Midterm review of the IFAD South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) Strategy 2022–2027

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Action: The Executive Board is invited to review the midterm review of the IFAD South-South and Triangular Cooperation Strategy 2022–2027.

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Executive summary

1. IFAD's South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) Strategy 2022–2027 is aimed at: (i) systematically identifying and disseminating knowledge and innovation; and (ii) supporting policy engagement to increase the productive capacities, market access and resilience of rural people. The strategy calls for an overall assessment of SSTC to be undertaken at completion of the Twelfth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD12), with adjustments to the strategy to be made prior to IFAD13.[1] This is the purpose of the present midterm review (MTR).

2. This MTR was carried out through interviews, a desk review of relevant documents, and a survey among IFAD staff and SSTC beneficiaries. It revealed growing recognition of SSTC as a complementary implementation modality. It also showed IFAD's comparative advantage in the area of SSTC, linked to its mandate, business model and partnerships, with a sound corporate architecture to leverage this comparative advantage.

3. Shortcomings were identified in the strategy's theory of change (ToC) and its results measurement framework (RMF), leading to a proposal to revise both.

4. **Key findings:**

    *   **Objective 1.** Ninety-five per cent of IFAD country strategic opportunities programmes approved between 2022 and 2024 explicitly integrate SSTC with a view to promoting knowledge-sharing at the country programme and project level. However, SSTC integration within projects remains inconsistent, largely due to a lack of dedicated resources.

    *   **Objective 2.** IFAD-supported institutions (e.g. PROCASUR,[2] Morocco's Centre of Excellence for Agricultural South-South Cooperation, the China-IFAD SSTC Facility) effectively facilitated policy dialogue and knowledge transfer. Synergies with other IFAD portfolios such as knowledge management, information and communications technologies for development (ICT4D) and the private sector could be strengthened to further promote enabling policies.

    *   **Partnerships.** IFAD has SSTC partnerships with Brazil, China, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and various international institutions. Rome-based agency collaboration has improved, but is hampered by inconsistent joint strategic planning for SSTC and a lack of funding, thereby limiting knowledge-sharing within country programmes and projects.

    *   **Funding constraints.** SSTC initiatives rely primarily on limited supplementary funding. While some country programmes, such as in Brazil, successfully embedded SSTC financially, overall funding remains inconsistent and insufficient.

    *   **Institutional structure.** The SSTC Unit was, until September 2024, positioned within IFAD's Global Engagement, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Division. Its recent move to the front office of the Department for Country Operations is likely to improve the integration of SSTC in country operations and in the programme of loans and grants.

    *   **Monitoring and evaluation (M&E).** The strategy's ToC and RMF lack coherence and clarity, limiting the systematic tracking of outcomes. IFAD's corporate SSTC monitoring system remains underdeveloped.

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[1] Organizational changes led to a delay in the preparation of the MTR.
[2] The Corporation for Regional Rural Development Training (PROCASUR), originally the Regional Programme for Rural Development Training in Latin America, has grown into a global organization specializing in knowledge management for rural innovation.

- **Risk management.** SSTC activities remained mostly ad hoc and scattered, despite efforts towards a more structured prioritization.

5. **Action points:**

- **Revise the RMF** for the SSTC Strategy so that it clearly aligns outputs, outcomes and indicators to enhance SSTC effectiveness and accountability.

- **Integrate SSTC into IFAD operations** through structured annual regional plans, supported by specialized toolkits, guidelines, advisory services and capacity-building for country teams.

- **Clarify the institutional architecture** through a clearer definition of roles, responsibilities and reporting lines for SSTC staff.

- Encourage Member States to contribute to the **SSTC funding base** through supplementary funds.

- **Revitalize the interdepartmental working group on SSTC** to strengthen corporate learning, internal coordination and the alignment of SSTC with IFAD's priorities.

- Integrate **SSTC M&E** into existing operational and reporting systems (e.g. the Operational Results Management System), facilitating data capture in alignment with the revised RMF.

Midterm review of the IFAD South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) Strategy 2022–2027

I. Introduction

A. Background

1. During the Consultation on the Twelfth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD12), the Fund committed to developing a comprehensive SSTC Strategy for the period 2022–2027. This strategy, adopted by the IFAD Executive Board in December 2021, sought to help double and deepen IFAD's impact by: (i) systematically identifying and disseminating knowledge and innovation at the country programme and project level; and (ii) supporting policy engagement to increase the productive capacity, market access and resilience of rural people. Its design was informed by lessons learned from the 2016 SSTC approach.[3]

2. The strategy's ToC assumed that by creating an enabling environment and providing better support for SSTC in its operations, IFAD could leverage opportunities to broker knowledge and innovation for rural transformation, with a focus on partnerships. It noted opportunities to meet demand from Member States at different levels of development, including upper-middle-income countries (UMICs). Within IFAD, the ToC underlined the need to strengthen staff capacity and incentives; to take a more systematic approach to mobilizing financial resources from diverse sources; and to generate, distil and disseminate knowledge and innovations from operations to support development cooperation between Member States.

3. The strategy covers two replenishment cycles (IFAD12 and IFAD13). The Fund's IFAD12 midterm review[4] examined SSTC performance (paras. 73–77). The assessment of IFAD's SSTC programme was positive overall, although shortcomings were noted, such as narrow funding flows and insufficient integration of SSTC as an implementation modality within the programme of loans and grants (PoLG).

4. The strategy indicated that, upon completion of IFAD12 (at the end of 2024), an overall assessment of SSTC and results would be undertaken and a decision would be made on adjustments to the strategy.[5] This is the purpose of the present midterm review (MTR), which takes account of IFAD's existing and emerging context, identifying opportunities and risks and recommending adjustments. It is important to note that the MTR is not an evaluation of IFAD's SSTC portfolio per se.

