
**Midterm review of IFAD's Disability Inclusion
Strategy 2022–2027**
**Management's response to Member States'
comments**

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| Comments from Finland | |
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| <p>As a donor to UNDIS [United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy], Finland considers that IFAD's Disability Inclusion Strategy (2022–2027) remains highly relevant and aligned with UNDIS benchmarks. It is good to recognize the importance of the UNDIS framework in implementing disability inclusion in IFAD. Progress is evident: UNDIS indicators improved significantly (from 2 met in 2021 to 4 exceeded and 6 met by 2024), and disability inclusion is increasingly integrated into operations and workplace culture. Leadership commitment and partnerships (e.g. SPARK initiative) have been strong enablers.</p> | |
| <p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Management advocacy and global visibility; 7 new projects prioritizing persons with disabilities - 21.8% of portfolio now inclusive; <p>Development of reasonable accommodation guidelines and DEI training uptake.</p> | |
| <p>Challenges:</p> <p>No dedicated disability inclusion staff - reliance on focal points limits depth;</p> <p>Accessibility gaps: baseline assessment pending;</p> <p>ICT and decentralized offices need attention.</p> <p>Disability inclusion in projects often lacks concrete strategies, resources, and monitoring tools;</p> <p>Disability-disaggregated data remains scarce;</p> <p>Low completion rates for non-mandatory disability training - need for practical guidance and technical support.</p> | |
| Further questions | Management response |
| How will IFAD address the lack of dedicated disability inclusion staff and expertise? | <p>IFAD recognizes the need to strengthen its internal capacity on disability inclusion and is taking concrete steps to address gaps within the context of a flat budget environment. In 2025, IFAD recruited a full-time consultant to support the disability inclusion workstream, and options to further reinforce internal capacity are being explored – for example through the hiring of a Junior Professional Officer.</p> <p>In parallel, IFAD will continue to scale up capacity-building and knowledge-exchange opportunities for staff. Webinars held in September and October 2025 to disseminate lessons from field implementation are part of a broader effort to strengthen technical skills and awareness across the Fund.</p> <p>Partnerships with specialized organizations and United Nations agencies – including Light for the World International, the International Labour Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) – will remain central. These collaborations provide access to</p> |

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| | technical expertise and practical solutions, helping to mitigate current limitations in dedicated in-house expertise while IFAD continues to expand staff capacities. |
| Further questions | Management response |
| What reasonable accommodations is IFAD ready to do in terms of ICT and when to enable persons with disabilities to be recruited as staff? | <p>IFAD is committed to ensuring an inclusive workplace by providing reasonable accommodations in ICT and the workplace to enable the recruitment and effective participation of persons with disabilities. This includes accessible software and hardware, assistive technologies and adaptations to workstations and communication tools. Accommodations are provided on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the specific needs of each staff member or candidate, and implemented as early as possible in the recruitment process to ensure equal access.</p> <p>IFAD's reasonable accommodation guidelines are at the final consultation stage. They detail efforts to attract and recruit persons with disabilities. Following the launch of these guidelines, a pilot collaboration with United Nations Volunteers (UNV) will enable persons with disabilities to be recruited for specific assignments.</p> |
| What is the timeline for completing the baseline accessibility assessment across all offices? | <p>The baseline accessibility assessment for headquarters is scheduled for 2026 and will be carried out by an external specialized entity. This ensures a technically robust, comparable and scalable methodology, particularly in the absence of a universally adopted standard for assessing built-environment accessibility across the United Nations system.</p> <p>An internal self-assessment has already been conducted for all offices – most recently updated in October 2025. But this tool provides only preliminary indications and does not replace the need for an external assessment to ensure methodological rigor and a harmonized reference framework. IFAD is in the final stages of identifying the external partner and will be ready to start the headquarters assessment as soon as operationally feasible in 2026.</p> <p>Once the headquarters assessment is completed, the focus will shift to two areas:</p> <p>Implementation of improvement measures at headquarters.</p> <p>The assessment will provide clarity on required interventions, including timelines, costs and feasibility, so that recommendations can be translated into concrete actions without delay.</p> <p>Development of a practical and context-sensitive approach for decentralized offices.</p> <p>IFAD country offices operate in highly diverse settings. In some locations, IFAD occupies only a small space within a multi-tenant building where structural</p> |

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| | <p>modifications may not be possible. Building on the headquarters results, and with support from the external partner, a scalable model will be developed that is adaptable to diverse conditions while ensuring consistent evaluation criteria. Given these steps, the timeline for completing all office assessments will depend on: the methodological adaptations required for decentralized offices; and operational constraints in each context. The process will begin in 2026, starting with headquarters and expanding to IFAD country offices in a phased approach.</p> |
| <p>How will IFAD ensure systematic collection and use of disability-disaggregated data and <i>its use</i> in project design, monitoring and implementation?</p> | <p>Following the midterm review, IFAD is taking steps to strengthen the systematic collection and use of disability-disaggregated data. The Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division (ECG) has initiated a series of briefings with regional offices to clarify requirements and identify practical, context-appropriate solutions for improving data collection in projects that target persons with disabilities.</p> <p>IFAD is developing a checklist and complementary guidance to support supervision and implementation support missions, ensuring more consistent monitoring and reporting.</p> <p>A first dedicated mission will take place in December 2025 in Ethiopia (Participatory Agriculture and Climate Transformation [PACT] Programme), providing technical assistance to the project management unit. This mission will also help to establish a model for future support on disability inclusion across regions in 2026.</p> |
| <p>What mechanisms will be introduced to increase uptake of disability-related training and embed it in performance systems?</p> | <p>IFAD will strengthen incentives for staff to complete disability-related training by linking relevant learning opportunities more directly with performance discussions and professional development plans.</p> <p>A dedicated performance evaluation system objective on disability inclusion has been designed and is expected to be used by disability focal points, ensuring that a defined portion of their time and specific deliverables on disability inclusion are reflected in their performance objectives.</p> <p>Division and departmental directors will continue to encourage staff to complete disability-related training, following the approach used for other non-mandatory but strategic learning areas. Completion rates will be monitored annually to support broader uptake and ensure that disability inclusion is progressively embedded in staff development processes.</p> |
| <p>How will IFAD scale up targeted initiatives like SPARK and secure sustainable</p> | <p>A new dedicated grant (Scaling Up Disability Inclusive Transformation in East and Southern Africa [SPARK II-ESA]) will be submitted for online review by the Executive</p> |

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| funding for disability-inclusive programming? | Board starting from 11 December 2025. This grant aims to consolidate and scale up the results achieved by the original SPARK initiative, focusing on East and Southern Africa while creating opportunities for learning and knowledge generation to benefit IFAD's broader portfolio. Dissemination of SPARK experiences through knowledge-sharing events (e.g. two webinars in September and October 2025), the new knowledge materials and increased engagement of ECG staff in supporting disability inclusion are expected to facilitate the adoption of SPARK-tested approaches in new projects, including those supported by climate funds (as exemplified in Malawi). |
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