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Investing in rural people

President's report on a proposed grant under
the global/regional window to the
International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
for Youth Researching Youth: Competitive
Fellowships for Young African Scholars
Researching Youth Engagement in Rural
Economic Activities in Africa

Note to Executive Board representatives

Focal points:

Technical questions:

Paul Winters
Director, Research and Impact Assessment Division
Officer-in-Charge, Strategy and Knowledge Department
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2189
e-mail: p.winters@ifad.org

Rui Benfica
Lead Economist
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2872
e-mail: r.benfica@ifad.org

Dispatch of documentation:

William Skinner
Chief
Governing Bodies Office
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2974
e-mail: gb_office@ifad.org

For: Approval

Recommendation for approval

The Executive Board is invited to approve the recommendation for the proposed grant as contained in paragraph 18.

President's report on a proposed grant under the global/regional window to the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture for Youth Researching Youth: Competitive Fellowships for Young African Scholars Researching Youth Engagement in Rural Economic Activities in Africa

I. Background and compliance with IFAD Policy on Grant Financing

1. There is consensus among African leaders and development partners that the transformation of the agricultural sector is of critical importance and that the strong involvement of Africa's youth in rural development, agriculture and the management of natural resources will boost economic growth in the continent. Africa has the most youthful population of any continent, with 60 per cent of people aged 15-24 years. The potential of the youth population is an asset, which can be capitalized on to transform African agriculture into a more productive and market-oriented sector. Young agribusiness entrepreneurs are approaching agriculture as a business and accelerating this essential transformation. It is young people who are taking advantage of current agricultural research and the new technologies being developed and tailored to African agro-ecologies. African young people are discovering that they can make farming a profitable career.
2. However, African governments, young people and development agencies face a challenge in the lack of research and evidence-based information concerning the nature of problems and potential solutions to guide both policy development and programme implementation. While growth-oriented youth agribusiness and young rural economic entrepreneurs have received significant attention, the sector is still learning what works best in terms of policies, partnerships and programmes to support young growth-oriented entrepreneurs. There is a lack of empirical evidence about the role of young adults in entrepreneurship and the rural non-farm sector, highlighting the need for more scholarly research on factors affecting rural economic activities in Africa.
3. The proposed project will provide research grants to selected young African scholars to undertake research on youth engagement in rural economic activities in sub-Saharan Africa. It will take the form of an integrated learning and support programme that will strengthen the scientific capacity of young researchers in the social sciences in Africa.
4. The recipient of the grant, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), was selected through a competitive process. IITA has long experience in managing youth programmes and research for development in Africa. The proposed project design was selected because of its strong focus on an evidence-based approach to policy advocacy and development to improve policies and investments supporting rural youth. The project aims to build the capacity of young researchers to engage effectively in policy dialogue and influence policies.

5. The project is in line with the goal and objectives of the IFAD Policy on Grant Financing (2015). The project contributes to promoting innovative, pro-poor policy approaches with the potential to be scaled up for greater impact and to strengthening policy capacities. This knowledge-generation and -dissemination process will allow IFAD to better understand the factors influencing youth engagement and the opportunities and constraints for young entrepreneurs in rural areas, and to promote the development of the most appropriate strategies and policies.
6. The project is aligned with IFAD's investments in Africa. While IFAD has long funded youth economic empowerment through various instruments, such as grants and country programmes, there is further need to collate operation-focused research. The project seeks to enhance capacity to undertake and use research and, to that end, will engage with key stakeholders. Efforts to build partnerships with local stakeholders will be coordinated with relevant IFAD country programme managers to create synergies with IFAD activities in the field.
7. Participating countries will be selected in close coordination with IFAD's East and Southern Africa and for West and Central Africa regional divisions. The aim is to establish links with IFAD operations where possible to embed the research findings in projects.

II. The proposed project

8. The overall goal of the project is to enhance the understanding of the factors influencing youth engagement in agribusiness and the farm and non-farm rural economy. By doing so, it will significantly increase evidence on how policies and investments can contribute to economic growth and an enabling environment for rural youth. The overarching objective is to improve the availability, exchange, dissemination and use of research findings in the field of agribusiness and rural economic activities from young African scholars into policy and practice to support economic growth and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, working at the local, national and regional levels in Africa. The specific objectives are to: (i) strengthen the capacity of young African scholars in generating, appraising and disseminating evidence-based results to inform future action plans for national governments, the international community, the business sector and local communities; (ii) increase the availability and use of evidence for youth policies and decision-making related to youth participation in the rural sector; and (iii) strengthen the ability of key stakeholders to better use an evidence-based approach to youth economic empowerment in policy development.
9. The direct beneficiaries of the proposed project will be the young African scholars, with a special emphasis on young women professionals and students. The project targets two categories of young scholars, aged 40 or under at the time of application: (i) young academics and professionals at research institutions and universities in Africa; and (ii) young scholars aiming to acquire a master's or doctoral degree. The fellowships under the second category are open only to students currently enrolled in a graduate programme and at the point of, having completed all coursework, preparing the dissertation proposal. This will contribute to the development of future social science leaders in Africa.
10. The indirect beneficiaries include policy-makers and their institutions, youth entrepreneurs in agribusiness and rural economic activities, research organizations, the private sector, the media and development partners.
11. The project will be implemented over three years and will have the following components: (i) desk review, (ii) young scholars' research-capacity development, (iii) capacity development in production of research evidence for policy-making; and (iv) communication, advocacy and policy dialogue.