B. Methodology

5. The MTR is a rapid assessment based on a desk review of relevant documents, analysis of quantitative data provided by the SSTC Unit and interviews and focus group discussions with stakeholders at the corporate, regional and country levels. Corporate reports were also reviewed, including the Annual Report on the Independent Evaluation of IFAD (ARIE), the Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE), the Midterm review of the IFAD Knowledge Management Strategy 2019–2025: A Knowledge Strategy Refresh, and evaluations by the

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[3] These lessons emphasized the need to: (i) diversify funding sources; (ii) invest in cross-departmental collaboration; (iii) redefine SSTC-related roles and responsibilities within the context of IFAD's decentralization; (iv) enable and incentivize staff; (v) better integrate SSTC into country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) and the PoLG; (vi) design an appropriate institutional monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for SSTC; (vii) adapt the Fund's development cooperation support activities to the characteristics of the target countries (least developed countries, lower-middle-income countries, upper-middle-income countries); (viii) strengthen the Fund's engagement with the Rome-based agencies (RBAs) and international financial institutions (IFIs).
[4] IFAD13/1/R.2/Rev.1.
[5] EB 2021/134/R.8.

Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD. Comprehensive questionnaires were administered to staff in IFAD country offices and to beneficiaries of IFAD's SSTC initiatives.

II. Context

A. The growing importance of SSTC

6. **SSTC in global development**. Development cooperation among countries of the Global South has expanded steadily. Governments in low- and middle-income countries have shown growing interest in exchanging solutions for rural transformation, food security and poverty reduction. Many countries that were former beneficiaries of development assistance have established cooperation agencies to support other countries.[6] This momentum has been aided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation,[7] both of which highlight partnerships and encourage more systematic sharing of experience, technology, and knowledge among developing countries. All persons interviewed underlined the importance of SSTC as a complementary implementation modality and expressed the conviction that SSTC will gain in significance in a changing international environment, especially in the Global South.[8]

7. **Demand for SSTC.** Demand for SSTC has grown significantly among IFAD's Member States, particularly UMICs. Countries in this category, which still have pockets of rural poverty, are interested in becoming providers of SSTC, sharing and learning from other developing nations. They seek technical assistance, policy advice and knowledge exchange as well as traditional financial aid. SSTC is thus an additional instrument for IFAD to enhance its relevance in these countries, enabling them to share their development experiences. In the face of varied demand across regions and countries, IFAD must adopt a flexible and context-specific approach when implementing SSTC.

8. **SSTC at IFAD.** At IFAD, SSTC refers to the exchange of knowledge, skills and/or resources among two or more developing countries. These exchanges may consist of:

   - **Knowledge-sharing and policy exchange**. Organizing workshops, policy dialogues, study visits, learning routes and collaborative research to exchange innovations and best practices.

   - **Technical assistance.** Supporting the deployment of expertise and technologies to strengthen the capacities of smallholder farmers and rural institutions.

   - **Business collaboration.** Facilitating private sector partnerships and fostering cross-border economic cooperation through matchmaking and joint ventures.

   - **Trade facilitation.** Supporting market access through policy guidance, trade exhibitions and partnerships for certification.

9. **IFAD has a specific comparative advantage in SSTC**, resulting from its proximity to rural communities and its wide network of partnerships at the country and international levels; its commitment to development effectiveness anchored in evidence and learning; and its focus on innovation, among other elements. As a

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[6] For example, Algeria, Brazil, China, Cuba, Egypt, India, Mexico, Morocco and Türkiye, which, among many others, have established dedicated development cooperation while continuing to benefit from North-South cooperation.
[7] https://www.unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/N1911172.pdf.
[8] The term "Global South" can be understood as a less discriminatory synonym for "developing countries"; the latter term comprises, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2025) – Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia without Israel, Japan and the Republic of Korea, and Oceania without Australia and New Zealand.

United Nations specialized agency, IFAD can benefit from learning and sharing experiences with United Nations funds, programmes and agencies. As an IFI, IFAD can leverage its capacity to mobilize and deploy finance for investments in rural areas through SSTC – for example, by mobilizing cofinancing from developing countries for IFAD-funded projects, raising dedicated funds for SSTC from List B and C countries[9] and facilitating business-to-business linkages.

10. **IFAD has institutionalized SSTC as a priority** in its Strategic Framework 2016–2025, and it has been identified as a corporate priority since IFAD10.[10] IFAD's institutional structures, including SSTC Centres, the China-IFAD SSTC Facility, and the Rural Solutions Portal, have evolved to facilitate effective South-South exchanges. Despite these advancements, IFAD continues to face challenges in securing funding, integrating SSTC into country programmes and monitoring the implementation of such cooperation.

11. **Decentralization and expanded country presence**. IFAD's ongoing decentralization and recalibration have brought the Fund closer to beneficiaries and local partners, enabling quicker identification of best practices that can be shared among countries. Regional offices and the SSTC Centres are playing an important role in facilitating this cooperation modality. At the same time, decentralization has heightened the need for greater staff capacity, clarity in roles with regard to SSTC and practical tools to align SSTC activities with regional and country-level priorities.

B. Assessing the strategy for the midterm review

12. It is important to note that some aspects of the strategy complicated its review. In particular, the theory of change (ToC) is presented both as a narrative and as a diagram, with some inconsistencies between the two. Moreover, the ToC does not fully flesh out the second objective of the strategy (policy engagement). The relationship between the ToC and the strategy's RMF is not straightforward, as the ToC diagram outlines five outcomes, whereas the RMF includes three outcome-level indicators, two of which are actually related to ToC outputs. Most of the ToC outcomes are not covered by any RMF indicator. At the output level, two ToC outputs are not reflected in the RMF indicators (specifically, "special SSTC initiatives" and "policy exchanges and seminars organized"), while one RMF indicator ("IFAD staff trained in SSTC-related capacities") was not linked to any ToC output but rather to the narrative in paragraph 27 of the strategy. Finally, of the nine indicators included in the RMF, seven lacked baselines, six lacked targets and six had neither baselines nor targets.

