American Economic Review, 102(4): 1206-40.

[12] Phillips, David; Hugh Waddington, Howard White (2015) Targeting Matters: Examining the relationship between selection , participation and outcomes of farmer field schools ; 3iE Systematic Review 11, London.

[13] Excluded by lack of access to economic capital, numeracy/literacy skills, social capital, time poverty.

demonstrated that a '*substantial proportion of participating households*' had switched back to their lower income baseline occupations.[14]

III. Relevance of targeting principles and guidance

A. Targeting principles and guidance

33. **IFAD's documents and communication materials frame targeting as a comparative advantage distinct from other financing institutions and this value is echoed by Government and other partners**. The use of 'inclusive' in the title of IFAD's Strategic Framework 2016-2025 ("Enabling inclusive and sustainable rural transformation") is a significant declaration of its stance on targeting. Targeting is one of the strategy's five principles of engagement and is fundamental to two other principles; empowerment and gender equality.[15] The review of case study PPEs indicates that Governments and partners recognise IFAD's commitment to serving the needs of poorer populations regardless of the countries' economic classification and project designs reflect this.

34. **Governments' support for targeting poor people, especially since becoming signatories to Agenda 2030 and responding to the impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic, make IFAD targeting principles highly relevant.** Of the IFAD PPE/IE and PDR case studies reviewed, 16 out of 23 have a strong focus on poor and vulnerable populations as requested by Governments. The case studies note that Governments make specific requests for IFAD to work in remote, fragile, difficult locations where poverty is a continuing problem and where their own instruments are often costly to implement, see Box 2. Some Governments have indicated that they will only take loans for infrastructure development, but this does not have to be at the expense of IFAD's poverty focus where it adds value.[16] From the limited number of case studies which did not have a clear emphasis on poor people, it was not clear to what extent this had been compensated for by targeting in other projects within the country programme or to what extent Country Offices put effort into advocating a pro-poor focus to Governments.

Box 2:
Governments acknowledge IFAD's comparative advantage in targeting

> *Some PDRs specifically note that governments value IFAD's comparative advantage in targeting rural poor people. For example, the Haiti AP3B PDR notes 'The project is based on IFAD's comparative advantages in Haiti: (i) ensure the inclusion of the rural poor in development processes'. The design of PCAE in Senegal involves co-financing with World Bank with the explicit intention that IFAD's participation in project design enabled reframing of the targeting strategy to make it more inclusive to poor rural people.*

Source: ESN team elaboration pulling on information from IFAD PDRs – Haiti AP3B and Senegal PCAE

35. **IFAD's targeting principles in the Revised Operational Guidelines have changed slightly since the 2008 Targeting Policy, bringing them more in line with Agenda 2030 and the pledge to leave no one behind.** The principles cover five key aspects, the target group, mainstreaming themes, nature of poverty, targeting the better off, and partnership and engagement, see annex II**.** Analysis indicates that the revised principles have recognised Governments' commitments to Agenda 2030 and the need to focus more effort towards leaving no one behind. The dynamic nature of the experience of poverty has been more explicitly extended to recognising intersectionality. A significant shift in emphasis has come as a result

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[14] Farzana A. Misha, Wameq A. Raza, Jinnat Ara and Ellen van de Poel (2019) How Far Does a Big Push Really Push? Long-Term Effects of an Asset Transfer Program on Employment Trajectories https://doi.org/10.1086/700556 Erasmas University Rotterdam and World Bank.

[15] The five principles of engagement are**: targeting; empowerment; gender equality; innovation, learning and scaling up; and partnerships**. Note that targeting was also a principle of engagement in the former strategic frameworks: 2011 to 2015, and 2007 to 2010.

[16] For example, the IFAD-supported Viet Nam CSAT project only finances the infrastructure component (access roads, water infrastructure, warehouses, flood mitigation actions, etc.) but the PDR indicates it also retains a strong influence on the poverty targeting of the entire project and intends to measure disaggregated outcomes.

of widening the mainstreaming themes beyond gender to include youth, nutrition, environment and climate issues, in line with corporate commitments.

36. **Over time, many documents which allude to targeting have emerged creating some confusion among IFAD staff and partners.** Study interviewees revealed that design of targeting approaches relied on information from whatever targeting guidelines were current at the time of their first IFAD project design commission, their own intuition and experience. They had not had time to read new guidance except where it applied to newly introduced foci (e.g. youth, persons with disabilities) and complained that guidance was dispersed, too complicated and too long.[17] As a result, almost any targeting approach can be justified. With so much to digest, people also rely on word of mouth and the inevitable distortions/received wisdom/assumed understanding of common terms. The situation has not been helped by the high turnover of staff in IFAD since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

37. An assessment of guidance given through internal processes of project design and quality assurance to uphold targeting principles since the 2008 Policy was beyond the scope of this ESN. The low quality of targeting in some case study PDRs does however suggest that there is room for improvement to ensure targeting principles are followed.

38. **The perception that targeting will be different for different situations has diluted the intention that targeting principles are universal across all IFAD activities.** Separate targeting guidance for different types of project (value chains, climate change, rural finance, infrastructure) has fuelled the use of different terminology and different interpretations. Some staff interviewed say that targeting is different in Low-Income Countries (LICs) and Middle-Income Countries (MICs). However, all countries share the need for investment in rural transformation and all experience relative deprivation among their populations, especially rural ones.[18] Most interviewees indicated that principles can and should be universal but that guidance should make it explicit that operationalisation of the principles would be contextually appropriate.

B. Target groups

39. **Although there was no change in targeting principles and guidance between the 2008 Policy and 2018 (before the Revised Operational Guidelines came out), staff interviewed and PPE/IE case studies reviewed suggest shifts in interpretation over time**. The 2008 Policy noted a focus on the so-called 'active or productive poor'. This category 'active or productive poor' was adopted as default target group, especially by those espousing a value chain approach. However, the 2008 policy clearly highlighted a need to '*expand outreach to proactively include those who have fewer assets and opportunities, in particular extremely poor people as referred to in MDG 1[19] and to include marginalized groups, such as minorities and indigenous peoples, and address their specific needs'*. The guiding intention for all IFAD programmes was to extend targeting to poorer and extremely poor but interviews and case studies indicate less attention was given to the extremely poor. The change in IFAD's strap-line from '*Enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty'* to '*Investing in rural people'* (2014) further fuelled the idea that IFAD was no longer concerned with poorer/extremely poor people and has led some staff to claim that 'we cannot target them'.

40. **The 2019 Revised Operating Guidelines for Targeting did not change the intention in the 2008 Policy to target the poorer/extremely poor, but it did**

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[17] In particular the SECAP guidance volumes 1 & 2 with 236 pages on guidance related to targeting, mainstreaming themes and socio-economic analysis.
[18] For example, Argentina is an upper MIC but the PDR for PROSAF notes 'it is characterized by high income disparity and by high levels of rural poverty and growing food and nutritional insecurity.
[19] Millennium Development Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

use language that is more resolute and go one step further, capitalising on Agenda 2030 to reinvigorate efforts. The 2008 Policy stated IFAD's target group included extremely poor people "*who have the potential to take advantage of improved access to assets and opportunities for agricultural production and income-generating activities*". In contrast, the 2019 Revised Guidelines stated that for those who cannot take advantage immediately, IFAD will promote a gradual approach to facilitate their access/enable them to benefit from interventions. It recognised IFAD's own growing experience of partnering and using graduation/mentoring approaches to empower harder to reach groups.

41. **Certain target group terminology risks being belittling and could perpetuate stigma.** Terms such as 'beneficiary', 'poorest of the poor', 'inactive poor' (implied corollary of 'active poor'), 'destitute', 'displaced persons' and even 'target group' are labels with connotations of passive recipients rather than people with their own agency and are not relevant to IFAD's principles of empowerment. 'The poor' is not a category that many people living in poverty would claim for themselves'.[20] Some of these terms are avoidable, for others no suitable alternative has been found. Furthermore, some labels potentially perpetuate stigma, especially in some cultures (such as divorced/separated and certain ethnicity labels) or should not be used at all (such as persons living with HIV/AIDs).

42. **There is confusion and inconsistency in the terminology used to describe targeting and target groups**. While the interpretation of who is poor/vulnerable depends on country context, it is still possible to use the same terminology to describe relative poverty but this is not done. Figure 4 illustrates the breadth and frequency of terms used to describe target groups in 20 documents. The issue is compounded when terms are translated inconsistently into different languages.[21] Furthermore, terms vary within the same country context and within single projects. There were weak explanations and no common definition of what the terms 'vulnerable' or 'marginalised' meant. The definitions of "vulnerable" and "vulnerable groups" used in the 2017 Gender Glossary (but dating back to 2009) are not consistent with current discourse in IFAD related to climate change, food crises, conflict, etc.

Figure 4
Intended target groups mentioned in PPEs and PDRs

Source: ESN team elaboration based on PPEs and PDRs reviewed. Note: a bigger font size indicates a higher frequency of terms used across PPEs and PDRs.

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[20] Andrea Cornwall and Mamoru Fujita. 2007. The Politics of Representing 'the Poor'. In Rosalind Eyben and Joy Moncrieffe (Eds). The Power of Labelling (pp. 48-64).
[21] A glossary of terms has already been done on gender (2017).

43. **There is misunderstanding around targeting IFAD's priority groups
     'women, youth, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities'.** The
     Targeting Toolkit clearly states that these groups are from 'within different poverty
     groups' but there are instances where they are included as target groups without
     the qualifier adjective 'poor' and/or 'vulnerable'. Some guidance appears to suggest
     these groups are separate from the poor.[22] Whilst such categorical targeting is
     easily understood and resource-light, without thoughtful refinement it can lead to
     leakage to, and even co-option by, non-poor (see paragraph 52 for further
     analysis). The guidance has also been interpreted to mean that all these groups
     should be priorities in all projects and that mainstreaming themes (youth, nutrition,
     environment and climate) should also be considered in all projects.

