

# Overcoming challenges to rural transformation through the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals



The international community is in the midst of defining the post-2015 development agenda, which will shape the work of governments and other development partners for years to come, and is set to be adopted at a high-level summit in September 2015. The extent to which new development goals and targets reference agriculture and rural development, and their contribution to overcoming poverty and achieving food security and better nutrition, will have a significant impact on rural people worldwide. At present, sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition appear well positioned in the agenda. However, implementation measures are needed that will ensure that goals and targets are achieved in this area, for example draft Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2). In particular, there is a need to boost investments in agriculture and rural development to enable sustainable and inclusive rural transformation. It will be important to recognize the critical interdependence of urban and rural development, and the need to leverage rural-urban linkages for wider development impact.

IFAD's vision of the post-2015 rural world foresees thriving rural economies that are linked to cities and support viable urbanization. It is a world in which extreme rural poverty is eliminated and where poor rural people and communities, including those who live in remote areas, are empowered to build prosperous and sustainable livelihoods. It is a vision in which rural families, and in particular children are assured of their food and nutrition security, every family lives in dignity, and young people can hope to realize their aspirations for a better life in their own rural communities.

IFAD has embodied these reflections in its own Strategic Vision for 2016-2025. IFAD can play a leadership and catalytic role in the implementation of a post-2015 sustainable development agenda that can truly boost inclusive and sustainable rural transformation in the coming years. Such a transformation will require an increase in productivity, and in access to markets and services. It will also mean finding ways to boost investment to bridge the gaps that still hold back agriculture and rural enterprises – gaps in infrastructure, knowledge, technology, market development, climate adaptation and more.

Yet, many countries face diverse obstacles to achieving this reality. Many have been disrupted by conflict. Inadequate or unfair tenure systems deprive many smallholders of secure access to and control over land. High unemployment among

young people is a widespread problem, and a major source of rural-to-urban migration. Gender inequality remains pervasive in many countries; women continue to have significantly less access to assets and services. Investments in inclusive rural development and smallholder agriculture are essential to reduce hunger, protect and preserve key natural resources and biodiversity, and provide decent incomes and working conditions for rural women and men.

Since its foundation, IFAD has invested more than US\$16.3 billion of its own resources and leveraged US\$23.4 billion of cofinancing, supporting approximately 438 million people to grow more food, better manage their land and other natural resources, learn new skills, start small businesses, build strong organizations and gain a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. However, much remains to be done. Extreme poverty is still predominantly rural, rural-urban inequalities persist, and investment levels in agriculture and the rural sector remain vastly insufficient.

IFAD invites Governors to share their views on these challenges, taking advantage of the ongoing debate about how the post-2015 agenda will be implemented at the national, regional and global levels. Accordingly, the round table will centre on the following questions:

- What do you see as the main challenges and opportunities with respect to boosting investment in rural transformation in the context of the post-2015 agenda in your country?
- What role can the private sector play in enabling this transformation, and what public policies are needed to enable it to do so? What is the experience of your country in this regard?
- What role would you like IFAD to play in the context of a global effort to boost investment in rural transformation through the post-2015 agenda?