13. Given these limitations, the MTR did not rely solely on the ToC and the RMF but also assessed progress against the key implementation areas of the strategy.

III. Findings

A. Progress against the thematic pillars of the ToC

Pillar 1. Knowledge-sharing: Scaling up Southern solutions across programmes

14. **Mainstreaming SSTC has promoted Southern development solutions across IFAD's country strategies.** In line with the IFAD12 target of 90 per cent of country strategies integrating dedicated SSTC components, 21 out of 22 approved COSOPs incorporated dedicated narratives on SSTC. These COSOPs[11] highlight potential partnerships with Brazil, China, Kenya and other countries for the

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[9] The Fund's Member States are classified as follows: List A (primarily contributing developed countries); List B (primarily contributing developing countries); and List C (potential recipient countries).
[10] GC 38/L.4/Rev.1. Under IFAD10 the Fund committed to ensuring that at least 50 per cent of all new COSOPs included a reference to SSTC. This indicator has now been raised to 100 per cent.
[11] The following COSOPs approved in 2022 have made reference to partnership with Brazil, China or Kenya for SSTC: Burundi (2022–2027); Cambodia (2022–2027); Eswatini (2022–2027); Malawi (2023–2030); Pakistan (2023–2027); United Republic of Tanzania (2022–2027); Uzbekistan (2023–2027).

exchange of agricultural practices, technology transfer and policy development to address local needs. To institutionalize integration of the SSTC modality, IFAD developed guidelines in 2019 (updated in 2023) to support country teams in identifying opportunities to adopt, adapt or share context-specific Southern expertise during country strategy design.

15. **Integration of SSTC into 95 per cent of COSOPs has supported its inclusion into investment projects.** Twenty-five approved loans incorporated SSTC as a delivery modality, with 10 allocating dedicated budgets for activities such as peer learning and capacity-building.[12] IFAD projects in West and Central Africa have collaborated with projects in the other regions to share digital innovation tools, agroecological practices and strategies for institutional strengthening. As an example, regular study visits are organized to the Kenya Cereal Enhancement Programme – Climate-Resilient Agricultural Livelihoods Window (KCEP-CRAL) to learn about its innovative e-voucher solution.[13]

16. **However, inclusion of SSTC in investment projects remains uneven**. Some project design documents mention SSTC without detailing how Southern solutions align with their ToC or contribute to outcomes. Others lack dedicated resources to operationalize knowledge exchange, missing out on opportunities for scaling up. To maximize impact, IFAD might adopt a standardized framework – like those for climate, gender, nutrition or youth mainstreaming – to ensure that SSTC narratives in the PoLG are designed to identify, adapt and scale up Southern solutions in alignment with operational goals.

17. **IFAD has expanded its knowledge-sharing engagements to disseminate Southern expertise**. Complementing its investment portfolio, the China-IFAD SSTC Facility enabled over 200 capacity-building workshops and exchange visits, and produced 111 knowledge products to codify best practices.[14] Additionally, between 2023 and 2024, based on government requests, IFAD organized more than 40 exchanges on topics ranging from sustainable land management and digital agriculture to cocoa and dairy production, fostering demand-driven peer learning across regions. Although these initiatives were not all linked to ongoing investments, they have complemented IFAD's efforts in support of rural development in the target countries.

18. The Midterm review of the IFAD Knowledge Management Strategy 2019–2025: A Knowledge Strategy Refresh[15] noted that "there has also been a positive trend towards incorporating knowledge and learning into thematic areas and strategies, such as the Development Effectiveness Framework and the South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) Strategy 2022–2027", thereby acknowledging the interaction and mutually strengthening relationship between SSTC and knowledge management (KM).

19. **The Rural Solutions Portal,** launched in 2018, featured 118 solutions by the end of 2024, including 12 published under IFAD12.[16] These solutions, sourced from IFAD's operations and through partnerships, have been integrated into IFAD's country strategies. For instance, the hydroponic fodder production solution,[17] incorporated as a potential solution in Uzbekistan's COSOP, has demonstrated practical application across diverse contexts.[18] IFAD's promotion of the portal in global forums has led to a significant increase in website visits, with the number

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[12] A list of approved investment projects which integrate an SSTC element is included in appendix III.
[13] List of countries engaged in learning experience with the e-voucher system.
[14] China–IFAD SSTC Facility progress report. 2023. https://www.ifad.org/documents/48415603/49744418/China-IFAD_SSTC_Facility_Report_2023+final+version.pdf/11313766-5980-48de-fee3-09418fd9339f?t=1726641530933.
[15] EB 2022/136/R.17.
[16] https://ruralsolutionsportal.org/en/.
[17] A solution supported by the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and piloted in the IFAD Promoting Agricultural Commercialization and Enterprises (PACE) project in Bangladesh.
[18] https://www.ifad.org/en/w/corporate-documents/regions-countries/uzbekistan-country-strategic-opportunities-programme-2023-2027.

rising from 10,000 in 2019 to 25,000 in 2023.[19] This highlights the portal's relevance for sharing and scaling Southern solutions across IFAD's programmes and beyond.

Pillar 2. Policy engagement: Creating a conducive environment for rural development

20. **Policy engagement has helped establish specialized institutions** that promote SSTC. For instance, the IFAD grant-funded Corporation for Regional Rural Development Training (PROCASUR), launched in Latin America, has grown into a global organization specializing in knowledge management for rural innovation, contributing to 15 regional exchanges between 2022 and 2024 alone. Similarly, IFAD's support in establishing the Centre of Excellence for Agricultural South-South Cooperation in Morocco facilitates the sharing of successful agricultural practices and digital solutions across Africa, inspiring countries such as Madagascar to adopt an agriculture orientation law that strengthens private sector linkages with smallholder farmers.[20] These examples demonstrate how institutional strengthening through SSTC fosters long-term sustainability and scalability of development solutions.