44. **The term 'target group' is primarily used for the intended poor/vulnerable
     beneficiaries but the guidance suggesting strategic inclusion of 'better-off'
     has led to confusion.** Rural poor people are the intended beneficiaries of IFAD's
     programmes and are part of wider systems. Provision of meaningful support for
     them requires investment in a range of actors within those systems. Guidelines
     have been unhelpful in making this distinction by referring to these other actors as
     target groups. For example, the Revised Operational Guidelines confusingly stated
     'targeting can be flexible enough to include relatively better-off groups' intending
     this to be limited to farmers with sufficient assets to engage with markets, usually
     in order to act as role models, early adopters or lead farmers. If investment in
     these farmers is designed to stimulate the motivation and participation of poorer
     farmers, or to provide employment for poorer farmers they are intermediaries
     (means to an end) not target groups per se.[23]

45. Furthermore, some case study project designs have interpreted the principle of
     targeting 'better off' beyond 'better-off' farmers to include the beneficiaries of
     investments needed to improve services for poor/vulnerable target groups.
     Suppliers (of inputs, equipment), service providers (financial, extension, business
     development, transport), buyers and processors should not be treated as target
     groups but may, importantly, be recipients of capacity building, technical and
     financial support, see Box 3. This is key to distinguishing between investment
     beneficiaries and target groups and ensuring that programmes are always designed
     to maximise benefits for rural poor people. Clear separation between target groups
     and intermediaries/service providers ensures clarity for monitoring and evaluation
     purposes, cost-beneficiary analyses and helps to separate and justify investments
     which are clearly intended to build an enabling environment for socio-economic
     development of rural poor people.

Box 3
Distinguishing between beneficiaries and target groups

> *The distinction is made in two case study PDRs. Senegal PCAE PDR makes it clear that
> target groups are a sub-section of beneficiaries and target groups are those with whom
> they have worked in previous projects. Although Viet Nam CSAT PDR includes medium and
> better off farmers as target groups (~20%) it notes 'these are not the prime target group.
> They are included in CSAT interventions because they have the ability to assist poor
> smallholders in commercial agricultural production for example through CG investments,
> and co-investments in agricultural demonstrations.'*

Source: ESN team elaboration based on PDRs

46. **There is inconsistent definition of the terms direct and indirect
     beneficiaries and little guidance on these terms.** Direct beneficiaries
     (sometimes called primary beneficiaries) are usually defined across development
     agencies as those benefiting from project-funded activities. This creates a problem

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[22] Operational Guidelines on Pro Poor Value Chain Development identify 'very poor, poor and nearly poor' and social
groups 'women, youth, indigenous peoples, disabled people'.
[23] There has been no systematic review to validate these assumptions and the contribution of this approach to 'leave no
one behind'.

where investments are being made to non-poor within systems as noted above. However, indirect beneficiaries (sometimes called secondary beneficiaries) are generally defined as those who benefit as a result of improvements made to the direct beneficiaries e.g. the families/dependents of poor rural men and women directly engaged in project activities. While many projects do use the formula of multiplying direct beneficiaries by the average household size to estimate indirect beneficiaries, some calculations in the case studies include the population of entire communities or even districts and provinces. Recent IFAD operational documents on Core Indicators do distinguish between the number of persons receiving services supported by the project and the estimated total number of household members.[24] However, they do not adequately distinguish between the types of indirect beneficiaries (including potential spillover effects). Nor is practical guidance provided beyond directives to avoid double accounting.

Key points

- IFAD's documents and communication materials frame targeting as a comparative advantage distinct from other financing institutions. Governments and partners recognise IFAD's commitment to serving the needs of poorer populations regardless of the countries' economic classification.

- IFAD's targeting principles in the Revised Operational Guidelines bring them more in line with Agenda 2030 and the pledge to leave no one behind. They use more resolute language and go one step further than the 2008 Policy to target poorer or the poorest people

- Staff and consultants have not followed the many new operational documents over time.

- The perception that targeting will be different for different situations has diluted the intention that targeting principles are universal across all IFAD activities.

- Target groups are sometimes unclearly defined and defined in multiple ways. There is also misunderstanding around targeting IFAD's priority groups 'women, youth, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities' and inconsistent use of the terms direct and indirect beneficiaries.

- The term 'target group' is used for the intended poor/vulnerable beneficiaries and sometimes erroneously also includes intermediaries and service providers. Guidelines have not made this distinction but it is key to ensure that programmes are always designed to maximise benefits for rural poor people.

IV. Relevance of targeting in project designs

47. **Given the clear principles of targeting rural poor people, project designs would be expected to demonstrate people-centred development approaches in all contexts.** IFAD works in a wide range of countries, contexts and with differing expectations from Governments, but given its core intention of improving the lives of rural poor people, there is a need to apply targeting principles to all aspects of project design. These include a clear understanding of the target group, the dynamic nature of their experience of poverty and effects of multiple deprivations (inter-sectionality) as a starting point, as well as assessing in what ways these people can best be reached and what interventions, partnerships and intermediaries might work most effectively to improve lives.

A. Poverty, vulnerability and livelihoods analyses

48. **Poverty and livelihoods analyses are recommended as an essential part of project design in the Policy, Guidelines and How To Do Notes[25] but they lack key information and analysis.** They are expected to identify obstacles to

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[24] IFAD 2021 Core Outcome Indicators Measurement Guidelines; IFAD 2022 IFAD's Core Indicators Framework.
[25] The IFAD toolkit on Poverty targeting, gender & empowerment includes How to do notes for project design and implementation.

and opportunities for poverty reduction, looking at processes of exclusion, vulnerability or disempowerment. However, in the case study PDRs they are more often descriptions of current condition rather than analyses able to provide insights into the opportunities and risks of interventions tailored for specific target groups.[26] Nor do they adequately recognise the target groups' priorities, constraints (also raised in Evaluation Synthesis Reports on Inclusive Financial Services and Gender), assets, labour capacity, aspirations, perceptions of risk and the dynamic nature of poverty.[27] A lack of understanding of how poor people assess risk may lead to self-exclusion. As all IFAD programmes anticipate some kind of behaviour change among target groups, there is an intrinsic need to analyse their capability, opportunity and motivation for change. Furthermore, there is limited evidence in the case studies of PPEs/IEs reviewed that the advice in the IFAD 2008 targeting policy to undertake poverty and livelihoods analyses throughout the life of the project to ensure that responses are current and appropriate was taken.[28]

49. **The social component of the Social Environmental and Climate Assessment (SECAP) does not adequately replace the detailed social assessments conducted in the past as a means to define target groups.** The SECAP 2021 guidelines frame SECAP as a risk assessment and means to exercise due diligence. Therefore, the social component rightly should focus on labour, resettlement and indigenous people's issues.[29] Unfortunately, SECAP has been treated as a substitute for Annex/Appendix II/2 on Poverty, Targeting and Gender found in earlier PDRs.[30] Both Annex II/2 and SECAP are not sufficiently analytical and draw on a limited range of research sources. However, SECAP reduces the social component to a few pages, does not identify entry points for working with segmented target populations and is generally authored by environment/climate change experts rather than social development experts. Few Annex II/2s indicate that primary research was conducted during design[31] but there is no evidence of this in case study SECAP documents reviewed.[32] Opportunities to base targeting decisions on listening to poor people and collaborating to generate solutions, as stated in the 2008 Targeting Policy, are diminishing. Reviews of case studies show that only 38 per cent of older projects (PPEs and IEs) have engaged with target groups in a participatory manner to identify priorities and groups to be targeted. The practice is declining in newer projects (PDRs) where only one out of 10 cases examined has done so.

50. **Delaying poverty, vulnerability and livelihoods analysis until project start-up is too late and contributes to reliance on solution-led project designs rather than designs which are responsive to rural people's agricultural-related priorities.** A number of PDRs reviewed indicated that detailed analyses will be undertaken at baseline or during early implementation, which is at odds with the guidance provided.[33] This means that PDRs on which the PIMs are based do not provide the needed clarity on the target groups nor differentiated pathways of change. Furthermore, PPEs indicate that target group analyses and strategies planned for the first year of projects are often delayed or never completed. Without

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[26] Long serving IFAD staff reported that poverty/social analyses used to be better in the past, especially those including participatory approaches.

[27] The experience of poverty changes as a result of family life cycle events, from season to season, as a result of conflict, global crises, climate change.

[28] An exception (outside the ESN sample) was WUPAP in Nepal that demonstrated a sequenced approach which adapted to changing needs post conflict towards transition and revisited the context and definition of target groups using a wealth ranking approach.

[29] Often action related to indigenous peoples is framed narrowly only in terms of applying principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

[30] Following a directive to reduce the size of PDRs around 2017, Annex II/2 was dropped.

[31] For example, the PDR of the Guyana Hinterland Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture Development Project (2016) provides outcomes of focus group discussions conducted with target groups during design (annex 2).

[32] Covid may have restricted this possibility but other organizations were actively using remote research and local expertise to fill these gaps during this period.

[33] IFAD How to do Poverty Targeting, Gender Equality and Empowerment during Project Design (2017); IFAD Revised Operational Guidelines on targeting (2019).

these analyses design faults are inevitable and partnerships needed to complement and contribute to intervention efforts are not well anticipated at design. Resource constraints are cited as the reason for less detailed and/or delayed analyses. However, effectiveness and impact are at significant risk and ways to fill this gap have not to-date been sufficiently encouraged (for example, through suggesting in-country reference groups to provide up to date critiques of targeting intentions, partnerships with research institutions, longer design periods).

51. **Project designs use broad unsegmented categories of target groups.** Target group labels such as 'women', 'youth', and 'indigenous population' are unhelpful but widely used. Worse are labels such as 'women and youth'.[34] They do not take into account differences in socio-economic status, education and skills, their social networks and support systems, aspiration and circumstances that motivate participation/engagement in IFAD project activities. The evaluation found that newer PDRs, in particular, use these broad-brush categories to demonstrate response to corporate thematic foci and as a result fail to provide clear pathways of change for the different groups.[35]

52. **The tendency to include many target groups has increased from case studies on PPEs/IEs to the new PDRs.** Ten out of 13 PPEs/IEs reviewed include a diverse range of apparently intended target groups (some of which include target groups beyond IFAD priority groups which were overlooked in actual implementation (See example in Box 4 below). The review of PDRs indicated that this continues and is exacerbated by the perceived need to include all priority groups and mainstreaming themes in all projects,[36] resulting in diluting actual project target group focus. No project designs reviewed clearly explained why some groups would not be targeted when this should be considered good practice. No project designs referred to how the range of target groups might be supported by other projects in the country programme. This would explain how the corporate imperatives were being addressed in a coherent way but not necessarily in all projects.