21. **The China-IFAD SSTC Facility has helped promote enabling policies across IFAD's country portfolios.** For instance, in the United Republic of Tanzania, dialogues and a brief[21] under the Supporting and Strengthening Community Resilience in Tanzania (SSUCORETA) project[22] have helped codify cross-border trade regulations for cassava and sunflower oil to improve regional market access for smallholder farmers. In Cuba, a China-IFAD SSTC Facility-supported project[23] enhanced climate risk management capacities, reduced drought-related vulnerabilities and implemented complementary local disaster risk reduction strategies, strengthening the capacities of government officials.[24] Overall, from 2022 to 2024, China-IFAD SSTC Facility-supported projects held over 30 policy dialogue events on topics such as water use, climate resilience and farmer-led value chain development.

Pillar 3. Partnerships: Diversifying collaboration in support of the SSTC portfolio

22. **The facility has also enabled over 30 partnerships** via technical exchanges, capacity-building and rural investment initiatives; including business-to-business linkages. IFAD has also established partnerships with the China International Development Cooperation Agency and the Multilateral Cooperation Centre for Development Finance, facilitated by the SSTC and Knowledge Centre in China.

23. **IFAD has diversified collaborations with Southern countries and specialized institutions.** Over the MTR period, IFAD entered into SSTC-related agreements with, inter alia, the Brazilian Cooperation Agency, the Presidential Agency for International Cooperation of Colombia and the Islamic Development Bank. These partnerships have expanded IFAD's scope of technical cooperation, facilitating knowledge exchange and technical assistance in agricultural development. Collaboration with agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

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[19] Information from Google Analytics data gathered in collaboration with the IFAD information technology team.
[20] Kingdom of Morocco country strategy and programme evaluation. EC 2021/113/W.P.5.
[21] Laizer, et al. 2024. Unlocking the cassava treasure: a path to elevate export revenues in Tanzania. Dar es Salaam. International Institute of Tropical Agriculture.
[22] SSUCORETA aims to improve agricultural production and market access for smallholder farmers, particularly cassava and sunflower farmers.
[23] Factsheet – supporting local solutions toward a more resilient and sustainable local food system in Cuba. https://www.ifad.org/documents/48415603/49745503/sstcf-cuba-factsheet.pdf/9fe865f7-d21d-b17e-c047-4202afffd3d8?t=1738860790728.
[24] China-IFAD South-South and Triangular Cooperation Facility Annual Progress Report 2023.

Development (OECD) have helped mobilize knowledge from Southern sources and supported the promotion of IFAD's SSTC portfolio at global events, including the Global South-South Development Expo in Thailand in 2022 and OECD's annual International Meeting on Triangular Cooperation.

24. **Headquarters and field collaboration among the RBAs**. RBA collaboration on initiatives such as the local cassava flour project in the Republic of the Congo[25] and social protection interventions in Cuba,[26] working with partners from Africa and China, reflect a strategic alignment, leveraging each agency's comparative strengths. The RBAs have begun a joint home-grown school feeding (HGSF) initiative[27] which has attracted interest from Brazil, with two notable outcomes: (i) a supplementary funds commitment of US$3 million to support South-South collaboration on HGSF; and (ii) the inclusion of this partnership as one of the commitments in the 2030 Smallholder and Family Farming Sprint of Brazil's Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty.[28]

B. Progress against key areas for the implementation of the strategy

25. The strategy specified four focus areas for its implementation: (i) securing appropriate and diversified financing; (ii) enhancing IFAD's institutional architecture for SSTC; (iii) establishing a robust M&E framework; and (iv) risk monitoring and management.

Key area 1. Securing appropriate and diversified financing

26. **Supplementary funding remains the primary financial resource for SSTC within IFAD.** Efforts to diversify and expand financial streams have seen some progress. Notably, the Government of China approved a second tranche of US$10 million for the China-IFAD SSTC Facility, and the Government of Brazil committed US$3 million for the joint RBA programme on home-grown school feeding (see paragraph 29). Additional funds were secured from other partners, including the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)[29] and Colombia.[30]

27. **However, the volume, specific scope and complex administrative procedures for these funding sources limit their flexibility to address the diversity of SSTC initiatives.** The facility's decision-making process was perceived as complex, especially considering the relatively small size of its grants (maximum US$0.5 million), entailing disproportionally high administrative overhead costs. New implementation guidelines addressing some of these limitations and challenges are currently being designed for the second phase of the facility.

28. **Under IFAD12, several country programmes leveraged investment loans to operationalize SSTC.** Ten of the 25 projects integrating SSTC allocated specific budgets for related activities. Examples include Brazil, with over US$2.7 million in loan resources across two projects, and Zambia, which dedicated US$1 million to facilitate South-South exchanges. However, funding allocations for SSTC vary

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[25] https://www.ifad.org/en/w/rural-voices/rome-based-agencies-establish-sstc-collaboration-to-benefit-cassava-production-in-the-congo.
[26] https://www.ifad.org/documents/48415603/49745503/sstcf-cuba-factsheet.pdf/9fe865f7-d21d-b17e-c047-4202afffd3d8?t=1738860790728.
[27] https://www.ifad.org/en/w/publications/rome-based-agencies-joint-initiative-for-home-grown-school-feeding.
[28] https://globalallianceagainsthungerandpoverty.org/new/2030-smallholder-and-family-farming-sprint-press-release/.
[29] In 2023, IsDB financially supported a study visit on aquaculture business development from Côte d'Ivoire to an SSTC project in Nigeria.
[30] In 2024, IFAD signed a supplementary fund agreement of US$150,000 for knowledge exchange on women's empowerment.

considerably, ranging from US$40,000[31] to US$1.6 million[32] per project. This disparity may reflect uneven prioritization of SSTC across country programmes.

29. The strategy recommends assessing the feasibility of a multi-donor SSTC facility; a proposal to that end has been prepared and will be subject to further review. During the review period, the Fund did not approve any grant **specifically** for SSTC through its regular grants programme. However, several grants covered more than one country and thereby included an element of South-South learning.