Box 4
Inclusion of diverse target groups without implementations strategies in IFAD projects

> *In reviewed case studies (PPEs/IEs), various groups are often stated as project target groups with no specific interventions or strategies identified to reach these groups. For example, Nepal-WUPAP stated bonded labourers as one of its target group, however, there was no livelihood analysis undertaken for this group to understand its priorities and constraints, nor any strategies or interventions to reach them. Consequently, while bonded labourers mentioned as one of the project's target groups, nothing was reported on the achievement concerning this target group in the project PPE and PCR. Similar cases are also found in Rwanda-KWAMP (orphans, people living with HIV/AIDS) and Ghana-RTIMP (unspecified "other vulnerable groups").*

Source: ESN Team Elaboration

53. **In the absence of adequate contemporary analysis of target groups, assumptions are made about typologies, which may not hold true.** Indigenous people, female headed households, divorced or widowed women, some ethnic groups, landless and some livelihoods groups are often assumed to be poorer than the main population without up-to-date data to support the

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[34] The Evaluation Synthesis Report on Rural Youth (2014) found that this approach did not work. "*Evaluations noted that grouping young people with other vulnerable groups and implementing self-targeting approaches alone did not lead to success.*

[35] The design of the Zimbabwe Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project (SACP) notes that successful women and youth inclusion requires special project-resourced and focused strategies.' But provides no evidence of this in the ToC which says '*Targeted technical assistance for rural women, men and youth on climate smart agriculture, business planning, financial literacy and nutrition skills',* providing no differentiated pathways.

[36] Since 2019, IFAD is promoting an integrated approach to gender, youth, nutrition, environment and climate to ensure activities around each theme are implemented in a complementary manner for maximum impact. IFAD, 2020. Mainstreaming Environment-climate-change-gender-youth-and-nutrition.

assumptions. Intentions to confirm socio economic status through some kind of community consultation (such as community-based wealth ranking) are absent from case study PDRs. The assumptions made about target group typologies are rarely challenged in project missions and evaluations.

54. **Participatory approaches are clearly advocated by IFAD to refine definitions of target groups and respond to needs, but these are perceived by some IFAD staff as resource intensive and time consuming.[37]** The Targeting Toolkit argues for using participatory approaches as a means of incentivizing targeting.[38] However, this intention is rarely understood by implementers and participation is reduced to one-way provision of information on project intentions (e.g. to communities, local government)[39] or to validation of targeting approaches only. In many cases, participatory engagement with target groups and their representatives is dropped altogether. Where there has been success achieved in the past, for instance in Chad (PPE),[40] or where participatory approaches are culturally normalised, such as in Morocco, there is more willingness to continue this practice.

B. National Poverty Data/Systems and other targeting instruments

55. **Most case study projects adhere to targeting guidelines by using national targeting systems in a bid to enhance ownership, coherence and relevance for Governments.** Just over three quarters (78 per cent) of case study projects (PPEs, IEs, and PDRs) used national poverty data and 27 per cent of them were able to augment this with granular household level targeting data.

56. **Government household-level socio-economic databases have improved thereby providing a more reliable way to target.** Over the last two decades, Governments have introduced systems for their own budgeting/targeting needs especially for social protection programmes. While their accuracy varies, they are nevertheless nationally accepted instruments for household classification intended to improve targeting efficiency and transparency. Study cases show that IFAD has used or intended to use Government data systems in some projects (See box 5 below for example). In Mexico, IFAD was required to use government instruments to channel resources to target groups. Where Government data is unavailable, IFAD has adopted a recognised alternative (China, expert-based poverty scorecard). There is no evidence to show that project designs use a critical eye to review the rigour or validity of Government instruments.

Box 5
The use of national poverty data/targeting systems in IFAD projects

> *IFAD has used or intended to use the existing national poverty data or targeting systems in some of its projects. In Rwanda, IFAD has used Ubudehe to inform its targeting. Ubudehe is a long-standing cultural system of mutual help that was adopted by the Government of Rwanda in 2000 as a basis of classifying all households. Currently, five categories are used which enables special focus on categories C and D to provide support for graduation out of poverty. In Pakistan, the KT-RETP project (PDR) promotes the use of the Poverty Score Card (PSC)-a national socio-economic registry developed in 2010 to identify families eligible for support from the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). The registry classifies 27 million households using a proxy means test based PSC*

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[37] 2008 Targeting Policy; 2017 How to do note on project design; 2019 Revised Operation Guidelines.
[38] The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) has developed Spectrum of Public Participation to guide agencies in determining appropriate level of stakeholder engagement that define the public's role in any community engagement programme. IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation can be accessed here:
https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/pillars/Spectrum_8.5x11_Print.pdf
[39] Consultation meetings are not the same as participation. Triangulated information from the Sub-regional Evaluation of countries with fragile situations in IFAD-WCA (forthcoming) also confirmed the "superficiality" of consultations with target groups in most projects.
[40] Chad Pastoral Water and Resource Management Project in Sahelian Areas (PROHYPA) used a participatory pastoral diagnosis (PPD) originally developed by French Development Agency (FDA).

> *promoted by the World Bank. In Argentina, PROSAF (PDR) describes its intention to target households already receiving government social protection.*

Source: ESN team elaboration

57. **Geographic targeting is widespread, endorsed and requested by governments.** Most case study projects adequately targeted areas with high numbers or proportions of rural poor people. Among the case study PDRs, there is evidence of increased use of climate vulnerability as a determinant of target areas, sometimes in addition to rural poverty, which is in line with the 2019 Revised Operational Guidelines on Targeting.[41] In contexts of fragility, successive investments in the same geographic area also make learning and implementing lessons easier.[42] However, geographic targeting is insufficient on its own to leave no one behind and prevent disproportionate benefit leakage to the non-poor. Area approaches are criticised when they are too large and spread resources too thinly.[43]

58. **Despite improvements in Government targeting instruments, Community-based targeting still has value as a means to validate and reduce inclusion/exclusion errors.** Community-based targeting was in the past a preferred instrument for IFAD where government data was unavailable or unreliable and improved outreach in poor areas.[44] It continues where there is precedence and experience, for example in Nepal and Tajikistan,[45] and enjoys high levels of social acceptability within communities.[46] It remains relevant where government data is out of date and/or where exclusion errors are persistent, but context-specific risks of local elite capture still need to be mitigated.

C. Intervention strategies

59. **The 'leave no one behind' mandate embodied in the 2030 Agenda has given rise to unwarranted concern among some IFAD staff as a departure from its targeting policy.** Yet, the 2008 Targeting Policy is clear on IFAD's focus on extremely poor people.[47] Furthermore, evidence shows that IFAD has experience to achieve this mandate through:

- **Graduation/mentoring approaches.** These are usually implemented in partnership with existing social protection schemes or in collaboration with humanitarian relief rehabilitation programmes. Graduation and mentoring approaches have demonstrated potential including in Tunisia and Kenya.[48] However, based on the BRAC model developed in 2002, they are not a panacea and do not always yield the results anticipated.[49] Good coaching/mentoring is key.[50] IOE evaluations found facilitators of various kinds play an important role to ensure projects reach the poor and are

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[41] Findings from Thematic Evaluation on Climate Change Adaptation (2022).

[42] Sub-regional Evaluation of countries with fragile situations in IFAD-WCA (forthcoming).

[43] PPE Chad PROHYPA, PPE Morocco PDRMO, plus both the Evaluation Synthesis Report on Community Driven Development and Evaluation Synthesis on Fisheries and aquaculture note too large geographic areas are problematic.

[44] Evaluation Synthesis Report on Community-driven development.

[45] The newly approved design of CASP+ PDR in xx states it will conduct Participatory Wealth Ranking exercise at community level to complement its targeting; the exercise was conducted in the previous IFAD-funded project, LPDP (2011-2018).

[46] Rahman, 2022, Literature review on Targeting the Poor and the Ultra-Poor.

[47] It explains that while the focus of IFAD was on the '*active or productive poor* ', there was a need to '*expand outreach to proactively include those who have fewer assets and opportunities, in particular extremely poor people (…) and to include marginalized groups, such as minorities and indigenous peoples, and address their specific needs'.*

[48] Projects IESS-Kairouan, Tunisia, and PROFIT and to a lesser extent KCEP-CRAL in Kenya (IOE Kenya CSPE)

[49] Kidd, Stephen and Diloa Athias (2019). The Effectiveness of the graduation approach; What does the evidence tell us? Development Pathways Issue 27, raises many questions about the inflated achievements of the graduation approach. Evaluation of the non IFAD Graduation Approach in Honduras found costs outweighed benefits source: https://www.poverty-action.org/study/graduating-ultra-poor-honduras. Other countries' graduation approaches showed mixed results; https://www.poverty-action.org/impact/ultra-poor-graduation-model

[50] ADB Brief #169 (2021) Assessment of the impact of the graduation approach in the Philippines: https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/682781/adb-brief-169-impact-graduation-approach-philippines.pdf

inclusive.[51] Governments are attracted to this approach not least of all because of the growing international evidence of achievement.

- **Labour intensive approaches to create waged employment**.[52] Where labour intensive approaches were used for the benefit of those categorised as 'left behind', the benefits were not always monitored or evaluated (See Box 6 below). For other projects with infrastructure components, it was not made clear whether the design had considered using labour-intensive approaches or not. IFAD personnel were not always aware of the potential of these interventions.

Box 6
The use of labour intensive approaches to benefit IFAD target groups

Bangladesh CCRIP (PPE) used labour-contracting societies (LCS) involving 5,723 poor women and men for road and market-infrastructure construction. More than 1.8 million labour days were generated for LCS members (41 per cent of which were women). The PPE found that LCS employment provided short-term consumption support for poor women (and men) and enabled some of them to engage in longer-term income-earning activities. However, this outcome was undervalued in the project objectives.