Key area 2. Structure, roles and responsibilities: enhancing IFAD's institutional architecture for SSTC

30. **Institutional repositioning of the SSTC Unit should further facilitate SSTC integration into country programmes.** Although the SSTC Unit developed guidelines for COSOP integration, its involvement in country strategy design has hitherto been inconsistent, ranging from desk reviews or ad hoc inputs for projects and country strategies to a more active role of participating in the in-country definition of SSTC narratives.

31. **The SSTC Centres have helped to expand and strengthen integration of SSTC.** The centres in Brasilia and Beijing are important for decentralizing SSTC implementation, building regional partnerships and aligning activities with local priorities. The Brasilia centre facilitated cross-regional exchanges, such as the goat and sheep learning route (2023) connecting African countries with Brazilian agricultural innovations. The Beijing centre strengthened ties with the China International Development Cooperation Agency and the Multilateral Cooperation Centre for Development Finance to secure funding and promote technical collaboration. These centres also contributed to the incorporation of SSTC in country strategies; for example, the COSOPs for Argentina, Brazil and Colombia have emphasized SSTC as a tool for policy and knowledge transfer. While the third SSTC centre originally established in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was less active during the timeframe of this MTR, its recent move to Nairobi and the assignment of a dedicated SSTC regional analyst to the centre are expected to be beneficial for sub-Saharan Africa.

32. **The interdepartmental working group on SSTC**, established to coordinate SSTC across IFAD departments, has experienced irregular engagement. Interviews revealed uneven participation, with some divisions viewing SSTC as peripheral to their core functions. While the group has helped raise cross-departmental awareness, there is a need to strengthen its mandate and operating modalities. Under the Department for Country Operations, the SSTC Unit will revamp the working group in 2025.

33. **The 2024 recalibration relocated the SSTC Unit, inclusive of the China-IFAD SSTC Facility, within the Department for Country Operations.** This shift has been broadly welcomed across the institution, as it facilitates the alignment of SSTC more closely with country operations and the integration of SSTC into COSOPs, loans and grants. However, respondents were unclear on the roles and responsibilities of the Fund's various SSTC actors: the SSTC Unit, the China-IFAD SSTC Facility, the SSTC Centres and the regional offices.[33] The functions and responsibilities of these actors will be more clearly defined as recalibration becomes fully operational.

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[31] Project design report: Sustainable Agricultural Development Project in South Sudan. https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb-seminars/2024-09-11-12-EB-consultation/docs/EB-2024-142-R-7-Project-Desing-Report.pdf.

[32] Project design report: Climate Resilience, Food Security and Nutrition in the Northeast Semiarid of Brazil Project. https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb-seminars/2024-11-25-EB-consultation/docs/EB-2024-143-R-7-Project-Design-Report.pdf.

[33] The SSTC Strategy 2022–2027 notes: "As IFAD proceeds with Decentralization 2.0, the role of these [SSTC and KM] centres needs to be revisited as part of IFAD's new decentralized structure to determine how their contribution to strengthening SSTC can be maximized. Additionally, the role of the SSTC and Knowledge Centres vis-à-vis the establishment of new regional offices (ROs) requires clarification." IFAD. 2021.

Key area 3. Establishing a robust M&E framework

34. **The strategy introduced a results framework explicitly designed for M&E.** However, the ToC and RMF present, as noted above, some inconsistencies and challenges. Moreover, a corporate database and a dashboard on SSTC, initially reported as "under development" in the strategy, is not yet operational, and the proposed introduction of a rating system to assess SSTC's contribution to country programme objectives through COSOP results reviews and COSOP completion reviews has not yet materialized. Furthermore, the establishment of a joint RBA M&E system was unsuccessful owing to differences in institutional methodologies and monitoring systems and lack of resources.

35. **Fragmented and inconsistent monitoring of SSTC work.** Current monitoring practices rely heavily on manual data collection, which varies significantly in comprehensiveness across IFAD's regions and initiatives. On a positive note, the China-IFAD SSTC Facility employs clearly defined indicators for donor reporting purposes, while the decentralized SSTC Centres in Brazil and China systematically contribute to monitoring of regional SSTC activities.

Key area 4. Risk monitoring and management

36. Most of the risks identified in the strategy have not materialized. However, under operational risks, the strategy sought to avoid ad hoc and scattered activities and to increase selectivity and prioritization. This has happened, but only to a certain extent. Many interlocutors still considered SSTC an ad hoc approach. This view was also noted in some country strategy and programme evaluations, such as those of Pakistan (2022), Uzbekistan (2023) and Kyrgyzstan (2024).

IV. Conclusions and lessons learned

37. The MTR notes that SSTC is increasingly mainstreamed in IFAD's strategies, country programmes and PoLG. It has been strengthened in the business model, allowing for knowledge-sharing, and enhanced sustainability and scaling up of results. Although, in financial terms the amount devoted to or generated by SSTC is relatively small, accounting for scarcely 1 per cent of the Fund's annual PoLG, in operational terms SSTC has proven its value as a relevant and efficient cooperation modality that is appreciated by Member States. All interlocutors recognized the importance of SSTC and foresaw a growing role for such cooperation in tandem with an empowered Global South. For UMICs, in particular, IFAD's relevance could be enhanced as both a broker and a matchmaker for SSTC and as a catalyst for innovative financing models.

38. Lessons learned and recommendations:

   • SSTC in IFAD is often perceived as unplanned, ad hoc, driven from the outside and "opportunistic". Most staff members knew about the SSTC Strategy, but few had read it and even fewer applied it. Interlocutors called for an operational strategy, with results-oriented annual SSTC workplans and demand-driven regional SSTC strategies.[34]

   • Staff members reported that it was rather difficult to incorporate SSTC at the design stage of new loans because the authors of the design report often lacked information about what other countries from the Global South could offer in terms of knowledge and expertise. This challenge should be overcome as IFAD develops guidelines on incorporating SSTC into loans and grants, similar to the guidelines on COSOPs and country strategy notes.