In other projects where the labour intensive approach was applied, the benefit to target groups was not examined, for example, Nepal-WUPAP PPE and Rwanda-KWAMP PPE. Reviewed PDRs which have infrastructure components (Vietnam CSAT and Zimbabwe SACP) did not clarify if they intended to use a labour intensive approach.

Source: ESN team elaboration based on PPEs

60. **Efforts to reach the poorest and/or most vulnerable are also supported through partnerships with organisations to address basic needs and policy engagement.** Partnerships have often been forged to fill gaps where IFAD either has limited capacity, resources or where governments have restricted the use of loans to infrastructure. However, reviewed PPEs show that partnerships are sometimes inadequately secured to meet the intended objectives.[53] There are examples of IFAD advocating for inclusive policy and practice in Government programmes, for example in Mexico and Vietnam.[54] The Senegal Agriculture and Livestock Competitiveness Programme for Results (PCAE-PforR) PDR highlights that IFAD, as a co-financer with the World Bank, is particularly concerned with enhancing the inclusiveness of the programme. It details its key role in policy advocacy to influence Government to make more equitable budget allocations in favour of poor smallholders for seeds, vaccinations services etc.

61. **Still, sometimes weak segmentation and analysis of target groups combined with perceived diminishing opportunities for direct engagement of target groups during design limits customization and ultimately the effectiveness of interventions.** The review of both case study PPEs/IEs and PDRs suggests that sometimes standardised interventions, or solution-led intervention strategies are used. These are not well-adapted to contexts or particular circumstances of target groups and do not necessarily learn from weaknesses in design identified elsewhere. Eight out of 10 PPEs reviewed show adverse effect of this shortcoming on projects performance.[55] Products and

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[51] Evaluation Synthesis Report on GEWE (2017), Inclusive Financial Services (2019), Community-driven development (2020), and Corporate-level Evaluation on pro-poor value chain (2019). Georgia-RDP is a case where poor people in remote areas were successfully targeted through a village counsellor system established by financial service providers.
[52] The evaluation synthesis on Infrastructure (2021) highlights infrastructure projects in fragile countries (usually labour-intensive) offer opportunities for farmers to increase their income sources through food or cash for work.
[53] Bangladesh CCRIP project intended to forge links with another IFAD project (PACE) to link labour-contracting society 'graduates' to financial institutions but the latter worked with micro-enterprises and could not accommodate CCRIP's target group. Belize BRFP design was predicated on linking loan provision with the EU-funded BRDP II enterprise development project, but this subsequently became an infrastructure project only. Rwanda's KWAMP partnership with the World Food Programme to provide 'food for work' also fell through with the withdrawal of funding from WFP.
[54] Interviews.
[55] Ghana RTIMP assumed that target groups would be able to replicate 'good practice centre' advice but the PPE concluded these centres were far beyond the capacity of small farmers to replicate. Malawi RLEEP found the potato

services have been promoted which are not priorities or appropriate for target groups. Suggestions that this is a casualty of reduced design budgets is disputed by some IFAD staff, while it is acknowledged that travel restrictions related to COVID have recently limited opportunities for direct engagement. However, there are Country Directors (Tunisia, Morocco, Viet Nam) who have optimised the use of available resources (including grants) and have been able to ensure that interventions are appropriately customised for particular contexts and target groups.

62. **Targeting within different project types is managed differently but does not need to be.** IFAD distinguishes projects by intervention typologies (e.g. value chain approach, climate change adaptation, infrastructure, rural finance etc.). Very few projects actually fit into a single typology/theme, so adjusting targeting by project types makes limited sense. Some IFAD staff felt that the principles of targeting should remain valid across all types or combinations of types of interventions.

63. **Value chain projects are not 'an exception' with regards to targeting** if it is accepted that all beneficiaries of investment are not necessarily the target group (see paragraph 44 above). Adopting a value chain approach rather than a market systems approach is one reason why some argue for a focus on active/productive poor who can participate and benefit directly in a linear profit- added chains. In-country value chain analyses focus on hypothetical profit margins between links in the chain and not on the benefits for poor people that can be influenced by the project at each link of the chain. Market systems, which are rarely used as a framework for identifying interventions, enable a more holistic comprehension of how poor people interact with the system.[56] A systems lens enables better analysis of the positive and negative effects of interventions in parts of the system.[57] The important prefix to value chain approaches is 'pro-poor' to ensure optimum and diverse benefits for intended target groups of the poor, but this is often not used.

Box 7
Systems approaches

Critically, IFAD is increasingly recommending adopting systems approaches to programmes and concomitant segmentation of target groups rather than limited linear chain approaches. However, there remains confusion over the nomenclature. The food systems approach promoted by the UN Rome-based agencies does not adequately capture the wider agriculture systems within which smallholder farmers operate. Market systems also include non-food agriculture (for example cacao, copra, fibres, pharmaceuticals, dyes, fuel, resins, etc.). In development parlance, market system support is intended to meet both economic and nutrition outcomes and therefore provides a better lens for most of IFAD's programmes than the more narrow food systems lens. Taking a market systems approach includes consideration of food systems but ensures that the full range of livelihood options and actors are identified to ensure support is channeled to improve participation and resilience of smallholders. USAID has consciously made this shift in order to better map systems actors.

Source: ESN team elaboration with insights from https://www.agrilinks.org/post/balancing-systems-making-food-and-market-systems-work-nutrition; https://beamexchange.org/

64. **Some projects have tried to design value chain approaches specifically for poor farmers.** Box 8 shows key factors contributing to effective outreach to

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value chain was unsuitable for poor farmers as potatoes require a high level of investment. It also invested in Farm Radio but poor farmers reported they did not have the resources to purchase radio sets and batteries.

[56] For example, as waged agricultural workers, seasonal workers, in informal markets, as consumers (of produce , services and agricultural inputs), as employees in processing, packaging, transportation of agricultural inputs/produce, as local vaccinators, sprayers, tractor drivers.

[57] Systems thinking in IFAD is implied by the statement '*Value chains can be inclusive of poor rural people not only at the primary production level but also at other levels of the value chain, such as in processing, transport, input and other service provisions and through the creation of employment and microenterprise development*'. Operational Guidelines for IFAD's Engagement in Pro-poor Value chains.

poorer small-scale producers. In efforts to use self-targeting, commodities selected in design have been those more likely to be grown by poorer farmers. There are obvious reasons why the poor grow these; for own and local consumption, tradition, less costly inputs. However, this is not necessarily a good way to target. As some PPEs pointed out profits may be low and the chances of market saturation and price depression are high.[58] Often what poor families want is reliable decent employment either all year or in their own off-peak farming seasons. Value chain projects reviewed insufficiently accounted for this, with the exception of PDRMO Morocco where the PPE reported time and cost savings.

Box 8
Factors contributing to effective outreach to poorer small-scale producers

(i) Selecting commodities requiring little land or capital investment and involving intensive, unskilled labour inputs (considering the risks mentioned above);

(ii) Enforcing pro-poor requirements for agribusinesses as a condition for obtaining IFAD project support;

(iii) Community-based groundwork and mobilization of producer groups combined with other activities; and

(iv) Previous work in the same area establishing the productive base and local knowledge, and a participatory approach to design and implementation.

Source: IOE 2019 Corporate-level evaluation on value chain development

65.   **Some projects have used dedicated budgets to ensure interventions can be directed to specific target groups.** In PROHYPA Chad the budget provision for women was important as it enabled some activities to continue after the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's withdrawal. In Rural Kenya Financial Inclusion Facility (RK-FINFA), target group disaggregated budgets are dictated by government policy. Careful consideration nevertheless needs to be given to ensuring the provision does not result in siloed action insufficiently integrated into the project.

66.   **Interventions for priority groups are not always well integrated in project designs**. Specific interventions appear to be 'add-ons', such as promoting improved cooking stoves, renewable energy kits, kitchen gardens, and craft activities for women. Whilst project designs rightly justify these (reducing women's workload, improving nutrition, diversifying incomes), they divert resources from the main project focus, are outside of the core pathways of change and appear to be included largely to satisfy corporate thematic foci. Furthermore, they often challenge implementing agencies (e.g. Agriculture departments), as the interventions are not within their remit.[59]

67.   Other well-known issues that continue to hinder the effectiveness of targeting include: mandatory and high financial contributions from beneficiaries, although there are also examples of projects that waive these,[60] and, the fulfillment of eligibility criteria by districts and provinces to receive project support, limiting outreach to poorer areas.[61]

D.   Pathways of change

68.   **Existing targeting and value chain guidelines advise design and implementation teams to define clear pathways of change for target groups, but few fulfil this expectation.** IOE provides reconstructed project ToCs to provide a theory basis for PPEs. The project designs reviewed that were

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[58] PPE Ghana RTIMP; Malawi RLEEP impact assessment 2017 and PPE; also in the Viet Nam CSAT PDR it suggests value chains suitable for poor (including Khmer) '*peanut, rice, chicken, and coconut value chain should be considered to be invested*' while the financial analysis indicated that investment in rice and coconut is not profitable.
[59] Various PPEs
[60] Financial contributions were waived in Pakistan KP-RETP and Ghana Rural Enterprise Programme for those who could not pay them.
[61] IOE Indonesia CSPE (forthcoming).

approved in 2021 were expected to use ToCs to summarise the pathways of change for target groups. However, few ToC schematics and/or narratives fulfil this expectation. Of the ten recent PDRs reviewed only four provided a pathway of change and within these four, diverse target groups were combined (e.g. women and youth). IOE reconstructed ToCs also often lack focus on target groups. ToCs that are considered in-house as good examples of focus are those that only limit the number of commodities, but they do not define pathways of change for target groups – the very people who are meant to benefit.[62] In the case studies, there is a lack of clarity on the relationships between investments in intermediaries and the benefits that should result for target groups. Interviews for this study have revealed that ToCs are perceived as 'another compliance requirement' and are often compiled by consultants at the end of the design phase. They are not used as a tool that can engage partners early in design in a shared, co-creation of realistic pathways of change, thereby building shared and clear understanding, anticipating and mitigating risks and assuring design feasibility and evaluability.

69. **ToCs are sometimes limited to impacts on income and do not include the contributions of complementary programmes which have explicit value added.** Income does not necessarily represent what target groups most want from projects. Various IFAD documents acknowledge the range of desired outcomes including both economic and social. As noted above, partnerships are often forged to fill gaps where IFAD has limited capacity, resources or expertise but these partnerships are not explicit in the ToCs or in the design narrative. The complementarities and synergies are key to achieving outcomes.

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[62] IFAD 2022 Achieving Rural Transformation; Results and Lessons from IFAD Impact Assessments

> **Key points**
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> - Poverty and vulnerability analyses are recognised as essential for project design but their quality and timeliness are limited, worsened by the loss of the annex on Poverty, targeting and gender since 2017.
>
> - Target groups in project designs are sometimes unsegmented and based on assumptions, rather than contextual analysis. Participatory approaches to refine target groups definitions and understand priorities are successfully used in some cases but can be limited or altogether absent in others.
>
> - More Governments have socio-economic databases that can be used for targeting. IFAD has used these where possible but uncritically.
>
> - Geographic targeting of areas with high numbers or proportions of rural poor people is widespread, endorsed and requested by governments, and there is evidence of increased use of climate vulnerability as a determinant of target areas. Community-based targeting is still used and remains relevant to validate and reduce inclusion/exclusion errors.
>
> - IFAD has experience targeting poorer and the poorest people using different means, including graduation/mentoring approaches and labour intensive approaches for waged employment. Other keys ways of working are through partnerships to address basic needs and policy engagement to advocate for inclusive government programmes. Supportive operational measures also include using dedicated budgets to ensure interventions can be directed to specific target groups.
>
> - Intervention strategies can sometimes suffer from limited customization to local contexts and target group priorities, reducing the effectiveness of interventions. Interventions for priority groups are not always well integrated into the core project design.
>
> - Pro-poor value chain projects are more able to target poorer people when they take a systems lens and integrate key factors into project design and implementation.
>
> - Schematic and/or narratives on project theories of change in project designs do not often mention target groups making it difficult to understand the pathways of change for different target groups.

V. Effectiveness of targeting in IFAD-supported projects

A. Metrics and instruments for measuring targeting performance

70. **Effectiveness of targeting cannot be ascertained without the disaggregation of quantitative and qualitative data by target groups.** All the PPEs reviewed noted that there was a lack of disaggregated data from which to deduce target group outreach and outcomes.[63] Nevertheless, IOE only made recommendations to improve targeting data collection and analysis in four out of ten of the case study PPEs. It is acknowledged that a step forward has been made with log frames and corporate requirements stipulating gender disaggregated data and more recently age- and indigenous peoples- disaggregated data. Still, the numbers which get fed into corporate results management systems on outreach and core indicators are not always useful for projects to establish what works and for whom and to be able to adapt and improve on interventions during the life of the project. Target group disaggregated indicators are not the same as targets for outreach yet many projects rely solely on the latter. Logframes reviewed primarily contain RIMS (pre 2017) or ORMS indicators and are inadequate for understanding change by target group.

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[63] In some cases this would be straightforward e.g. in the design of Pakistan KP-RETP targeting uses the household poverty scorecard enabling easy disaggregation but it is not clear if this will be done.

71.   Poor disaggregation can also lead to multiple accounting. For example, a project may have specific activities for women counting them as direct beneficiaries but also counting them as members of direct beneficiary households, as youth and potentially again as indirect beneficiaries. These methodological issues inflate outreach numbers and make cross-project and cross-country comparisons impossible.

72.   **The lack of clarity in pathways of change for target groups leads to weak articulation of change indicators.** There is no evidence of ToCs in case study PDRs providing the basis for developing indicators to demonstrate process and outcome change for target groups. The logic in logframes and ToCs are not always consistent. Numbers of people trained or reached with services are supply -input indicators required for MIS and efficiency assessments but they are not adequate to describe the change in behaviours ('what do people do differently'?) resulting from the programme. The recent guidance for measuring core indicators (2021)[64] has included intentions to measure behaviour change outcomes by a new indicator on empowerment[65] and two new indicators on stakeholder feedback.[66] Case study PDRs were designed before dissemination of these new guidelines so the application and adequacy of these measures could not be ascertained. Analytical review by the ESN finds that the empowerment indicator will be measured using quantitative survey instruments only. Indicators for the project supported service provision/intermediaries do not describe what they do differently to provide services for, to include or to support the target group better.[67]

73.   **Some projects, especially infrastructure and rural finance projects put more focus on the physical outputs than on the outcomes for people.** Lengths of roads, numbers of rehabilitated market places, area coverage for irrigation are recorded as ends in themselves when they are means to ends.[68] Similarly, rural finance projects measure services and products without also measuring how these services are used to improve the lives of poor people. In addition to outputs, benefits and outcomes for rural poor people also need to be measured. Pakistan KP-RETP design includes a ToC which is clearly target-group - led compared to Kenya RK-FINFA which is financial services–driven.

74.   **Indicators which are key for target groups are not necessarily measured in evaluations.** Benefits which are important for target groups, especially from relatively short term projects, are not the conventional IFAD measures of income or assets/savings.[69] Poor people value cost savings, time and effort savings, waged employment (predictable payments), security of access to productive land, timely access to high quality inputs and services, improved production practice, diverse and sufficient family meals, reduced stress.

75.   **There is insufficient use of alternative and target group appropriate means to gather information on positive change.** The case studies show a preference for large quantitative surveys as means to demonstrate target group outcomes. But baselines are often undertaken too late and poorly designed and implemented. PPEs regularly report inadequate evidence either from the project's own Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system or from baseline/endline studies from which to

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[64] IFAD 2021 Core Outcome Indicators Measurement Guidelines
[65] Comprising a composite empowerment index based on simplified version of project- Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI) which relies on self-reporting.
[66] Satisfaction with project supported services and self-reported capacity to influence decision-making of local authorities and project supported service providers
[67] For example, indicators such as # new jobs (for target group) provided at/above national minimum wage, #/size agricultural loans provided to first time borrowers (target group) without collateral) could be measured.
[68] For example, Employment generated, farmer access to remunerative markets, cost savings on transportation, increased agricultural production.
[69] Note that the PPE Tajikistan KLSP found that incomes declined for target groups, but that they still highly valued the technical assistance and training.

deduce achievements.[70] PPE teams make up this deficit with a limited number of interviews, focus groups and field visits. The evaluation found that more judicious use of periodic qualitative progress evaluations supported by low key simple-to-manage survey tools capture information well about how target groups engage, use and value interventions.[71] There are many participatory evaluation approaches which IFAD could use more widely including for example Sensemaker, outcome mapping, participatory-GIS, Most Significant Change. These use visual and story-telling techniques among others to assess change and can be augmented by direct observation. These are particularly suitable for IFAD as they fulfil the dual objectives of context-specific co-analysis and contributing to community and individual empowerment.[72] Box 9 describes an approach used in IFAD to involve target groups in evaluation.

Box 9
Potential use of PIALA as an alternative approach to produce participatory and rigorous impact assessment

PIALA (Participatory Impact Assessment and Learning Approach) was developed for IFAD, with additional funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. PIALA was piloted in two IFAD projects, DBRP in Viet Nam and RTIMP in Ghana. The PPE of RTIMP used the PIALA analysis and data throughout the evaluation process. The PIALA methodology uses a ToC and a participatory sense-making approach to answer, among others, the following questions: "what has changed (or not) for whom and why"; "how sustainable are these changes likely to be"; "what are the impacts and what has caused these changes". Household survey, focus group discussion with community members, and key informant interviews with district- and national- level stakeholders were conducted. A participatory sense making approach was facilitated with target groups and local officials to analyse together the emerging evidence of project contribution. PIALA's mix of processes and methods provides an alternative to the classic counterfactual-based evaluation, however, it is not widely used in IFAD.

Source: ESN Team elaboration based on RTIMP-Ghana's PPE and final report on the participatory impact evaluation.

76. **Evidence suggests some projects do not sufficiently reflect on the effectiveness of their targeting approaches or do so too late.** Monitoring is skewed towards providing MIS dashboard information and meeting efficiency exigencies rather than a tool to examine and adjust targeting effectiveness. Projects sometimes put more emphasis on what implementers are doing rather than why. While there are examples of projects adapting their targeting strategies during implementation, it is often at mid-term, which is too late in projects lasting five to six years. The case study PPEs often note that outcomes are compromised by late adjustment or introduction of new approaches to achieve better targeting.

77. **Comparisons of the cost effectiveness of different intervention strategies for different target group cannot be deduced because of the lack of clarity in target group specific pathways of change**. The ARRI paper provides a review of targeting including efficiencies and concludes that participatory approaches are time and cost-intensive. Review of this and graduation approaches which are similarly criticised was beyond the scope of this study but without disaggregated data which describes progressive change for target groups it is not

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[70] For example, Chad PROHYPA, Malawi RLEEP heavily criticised for their weak baseline data; Tajikistan KLSP had to repeat baseline data collection due to change in target areas three years into the project, with impact assessment just two years later.
[71] In particular using open-source mobile data collection platforms (e.g. Open Data Kit/ODK). A participatory monitoring system was proposed for Chad PROHYPA and would have been appropriate given the vast area covered by the project but it never materialised.
[72] The SAGE Handbook of Participatory Research and Inquiry (2021) volume 2 , Eds Danny Burns, Jo Howard and Sonia Ospina provides a particularly good resource for tried and tested participatory evaluation approaches. ESN notes only Most Significant Change (MSC) is presented as a possible tool by the IFAD Knowledge Management Unit and there is little acknowledgement of the wealth of other robust and rigorous mixed method and participatory approaches to evaluation.

possible to make fair comparisons. The lack of cost per beneficiary data disaggregated by different target groups also limits analysis.