   • Country directors have been critical for furthering SSTC, albeit with varied levels of engagement, but they have little incentive to do so since there is no accompanying reward for them. Interlocutors recommended positive

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[34] The Latin America and the Caribbean region has developed such a strategy; the other regions are yet to do so.

motivation and suggested that the Fund should allocate more regular budget resources to SSTC activities in country offices. SSTC could then be included in the performance evaluation of country directors, especially in policy engagement and non-sovereign operations. This initiative would be strengthened through training and support to enhance country directors' understanding of the principles of SSTC.

- The "learning routes"' developed by PROCASUR have become important methodologies for mainstreaming South-South Cooperation across IFAD's operational portfolio. The effectiveness and efficiency of the learning routes approach has been proven, and this approach should become one of the key delivery modalities for IFAD's SSTC.

V. Action points

39. **Annex III presents a revised RMF** that addresses shortcomings in the original. The revisions align outputs, outcomes and indicators with the strategy's objectives, providing coherent pathways for measuring SSTC effectiveness, tracking progress systematically and enhancing accountability. The logical framework has also been updated (annex I). The RMF will be reviewed in the light of the upcoming consultations for IFAD14.

40. **Enhanced integration into IFAD's PoLG** through annual regional SSTC plans, consolidated as a global plan. These plans will define targets, priorities, and deliverables for country teams, regional offices, and headquarter units. Their operationalization will be supported by the SSTC Unit through hands-on technical assistance to identify, adapt, and scale up SSTC activities within country strategies and investment projects. These efforts will be complemented by specialized toolkits, comprehensive advisory services, practical guidelines, and training materials.

41. **Clarification and strengthening of institutional architecture.** IFAD will delineate roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines for all staff involved in developing, implementing and coordinating SSTC, outlining deliverables for country teams, regional offices and headquarter units to deliver on corporate commitments.

42. **Expansion and diversification of SSTC funding sources,** incorporating SSTC during project design and negotiating allocation of adequate financial resources. This will help secure more predictable funding for SSTC activities. IFAD will expand its SSTC partnerships, primarily with upper-middle-income Member States, and expand engagement with non-state actors, including NGOs, academia and the private sector.

43. **IFAD will review the membership and terms of reference of the interdepartmental working group on SSTC**, ensuring adequate departmental representation, clearly defined strategic objectives and a regular, structured schedule of meetings.

44. **Mainstreaming SSTC within IFAD's operational and reporting systems** by incorporating specific SSTC markers into project design documents, budgeting frameworks and reporting templates. Integrating SSTC monitoring within these established systems will facilitate the consistent identification and aggregation of SSTC elements across the PoLG, contributing to comprehensive data collection aligned with the revised RMF.

SSTC Strategy logical framework (proposed revision)

1.   It is proposed to align the strategic objectives of the SSTC Strategy with the overarching objectives of IFAD's Strategic Framework 2016–2025. The formulation below combines the Framework's three strategic objectives, adding "through SSTC".

> **The IFAD SSTC Strategy 2022–2027 pursues the following strategic objective**: Increase poor rural people's productive capacities, market access and climate resilience through SSTC.

2.   The achievement of this objective can be measured by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, as well as by the indicators for SDG target 13.1. The objective is supported by three outcomes, eight outputs and 14 indicators.

> **Outcome 1**. IFAD has become a key partner for SSTC at the national, regional and country levels (partnership pillar)

Output 1.1. Portfolio of IFAD's SSTC activities expanded

   Indicator 1.1.1. Number of SSTC activities implemented per year

Output 1.2. IFAD's SSTC staff capacity enhanced

   Indicator 1.2.1. Number of IFAD staff working on SSTC at headquarters and in the field

   Indicator 1.2.2. Number of IFAD staff trained in SSTC per year

Output 1.3. Visibility of IFAD's SSTC portfolio and programme improved

   Indicator 1.3.1. Number of international and regional SSTC events attended by IFAD as a co-convenor or resource institution

   Indicator 1.3.2. Number of page views on IFAD's SSTC webpage and Rural Solutions Portal

   Indicator 1.3.3. Number of SSTC publications issued by IFAD per year

> **Outcome 2.** Knowledge and innovations of the Global South are incorporated into country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) and the programme of loans and grants (PoLG) to enhance their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability (knowledge pillar)

Output 2.1. SSTC knowledge products and innovations identified and disseminated

   Indicator 2.1.1. Number of knowledge products disseminated per year

Output 2.2. SSTC embedded in COSOPs and the PoLG with the required technical and financial provisions

   Indicator 2.2.1. Percentage of COSOPs that include a narrative on SSTC

   Indicator 2.2.2. Percentage of loans that include financial provisions specifically earmarked for SSTC

Indicator 2.2.3. Percentage of IFAD grant funding earmarked for SSTC activities

Output 2.3. Special SSTC initiatives launched at the country level through COSOPs, loans and grants or globally and regionally in support of COSOPs and the PoLG.

Indicator 2.3.1. Number of new country-level SSTC initiatives launched per year

Indicator 2.3.2. Number of new global and regional SSTC initiatives launched per year

Outcome 3. Intra- and interregional linkages and exchanges between countries of the Global South are strengthened (policy pillar).

Output 3.1. Policy products are developed and disseminated

Indicator 3.1.1: Number of policy products disseminated per year

Output 3.2. Policy exchanges and seminars organized

Indicator 3.2.1: Number of policy exchanges organized per year

Current results measurement framework (RMF) of the SSTC Strategy (updated with results)

	IFAD SSTC Strategy 2022–2027: results measurement framework					
Code	*Indicator*	*Source*	*Baseline*	*Target by the end of 2024*	*Current value by the end of 2024*	*Comments*
	Outcome-level indicators					
1.1	Overall quality of SSTC in country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) (percentage of ratings of 4 and above)	Quality assurance ratings	Not determined	Not determined	95 per cent	Value extracted from the 2023 and 2024 Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE).
1.2	SSTC's contribution to country programme objectives	COSOP results review and COSOP completion review	Not determined	Not determined	Could not be established	The two COSOP results reports (Bolivia [Plurinational State of] and the Republic of Moldova) published between 2022 and 2024 contain very few references to SSTC.
1.3	SSTC knowledge exchanges and cross-learning (ratings 3 and above, percentage)	Client survey	Not determined	Not determined	Could not be established	The SSTC Unit made several attempts to undertake a client survey, but the response rate was low.
	Output-level indicators					
2.1	Policy briefs integrating experiences from two or multiple developing countries, prepared and disseminated	Annual SSTC progress reports	Not determined	Not determined	-	Progress report 2023/2024 not yet available. Tracking table does not report on policy briefs.
2.2	New development solutions designed and developed for or through SSTC	Rural Solutions Portal; project reports; biennial client survey	15	30	27	12 solutions were added between 2022 and 2024.
2.3	New development solutions promoted	Project reports	Not determined	Not determined	174	This number refers to (i) 12 online portals and (ii) 162 knowledge products disseminated by projects funded under the China-IFAD SSTC Facility.
2.4	New partnership agreements related to SSTC	Annual SSTC progress reports	2	4	6	Brail, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC). Additional partnerships established at the local level.
2.5	IFAD staff trained in SSTC-related capacities (percentage)	Annual SSTC progress reports	Not determined	Not determined	0 per cent	No SSTC staff training took place during the reporting period, but seminars and information sessions were held.
2.6	COSOPs integrating new SSTC initiatives	Quality assurance ratings	Not determined	10	21	Between 2022 and 2024, 21 out 22 (95 per cent) newly approved COSOPs included a narrative on SSTC.

Proposed revised results measurement framework (RMF) (to be refined in the context of IFAD14)

Code	Indicator	Source	Baseline 2024	Target by the end of 2027	Comments
*Revised results measurement framework for the SSTC Strategy*
*Outcome 1: IFAD has become a key partner for SSTC at the national, regional and country levels*
1.1	Number of SSTC activities* implemented per year	SSTC database; SSTC progress reports	30	50	Includes activities under the China-IFAD SSTC Facility.
1.2	IFAD annual administrative budget dedicated to SSTC	IFAD budget document	US$950 000	US$1 250 000	An increase of about US$100 000 per year during the period 2022–2024. Target value assumes that this trend will continue.
1.3	Number of IFAD staff fully dedicated to SSTC working at headquarters and in the field	IFAD's PCD	7	10	Indicator confined to IFAD staff working full-time on SSTC.
1.4	Number of IFAD staff trained in SSTC per year	IFAD's People and Culture Division; Office of Development Effectiveness; SSTC Unit	0	10	In-person or remote training
1.5	Number of international/regional SSTC events attended/organized by IFAD	SSTC progress reports	2	5 global 1 in each region	
1.6	Number of page views on SSTC webpage and the Rural Solutions Portal	IFAD's Information and Communications Technology Division	25 000	50 000	Baseline refers to the page views on the Rural Solutions Portal
1.7	Number of SSTC publications issued by IFAD per year	SSTC progress reports	6	10	Includes the SSTC newsletter; only documents published on the corporate SSTC website are being counted.
*Outcome 2: Knowledge and innovations of the Global South are incorporated into country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) and the programme of loans and grants (PoLG)*
2.1	Number of knowledge products disseminated per year	SSTC progress reports	120	200	Does not include the knowledge products published on the Rural Solutions Portal
2.2	Percentage of COSOPs with an articulated narrative on SSTC	Statistics produced by the SSTC Unit	96 per cent	100 per cent	
2.3	Average quality rating for SSTC narratives in COSOPs	Quality Assurance Unit (QAS) and Operational Strategy and Policy Guidance Committee (OSC) reports	4.7	4 and above	
2.4	Number of toolkits, guidelines for integration and monitoring of SSTC	SSTC progress reports		1	

Revised results measurement framework for the SSTC Strategy					
Code	*Indicator*	*Source*	*Baseline 2024*	*Target by the end of 2027*	*Comments*
2.5	Number of loans that include financial provisions specifically earmarked for SSTC	IFAD project design reports from the Operational Results Management System	11	20	
Outcome 3: Intra- and interregional linkages and exchanges between countries of the Global South are strengthened					
3.1	Number of policy products disseminated per year	SSTC progress report	2	4	
3.2	Number of policy exchanges organized per year	SSTC progress report	1	2	

* For the purpose of this RMF the term "SSTC activity" is defined as follows: An SSTC activity is a partnership between two or more countries of the Global South, facilitated or supported by IFAD.

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List of COSOPs approved in IFAD12

Country	Score	Year
Bangladesh	5	2022
Burundi	5	2022
Cambodia	5	2022
Eswatini	5	2022
Indonesia	5	2022
Malawi	5	2022
Pakistan	5	2022
Tanzania	5	2022
Uzbekistan	5	2022
The Philippines	5	2023
El Salvador	4	2023
Ethiopia	5	2023
Mozambique	5	2023
Argentina	4	2024
Brazil	4	2024
China	5	2024
Colombia	3.5	2024
Guinea Bissau	4	2024
Kyrgyzstan	4	2024
Montenegro	NO SSTC NARRATIVE	2024
Nigeria	No rating	2024
South-Sudan	4	2024