B.   Capacity of implementers of the targeting strategy

78.   **Effectiveness of IFAD's programme depends heavily on implementation by Government partners.** Not only do there need to be shared definitions of target groups, but also a clear understanding of how to reach and effectively support them. Ministries of Agriculture continue to be IFAD's main government implementing partners, but they might lack the technical knowledge and experience required for targeting. This has been mitigated in some projects by the inclusion of Ministry of Social Welfare and/or NGOs. However their capacity levels can also vary. PPE RLEEP Malawi found diversity in application of targeting approaches across the many NGOs that were contracted, with only two adequately demonstrating pro-poor and gender-sensitive targeting. In contrast, the (forthcoming) Project Cluster Evaluation on enterprise development found that the four local facilitating NGOs in an agro-pastoral programme in Cameroon[73] have facilitated the participation of the target group of poor rural young men and women, including poor ethnic minorities from conservative communities, in core project activities.

79.   **Targeting is often insufficiently explained during project start-up to the key actors involved in implementation.** Project start-up typically lasts a week primarily focusing on financial and administrative procedures and systems. The Targeting Toolkit provides details of how targeting should be shared with all PMU and implementation staff during start up, but interviews indicate that such extensive orientation is not carried out. In some cases, there is a focus on the mechanics of targeting but not on sharing the principles and intentions. Interviews also pointed out that with high levels of staff turnover new IFAD staff are often unfamiliar with targeting principles and less able to explain and negotiate these with government counterparts. The IFAD-supported Economic, Social and Solidarity Project (IESS-Kairouan) in Tunisia made laudable attempts to address this orientation issue by devoting a full day to sharing and building consensus with the PMU on targeting and gender, albeit the minimum time required.

80.   **There is a disconnect between the PDR, SECAP, PIM and actual operations.** Important details concerning target groups in project designs reviewed (including how they will be selected and motivated to engage in the programme and what enabling actions need to be taken to ensure inclusion) are lost between documents.

81.   **Implementers focused on fulfilling quotas rather than tackling inequalities facing priority groups, while new PDRs are rising to the challenge of transformative change.** PPE/IE case studies show that quotas have been used widely and, while a weak instrument to create conditions of inclusion, they have nevertheless been accepted by government implementers and have raised the issue of inclusion of priority groups well. Nevertheless, targeting well is challenging and requires a deep understanding of the underlying causes of deprivation and the systems which perpetuate this. Newer PDRs appear to be rising to the challenge of gender transformation by at least describing the need to do something. The pathways to achieve these ends could still be more clearly defined to support implementers, see Box 10.

Box 10
Clarity in project designs on how to implement transformative approaches

> Haiti AP3B PDR makes the point that quotas are not enough for gender and youth inclusion and highlights some of the challenges to becoming gender transformative and youth sensitive but does not explain how.

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[73] Programme de Promotion de l'Entreprenariat Agropastoral des Jeunes (PEAJ) or Youth Agropastoral Entrepreneurship Promotion Programme, Cameroon (2015-2023).

> Kyrgyzstan RRPCP design also notes that quotas are not enough and should be supplemented with 'targeted awareness-raising, capacity building and economic incentives to ensure women's meaningful participation in pasture users' institutions' but lacks concrete action.
>
> Argentina PROSAF PDR frames the adoption of 'a gender-transformative and youth-sensitive and nutrition-sensitive approach' as innovative given the context of the country and does provide more detail than other projects designs on how this might be achieved.

Source: ESN team elaboration based on PDRs

82. **IFAD's provision of targeting support to implementers during missions is mixed.** As already mentioned above, the case study PPEs/IEs suggest targeting issues are often found at mid-term review, rather than earlier on during supervision missions. Interviewees acknowledged that targeting was not always well covered during supervision missions due to limited expertise in targeting among the restricted number of mission members. The imminent recruitment of a P4 Senior Technical Specialist on Targeting will be important to help strengthen targeting in general, including on missions to better support implementing partners.

83. **IFAD has recently introduced grievance mechanisms across all its new projects but these often meet compliance requirements rather than provide user-friendly opportunities to improve targeting during implementation.** A few PDRs hint at providing feedback systems beyond these legal compliance measures, but they still lack clarity in how they will actually work for target groups, and how they will be implemented, see Box 11.

Box 11
Feedback mechanisms in project designs

> *Haiti AP3B PDR notes that 'Feedback mechanisms will be provided during project implementation, which will allow beneficiaries to monitor and report on the quality of project service delivery and allow project management teams to provide feedback. Transparently by adjusting project interventions or taking other necessary actions.' However, it does not provide information on how this will operate and whether it is accessible/appropriate for target groups. Argentina PROSAF PDR notes a culture of good participatory practice and proposes participatory feedback mechanisms but leaves the elaboration of these until project implementation. This may lead to this good intention being overlooked.*

Source: ESN team elaboration based on PDRs

C.   Innovative targeting approaches

84.   In recent years, IFAD has piloted and increasingly adopted targeting innovations in/alongside its loan programmes including household-focused interventions and graduation approaches, already mentioned above. Box 13 at the end of this section provides some promising ideas to advance targeting from within and outside of IFAD.

85.   **Household-focused intervention strategies have shown potential for improving inclusive targeting.** The achievements using Gender Action Learning System (GALS) and Household Mentoring are well documented in IFAD but they have been framed in terms of women's empowerment when their potential is much wider than this.[74] Box 12 provides some examples.

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[74] This is acknowledged in the How to do note on Poverty Targeting, Gender Equality and Empowerment during Project Design (2017) that refers to 'Working with all household members to identify a unifying household vision for improved food and nutrition security, well-being and increased income, and to address discriminatory roles and relationships'.

Box 12
Examples of IFAD-supported household-focused interventions

In Papua New Guinea, the IFAD Markets for Village Farmers project adopted the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research-Family Farm Team Approach which, while sharing the intended gender outcomes of GALS and Household Mentoring, explain the approach in terms of family business visioning, planning and implementation involving all members of the family.

IFAD Indonesia is promoting family farm-based business planning and farmer-led monitoring systems originally developed by Mars to support their cocoa growers. Women, youth, persons with disabilities within households are inevitably included in these approaches.

The Belize Rural Finance Programme (BRFP) replaced group- based financial literacy training by supporting Credit Unions to provide 'personal financial mentoring' through field officers explaining products and services and providing household economic advice.

Source: ESN team elaboration, based on project documents and CSPE Indonesia (forthcoming)

86.   **Less attention is given to target groups as consumers.** Poor families struggle to provide nutritious food for the family throughout the year. They make choices between buying quality seeds versus using home stored seed, applying fertiliser and pesticides and trying to get by without, affording medical treatment or going without. Packaging nutritious goods in small affordable quantities is a measure to promote their accessibility. However, this study found no evidence of consideration of the poor as consumers.

Box 13
Promising ideas to advance targeting

Combining social protection with agriculture*: This is a relatively new approach for IFAD. FAO (2013) provided empirical evidence to support the development of such synergies.[1] The review of evidence demonstrates that cash transfers increase expenditure on agriculture, provide predictable payments which enable households to alleviate cashflow constraints and manage risk better (including not resorting to detrimental risk coping strategies such as forced sale of produce or agricultural assets). More recently, FAO has produced a series of briefs (with IFAD technical support) which describe and learn lessons from country case studies.[2]*

Revisiting community-based targeting (CBT). *CBT combined with participatory accountability is a promising approach to address the Agenda 2030 'leave no one behind' imperative. As pointed out by the literature review, evidence of the effectiveness of CBT is mixed. Nevertheless, it benefits from providing local legitimacy and draws on people's review of a range of dimensions of poverty (including history) which go beyond income and consumption measures. It provides assessment of intersectionality and has important potential for IFAD to use in addition to geographic targeting in order to meet the leave no one behind obligations.*

Moving from value chains to market systems to identify wider opportunities for targeting and inclusion*. As noted in the main text, value chains are one part of wider market systems and focusing only on these limits the identification of other ways in which poor people can benefit from positive change within market systems. USAID moved from a value chain (products to end consumer) focus to market systems specifically to achieve inclusive development.[3] A market systems lens enables review beyond direct engagement of poor people to analysis of how change in the market system may affect them (limiting negative effects and enhancing opportunities). The World Vision Market Systems Development Toolkit (2019) provides guidance to action this approach and specifically points out strategies to promote the inclusion of women.[4]*

Phone-based targeting; *This is a new development not yet used in IFAD but which is demonstrating promise as an effective and relatively quick means to identify poor households. The desk review noted the work of Blumenstock et al (2015)[5] which examined the mobile phone history of subscribers in Rwanda and concluded that a relatively effective wealth ranking index could be established this way. Subsequent studies by the same group (for example Aiken et al (2022)[6]) have shown that combined*

with machine learning (inputting conventional survey data), this approach can be more accurate than standard survey-based consumption and asset based methods. It is specially recommended where conventional targeting data is not available or is out of date, but depends on good penetration of household phone ownership and recent use and the willingness of mobile phone operators to share data. Households without phones which may indicate relatively higher poverty can of course also be identified this way.

Participatory Geographic Information Systems (GIS); *IFAD is already increasingly using GIS for a wide range of its activities including to inform design and to identify change in land use patterns, impact of interventions and risk (see for example, IFAD Catalogue of Geospatial Tools and Application for Climate Investments (2021);Mabiso et al, 2022).*[7] *To-date there is less evidence of GIS use within IFAD as a targeting tool except to identify geographic areas of climate vulnerability for universal targeting. However, combining IFAD's past experience of community (participatory) mapping with GIS offers a potentially effective means to collaborate with communities to refine targeting even to household level by opening up scrutiny of the assumptions and robustness of GIS data to the experiential knowledge of communities. Up to date and reliable GIS data is not always publicly available.*

Sources:[75]

Key points

- Assessment of targeting performance is constrained by a lack of: qualitative/quantitative data by different target groups; indicators to measure change for target groups (that matter to them); and, appropriate and practical surveys or other data collection methods used.

- Comparisons of the cost effectiveness of different intervention strategies for different target groups cannot be deduced because of the lack of clarity in target group specific pathways of change and disaggregated cost per beneficiary data.