Source: QAG COSOP OSC Meetings

List of investment projects with an SSTC element approved under IFAD12

Project name	Country	Year of approval	Dedicated budget (USD)
Participatory Agriculture and Climate Transformation Programme	Ethiopia	2022	
Empowerment through Nutrition-sensitive, Inclusive and Resilient Agricultural and Rural Entrepreneurship	DRC	2022	
Agriculture Services Programme for an Inclusive Rural Economy and Agricultural Trade (ASPIRE-AT)	Cambodia	2022	
Programme to Strengthen Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Support Economic Integration of Rural Youth (PROGRES)	Madagascar	2022	
Horticulture Enterprise Enhancement Project	Zimbabwe	2022	
Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project	Lesotho	2023	
Integrated Rural Development Project of the Mountain Areas in the Oriental	Morocco	2023	
Horticulture Development in Dryland Areas Project	Indonesia	2023	
Programme to strengthen smallholder resilience to climate change	Burkina Faso	2023	126 000
Rural Livelihoods Resilience Programme	Somalia	2023	
Competitiveness Improvement of Agriculture and Allied Sectors Project in Jammu and Kashmir (J&KCIP)	India	2023	
Livestock and Youth Support Project	Central African Republic	2023	
Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture Project Phase 2	Angola	2024	45 000
Euphrates River Watershed Rehabilitation Project (FIRAT)	Türkiye	2024	327 000

Gansu Demonstrative Rural Revitalization Project	China	2024	212 000
Hunan Green Development Project		2024	212 000
Integrated Natural Resources Management Programme	Kenya	2024	159 000
Sustainable Agricultural Development Project	South Sudan	2024	40 000
Value Chain Innovation for Sustainable Transformation in Agrarian Reform Communities	The Philippines	2024	
Support to Food Sovereignty Project	Senegal	2024	227 400
Value Chain Programme in Northern Nigeria	Nigeria	2024	
Capacity Development for Overcoming Hunger and Mitigating the Effects of Rural Poverty and Extreme Poverty	Brazil	2024	1 100 000
Climate Resilience, Food Security and Nutrition in the Northeast Semiarid of Brazil Project		2024	1 699 000
Development of sustainable rural productive and entrepreneurial capacities at the national level (Ruralidad para la Vida Project)	Colombia	2024	400 000
Bihar Aquaculture and Livestock Improvement Project	India	2024	
Financial Inclusion for Resilience and Innovation Project for Rural Zambia	Zambia	2024	1 000 000

Source: IFAD Project Design Reports from ORMS.

Projects approved under the China-IFAD SSTC Facility

No.	Initiative Title	Focus Countries	Main Thematic Area	Status by the end of 2023
1	Inclusive agriculture and agro-industrial value chain development as an enabler of poverty reduction in Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Value chain upgrade	Closed
2	South-South Cooperation for Scaling up Climate Resilient Value Chain Initiatives (SSCVC)	Vietnam, China, Laos, and Cambodia	Climate resilience enhancement	Closed
3	Rural Youth Innovation Award	Latin America and the Caribbean	Cross-cutting	Closed
4	Strengthening the Rural Solutions Portal and IFAD's IT tracking systems to increase the uptake of rural development solutions	Global	Other	Closed
5	Strengthening business-to-business linkages and investment opportunities through IFAD's SSTC and Knowledge Centres	Global	Other	Closed
6	South-South Triangular Cooperation for the Inter- Africa Bamboo Smallholder Farmers Livelihood Development Programme	Cameroon, Ghana, Ethiopia, Madagascar	Value chain upgrade	Closed
7	Promoting Water Conservation and Irrigation Water Use Efficiency in Ethiopia	Ethiopia	Productivity improvement (Water resource management)	Closed
8	Local production of fortified cassava flour in the Bouenza Department in the Republic of Congo	Republic of Congo	Value chain upgrade	Closed

No.	Initiative Title	Focus Countries	Main Thematic Area	Status by the end of 2023
9	Small-scale dryers for post-harvest management enterprises in Africa	Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya	Value chain upgrade	Closed
9	Effective South-South Cooperation in Agriculture to Unleash Transformative Power of Agriculture Sector for Inclusive Development in Pakistan	Pakistan	Productivity improvement	Closed
11	Learning from SSTC in project design for better results and greater sustainability	Global	Other	Closed
12	Promoting Sustainable Cage Aquaculture in West Africa (ProSCAWA)	Ghana and Nigeria	Productivity improvement (Aquaculture)	Closed
13	Supporting and Strengthening Community Resilience in Tanzania (SSUCORETA)	Tanzania	Value chain upgrade	Closed
14	Strengthening Agricultural Resilience Through Learning and Innovation (STARLIT)	Rwanda and Kenya	Value chain upgrade	Closed
15	Supporting local solutions towards a more resilient food system in Cuba	Cuba	Crisis response	Closed
16	Promoting Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Livelihood Opportunities in Rural Mountainous Areas through Upgrading Cashgora Value Chains	Tajikistan and Afghanistan	Value chain upgrade	Closed

No.	Initiative Title	Focus Countries	Main Thematic Area	Status by the end of 2023
17	Empowering Rural Youth through Innovative Horticultural solutions in Tomato Value Chain in Kenya	Kenya and China	Value chain upgrade	Closed
18	Support the Adoption and Promotion of Cassava Crop in Eritrea	Eritrea	Productivity improvement (Cassava)	Ongoing
19	South-South initiative to promote the sustainable use of bamboo as an innovative strategy for climate resilience of smallholder farmers in Argentina, Bolivia and Brazil	Argentina, Bolivia and Brazil	Value chain upgrade	Ongoing
20	Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for Digital Rural Inclusion and Youth Empowerment	Latin America and the Caribbean	Cross-cutting	Ongoing

IFAD's principal SSTC-related publications (2022–2024)

2022

Progress report on South-South and Triangular Cooperation 2021–2022

IFAD South-South and Triangular Cooperation Strategy 2022-2027

China-IFAD South-South and Triangular Cooperation Facility: Annual Progress Report 2022

2023

Guidance Note on Monitoring and Evaluation of South-South and Triangular Cooperation Initiatives in IFAD

Operational Guide on Embedding South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Country Strategic Opportunities Programmes

China-IFAD South-South and Triangular Cooperation Facility: Annual Progress Report 2023

IFAD's Newsletter on South-South and Triangular Cooperation - Issue 1

IFAD's Newsletter on South-South and Triangular Cooperation - Issue 2

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IFAD's Newsletter on South-South and Triangular Cooperation – Issue 3