- The effectiveness of IFAD's programme depends heavily on implementation by Government partners. However, capacity constraints are insufficiently addressed at start-up, in spite of the Guidelines available. Partnerships with different ministries and NGOs are often used to fill capacity gaps, although performance can vary.

- The imminent recruitment of a P4 Senior Technical Specialist on Targeting will be important to help strengthen targeting design and effectiveness.

- IFAD is successfully using targeting innovations including household-focused interventions and graduation approaches. In addition, there are promising ideas to advance targeting from outside of IFAD from which it can learn.

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[75] [1] Tirivayi, Nyasha, Marco Knowles and Benjamin Davis (2013) The Interaction between Social protection and Agriculture: A review of Evidence FAO; [2] FAO https://www.fao.org/social protection/resources/publications/briefs/en/ accessed June 2022; [3] https://www.marketlinks.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/Market_Systems_Framework.pdf, accessed June 2022; [4] World Vision 2019 Market Systems Development Toolkit; [5] Blumenstaocj J; G Cadamuro; and R.On (2015) Predicting poverty and wealth from mobile phone metadata . Science vol 350 issues 6264; [6] Aiken Email; Suzanna Bellue, Dean Karlan, Chris Udry and Joshua Blumenstock; Machine Learning and Phone Data can Improve Targeting of Humanitarian Aid; Nature, 2022 https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-022-04484-9 (accessed June 2022); [7] IFAD Catalogue of Geospatial Tools and Applications for Climate investments, 2021. Prepared for the ShareFair Event at COP26; Athur Mabiso, Patacchini, E, Savastrano, S and Sciabolazza, V.L. IFAD 2022

VI. Conclusions and lessons

A. Conclusions

87. **Targeting is central to IFAD's mandate and to realising its recognised comparative advantage**. The 2008 Policy and 2019 Revised Operational Guidelines endorse the centrality of targeting and provide strong rationale for targeting as a key principle of engagement, made explicit in past and present Strategic Frameworks. The 2019 Revised Operational Guidelines on Targeting update the targeting principles, bringing them more in line with Agenda 2030 and the imperative to leave no one behind.

88. **Three important issues concerning target groups in the Policy and Guidelines confuse the discourse on targeting in IFAD**. These are the lack of:

    i.   A clear distinction between target groups (rural poor people) and others who may benefit from IFAD investment (input suppliers, service providers, etc). The latter are provided assistance for their role in supporting provision of services for target groups.

    ii. A distinction between target groups and the principle of inclusion. Target groups are those for whom the project is mainly intended to benefit. Inclusion on the other hand is a principle which can be applied across project interventions and addresses the issues of access and equity. While it is accepted that specific actions may be required for excluded groups (such as through graduation approaches) efforts should be made to integrate these within the overall project ToC. Rather than creating parallel components for specific excluded or unreached groups as separate target groups, project design and implementation can address the challenge of making the core activities of projects more inclusive thereby endorsing principles of mainstream inclusion e.g. ethnic groups, persons with disabilities , young women etc.

    iii. A common definition of what the term vulnerable means.

89. **Furthermore, there is a gap between targeting theory and practice**; the intentions of the Policy and guidelines differ from their actual realisation. The imperative inherent in IFAD's claim to undertake "people-centred development" is not fully internalised and does not permeate throughout project cycles and action. For example, the quality of poverty, vulnerability and livelihoods analyses are weak and interviewees report they have worsened over time. Case studies suggest IFAD advocated participatory approaches are rarely used to refine definitions of target groups and sharpen interventions to respond to their needs. Likewise, few project ToCs define clear pathways of change for different target groups, as advised in different IFAD guidelines.

90. **Confusions and misinterpretations have been allowed to develop**. The most serious of these are those surrounding interpretation of the focus on 'active and productive poor' and the perceived corporate demands to address all priority groups in all projects. The study found that doubt exists about the capacity and opportunities that IFAD has to address the 'leave no one behind' intention, which is strongly supported in principle by IFAD. Guidance on this is insufficient and has resulted in project designs establishing separate components or merely paying lip service to these demands rather than critically exploring ways in which the core project intention can be enhanced to include and benefit priority groups and 'those left behind'.

91. **While targeting has improved in a number of ways, IFAD has not capitalised on the demands of Agenda 2030 to reflect critically with Governments on how to improve targeting further.** Achievements have been made with quotas and in some cases dedicated budgets for target groups. The

study shows that there is an increasing use of disaggregated data especially by gender and intentions in project designs to disaggregate by age and, where appropriate, ethnicity. However, much is still to be done. Promising practices of linking social protection with agriculture, graduation approaches and household-focused interventions exist in and outside of IFAD and can be built upon. The study notes that these require information, experience and skills (especially coaching and facilitation skills). These are often beyond the capacity of Departments of Agriculture and necessitate partnering with other government departments (especially social welfare), NGOs and other international agencies. Moreover, the project start-up period with Government implementers is not used to the extent necessary to share the principles and intentions of targeting and to discuss the target groups and how to reach and support them. Case study evaluations and interviews show there is also scope to improve the quality and timeliness of IFAD supervision of targeting.

92.   **The effectiveness of targeting as one of IFAD's core principles of engagement cannot currently be evaluated.** This is because target groups are not well and unambiguously defined; situational analysis is weak; clear target group specific pathways of change are not defined; context specific indicators of change disaggregated by suitably segmented target groups are not consistently used and monitoring and evaluation resources used by projects are weak. Cost-beneficiary assessments cannot be compared and even with a larger sample of projects for review little would be able to be deduced about what works well or how to improve targeting. While these deficiencies remain, IFAD can record outreach but will continue to be unable to evaluate its targeting approaches.

93.   **More effective use of resources is needed to make these vital improvements to targeting and to fill knowledge gaps.** Despite concerns raised in the study about constrained resources, some individuals (notably Country Directors) have found innovative ways to maintain a strong focus on targeting through establishing partnerships and using grants. The study raises the question of the need for large-scale household surveys which are both expensive and as case studies show often substandard and too late for corrective targeting action to be taken. The study notes promising experience of target group driven and managed M&E and points out that judicious use of small-scale qualitative evaluations with specific target groups throughout the project cycle may provide more useful and timely insights for improving targeting.

B.   Lessons

94.   Updating the Policy on Targeting is a timely opportunity to resolve confusions and make explicit IFAD's targeting intentions, its continuing comparative advantage and role in supporting governments to achieve the SDGs. The recruitment of a Senior Technical Specialist on Targeting is a positive step to bring about change at the operational level. The main lessons from this ESN on targeting in IFAD-supported projects are:

   i.   **Universal principles of targeting can be applied across IFAD's diverse portfolio.** Through re-emphasising that targeting rural poor people is at the heart of all IFAD's support to Governments and using the imperative to 'leave no one behind' (Agenda 2030) as leverage, IFAD can position itself as the financing institution to achieve this. Targeting principles and terminology for universal application can be articulated coherently across the portfolio regardless of project typology, thematic focus, country income status and non-sovereign arrangements.

   ii. **The launch of the updated policy can serve as a rallying point** to motivate IFAD personnel and implementing partners (Government, development partners, private sector and NGOs) to collaborate to improve the definition of target groups, to undertake deep contemporary and critical

situational analyses of target groups, develop target group specific pathways of change and ensure that outcomes for different target groups are adequately elaborated and measured. As some country directors have proven, even with resource and time constraints it is possible to access grants, innovate and draw on the diverse expertise among a constellation of partners to build robust knowledge of target groups and evaluate collaboratively what works for whom and how.

iii.   **The drift away from people-centred development can be reversed.** Where there is attention to, and qualitative improvement of, participatory processes (in targeting and participatory M&E) there is greater social accountability for IFAD investments. A renewed focus on participatory development can help re-set mindsets concerning the centrality of targeting rural poor people and endorse IFAD's position as a leader in empowering poor people and leaving no one behind. Where Governments own the idea of leaving no one behind and the importance of people-centred development to achieving this aim then better targeting outcomes are realised.

iv.   **Compliance culture is replacing thoughtful analysis and critical review of targeting.** Documentation requiring compliance includes SECAP, application of core indicators and demonstration of complaints and grievance mechanisms. Furthermore, there is widespread perception that projects need to address all priority groups and mainstreaming themes. These have supplanted critical engagement with the principles and application of good practice in targeting. Guidance and opportunities for critical analysis and the necessary skills and capacity for engagement of this kind need enhancing across IFAD and Government implementing agencies.

v.   **Evaluation (self and independent) of targeting needs to be rigorous and recommendations for improved targeting need to be demonstrated.** As weak M&E systems and capacity are persistently critiqued as limitations to understanding targeting and the effectiveness of channelling benefits to target groups, it is imperative that resources are prioritized to redress this. By so doing, IFAD's claims to targeting as a comparative advantage can be substantiated. The forthcoming revised Evaluation Manual emphasizes the importance of social justice and intersectionality thus providing impetus to bring this about.

IFAD target group definitions

Target area and people	2008 Targeting Policy	2019 Revised Operational Guidelines
Country level	- Developing countries	- Partner countries
Area	- Rural	- Rural
Poor people	- People living in poverty and experiencing food-insecurity and who are able to take advantage of opportunities ("productive/active poor") - Chronically poor	- People who are poor and vulnerable and have the potential to take advantage of improved access to assets and opportunities for agricultural production and rural income-generating activities
Vulnerable people	- Vulnerable to becoming poor because of risks and external shocks - The most vulnerable	
Poorest people	- Extremely poor people who have the potential to take advantage of improved access to assets and opportunities for agricultural production and rural income-generating activities - In some cases, they may be beyond reach of IFAD's instruments	- The poorest - For Those who cannot take advantage immediately, IFAD will promote a gradual approach to facilitate their access to resources and enable them to benefit from interventions in the future
Marginalized groups	- Minorities and indigenous peoples - Women including women-headed households	- Indigenous population - Ethnic minorities - Women - Youth - Persons with disabilities
Better-off people	- Better-off people	- Better-off groups

Source: IFAD 2008 Targeting Policy; 2019 Revised Operation Guidelines on Targeting

IFAD Targeting Principles

Area	2008 Targeting Policy	2019 Revised Operational Guidelines	Update/change
Target group	- Focus on rural people who are living in poverty and experiencing food insecurity, and who are able to take advantage of the opportunities to be offered;	- Targeting the poorest, the poor and the vulnerable rural people and those who are more likely to be left behind;	Emphasis and clarity to target the poorest, poor and vulnerable rural people.
	- Expand outreach to proactively include those who have fewer assets and opportunities, in particular extremely poor people as referred to in MDG 1;	- Empowering and building the capacity of those who have less of a voice and fewer assets;	
	- Include marginalized groups, such as minorities and indigenous peoples, and address their specific needs;		
Mainstreaming themes	- Address gender differences and have a special focus on women within all identified target groups, with particular attention to women heads of household, who are often especially disadvantaged;	- Mainstreaming gender, youth, nutrition and environmental and climate issues in the operationalization of the targeting process in COSOPs and projects;	Mainstreaming themes include youth, nutrition and environmental and climate issues (in addition to gender).
Nature of poverty	- Recognize that relative wealth or poverty can change rapidly due to external shocks and that this vulnerability needs to be addressed;	- Recognizing the dynamic nature of poverty and the importance of tackling the multiple forms of vulnerability;	Recognition of the importance to address intersectionality.
Targeting the better-off	- Clearly identify at the programme or project design stage who the intended target groups are and why, and consistently apply these categories, during implementation, in monitoring and evaluation of targeting performance. In the cases when better-off people need to be included, the rationale and justification should be provided, and risks of excessive benefit capture carefully monitored;	- Ensuring that working with relatively better-off stakeholders results in direct benefits for the poorest;	Shift focus from minimizing the risks of elite capture to ensuring direct benefits to the poorest.
Partnership & engagement approach	- Identify and work with like-minded partners at local, country, regional and international levels to develop a shared understanding of both the dynamics of rural poverty in different contexts and successful targeted approaches;	- Aligning targeting with government poverty reduction priorities, policies and strategies;	Strong emphasis on creating linkages to government policies and the need to implement participatory approach in targeting.
	- Pilot and share learning on successful approaches to targeting hard-to-reach groups;	- Testing innovative targeting approaches by strengthening existing partnerships and establishing new ones;	
	- Build innovative and complementary partnerships with actors that can reach target groups that IFAD cannot reach with the instruments at its disposal.	- Adopting consultative and participatory approaches to targeting.	

List of evaluation reports and project design reports used

Table 1. **IOE Project Performance Evaluations (PPEs)**

Country	Project ID	Region	Project name	Project type	Fragile*	Income status**	Publication year
Chad	1100001446	WCA	Pastoral Water and Resource Management Project in Sahelian Areas (PROHYPA)	Livestock	Yes	L	2018
Ghana	1100001312	WCA	Root and Tuber Improvement and Marketing Programme (RTIMP)	Rural Development	No	LM	2018
Morocco	1100001338	NEN	Rural Development Project in the Eastern Middle Atlas Mountains (PDRMO)	Agricultural Development	No	LM	2018
Belize	1100001456	LAC	Rural Finance Programme (BRFP)	Credit and Financial Services	No	UM	2019
Rwanda	1100001431	ESA	Kirehe Community-based Watershed Management Project (KWAMP)	Agricultural Development	No	L	2019
Haiti	1100001275	LAC	Small-scale Irrigation Development Project (PPI-2)	Irrigation	Yes	L	2020
Nepal	1100001119	APR	Western Uplands Poverty Alleviation Project (WUPAP)	Agricultural Development	No	L	2020
Bangladesh	1100001647	APR	Coastal Climate Resilient Infrastructure Project (CCRIP)	Rural Development	No	LM	2021
Malawi	1100001365	ESA	Rural Livelihoods and Economic Enhancement Programme (RLEEP)	Storage, processing and marketing	No	L	2021
Tajikistan	1100001408	NEN	Khatlon Livelihoods Support Project (KLSP)	Rural Development	No	L	2021

* Based on IOE ARRI 2021 classification which referred to the World Bank's Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations (FCSs) annual list. A country is classified as FCS (fragile=Yes) if (i) the country was on the World Bank's FCSs lists for more than half of the project implementation period; or (ii) the country was on the World Bank's 2020 list of countries with fragile and conflict-affected situations and specifically in the category "countries affected by violent conflict".

** Based on World Bank's country classification by income. For projects of which country classification change over projects implementation period, the income status that appear for more than half of the project implementation period is used.

Table 2. **IOE Impact Evaluations (IEs) since 2018**

Country	Project ID	Region	Project name	Publication Year
Kenya	1100001330	ESA	Smallholder Horticulture Marketing Programme (SHoMaP)	2018
Niger	1100001625	WCA	Food Security and Development Support Project in the Maradi Region (PASADEM)	2019
Ethiopia	1100001424	ESA	Community-based Integrated Natural Resources Management Project (CBINReMP)	2021

Table 3. **IOE higher-level evaluation reports**

Title	Evaluation Type*	Main theme	Publication Year
What works for gender equality and women's empowerment –a review of practices and results	ES	Gender equality and women's empowerment	2017
IFAD's support to livelihoods involving aquatic resources from small-scale fisheries, small-scale aquaculture and coastal zones	ES	Fisheries and aquaculture	2018
Inclusive financial services for the rural poor	ES	Inclusive financial services	2019
IFAD's Engagement in Pro-poor Value Chain Development	CLE	Pro-poor Value Chain development	2019
Technical Innovations for Rural Poverty Reduction	ES	Technical Innovations	2019
Community-driven development in IFAD-supported projects	ES	Community-driven development	2020
IFAD's support to innovations for inclusive and sustainable smallholder agriculture	CLE	Innovations	2020
Infrastructure at IFAD (2001-2019)	ES	Infrastructure	2021
Government performance in IFAD-supported operations	ES	Government performance	forthcoming
Thematic Evaluation of IFAD's Support for Smallholder Farmers' Adaptation to Climate Change	TE	Climate Change Adaptation	forthcoming
Sub-Regional Evaluation of countries with fragile situations in IFAD-WCA: Learning from experiences of IFAD's Engagement in the G5 Sahel Countries and Northern Nigeria.	SRE	Fragility	forthcoming
Project cluster evaluation on Rural enterprise development	PCE	Rural enterprise	forthcoming

* CLE – Corporate-level evaluation; ES – Evaluation synthesis; PCE – Project cluster evaluation; SRE – Sub-regional evaluation; TE – Thematic evaluation

Table 4. **IFAD Project Design Reports (approved by the Executive Board in 2021) reviewed**

Country	Project ID	Region	Project name	Project type	Fragile*	Income status**
Argentina	2000001530	LAC	Promotion of Resilient and Sustainable Agrifood Systems for Family Farming Programme (PROSAF)	Rural Development	No	UM
Congo	2000001040	WCA	Agriculture, youth and entrepreneurship project (PAJE)	Storage, processing and marketing	Yes	LM
Haiti	2000002247	LAC	Inclusive Blue Economy Project (I-BE)	Agricultural Development	Yes	L
Kenya	2000003431	ESA	Rural Kenya Financial Inclusion Facility (RK-FINFA)	Credit and Financial Services	No	LM
Kyrgyzstan	2000001978	NEN	Regional Resilient Pastoral Communities Project (RRPCP)	Credit and Financial Services	No	LM
Pakistan	2000002333	APR	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural Economic Transformation Project (KP-RETP)	Rural Development	No	LM
Senegal	2000002666	WCA	Agriculture and Livestock Competitiveness Program For Results (PCAE-PforR)	Agricultural Development	No	LM
Tajikistan	2000002204	NEN	Community-based Agricultural Support Project 'plus' (CASP+)	Rural Development	No	L
Viet Nam	2000002335	APR	Climate Smart Agricultural Value Chain Development in Ben Tre and Tra Vinh Provinces (CSAT)	Credit and Financial Services	No	LM
Zimbabwe	2000002341	ESA	Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project (SACP)	Credit and Financial Services	Yes	LM

* Based the World Bank's Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations (FCSs) annual list. A country is classified as FCS (fragile=Yes) if the country was on the World Bank's 2021 FCS list.
** Based on the 2021 World Bank's country classification by income.

List of key people met

IFAD Staff

Antao Rahul, Professional Officer –Rural Youth

Antonella Cordone, Senior Technical Specialist –Nutrition and Social Inclusion and former and ad-interim Senior Technical Specialist –Indigenous Peoples and Tribal Issues

Elizabeth Ssendiwala, Senior Regional Technical Specialist on Rural Institutions and former Regional Gender and Social Inclusion Officer

Francisco Pichon, Head of the Mekong Hub and Country Director for Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand, and Viet Nam and former Country Director in LAC and ESA

Marie-Aude Even, Senior Regional Technical Specialist in Agronomy

Matteo Marchisio, Head of the East Asia Regional Hub and South-South Cooperation Center, and Country Director for China, Republic of Korea, and Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Mikael Kauttu, Country Director for Tajikistan and Bosnia Herzegovina

Ndaya Beltchika, Lead Technical Specialist, Gender and Social Inclusion

Norman Messer, Country Director for Chad and Mali

Philippe Remy, Country Director for Libya, Montenegro, Tunisia and former Country Director in WCA

Steven Jonckheere, Senior Technical Specialist –Gender and Social Inclusion

Thomas Rath, Lead Advisor, Operational Policy and Programme Delivery Risk, and former Country Director in ESA and APR

IFAD Consultants

Ambra Gallina, Poverty Targeting and Social Inclusion consultant

Chiqui Arregui Gorman, Senior Social Development consultant

Rodica Weitzman, Gender and Social Inclusion consultant

In addition, the evaluation team met other IFAD staff and consultants and listened to their views during two key events:

i)   seminar on the literature review on Targeting of the Poor and Ultra-Poor by Professor Tauhidur Rahman, with 113 participants from a variety of divisions and locations around the world; and,

ii)   workshop on the ESN emerging findings with 21 participants including members of the IFAD Policy Reference Group on Targeting who are supporting the updating of the Targeting Policy.

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