III. Expected outcomes/outputs

12. The project is expected to have an impact on the capacities of young people and their partners to deliver improved policies and investments that are effective at supporting youth in agriculture. The main expected outcomes are: (i) evidence on youth in agribusiness is available, including for policy-makers; (ii) better-informed decisions for youth engagement in agribusiness and rural economic activities by policy-makers and implementers; (iii) enhanced capacity for research in youth engagement in agribusiness and rural farm and non-farm economy; and (iv) enhanced capacity among young people to effectively communicate, use research findings and engage in evidence-based advocacy and policy dialogue.

IV. Implementation arrangements

13. IITA will be the implementing agency of this project. It has a strong record of conducting research and developing and administering research programmes in Africa and has demonstrated experience in coaching and mentoring young scholars at various levels. IITA's established network encompasses institutions in the region, including universities and research institutes, which have strong capacities for reaching out to young scholars.
14. The day-to-day project management will rest with the head of the Capacity Development Office in the Directorate of Partnerships for Delivery. A full-time staff member will be recruited to oversee the day-to-day activities of the project. Details on other scientific and support staff will be determined for each student and scholar individually through a contract, and appropriate provisions will be made to ensure the successful completion of research activities.
15. The project will establish partnerships with IFAD-funded grants and youth-related initiatives, including with Columbia University in its capacity as host of the Secretariat of the Global Association of Masters in Development Practice for the IFAD-Universities Win-Win Partnership: Engaging Students with IFAD-Supported Operations and IFAD Partners. Both of these grants aim to strengthen students' research and to make a useful contribution towards IFAD strategic goals. The project will seek to identify and collaborate with the MasterCard Foundation and Institute of Development Studies' Matasa Fellows Network. This initiative aims to develop cohorts of young African researchers with the skills and commitment to bring their research into policy processes that address the challenges of young people and employment in Africa.
16. There are no deviations from the standard procedures for financial reporting and audit.

V. Indicative project costs and financing

17. The total budget for the proposed project is US\$2,432,000. IFAD financing will amount to US\$2,025,000 and IITA will contribute cofinancing in the amount of US\$407,000 through core funding and in-kind contributions.

Table 1
Costs by component and financier
(Thousands of United States dollars)

<i>Component</i>	<i>IFAD</i>	<i>Cofinancing</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Desk review and young scholars research capacity development	1 280	300	1 580
2. Capacity development in production of research evidence for policy-making	150	-	150
3. Communication, advocacy and policy dialogue	365	27	392
4. Project coordination	80	80	160
5. Overhead/management fees	150	-	150
Total	2 025	407	2 432

Table 2
Costs by expenditure category and financier
(Thousands of United States dollars)

<i>Expenditure category</i>	<i>IFAD</i>	<i>Cofinancing</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Salaries and allowances	80	380	460
2. Consultancies	105	15	120
3. Travel costs	240	-	240
4. Goods, services and inputs	1 130	12	1 142
5. Workshop	80	-	80
6. Training/capacity-building	240	-	240
7. Overhead/management fees	150	-	150
Total	2 025	407	2 432

VI. Recommendation

18. I recommend that the Executive Board approve the proposed grant in terms of the following resolution:

RESOLVED: that the Fund, in order to finance, in part, Youth Researching Youth: Competitive Fellowships for Young African Scholars Researching Youth Engagement in Rural Economic Activities in Africa, shall provide a grant in the amount of two million and twenty-five thousand United States dollars (US\$2,025,000) to the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture for a three-year period and upon such terms and conditions as shall be substantially in accordance with the terms and conditions presented to the Executive Board herein.

Kanayo F. Nwanze
President

Results-based logical Framework¹

	Objectives	Objectively Verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
Goal	Enhanced understanding of the factors influencing youth engagement in agribusiness and rural farm and non-farm economy.	i. Policy-makers and implementers recognize gaps in policy implementation and seek to address them; ii. Better-informed investment decisions for youth engagement in agribusiness and rural farm and non-farm economy.	Studies in rural areas and youth enterprises; case studies of changes in youth' livelihoods; Completion and impact and evaluation reports;	
Objectives	<p>1) Strengthened capacity among young African scholars in generating, appraising and disseminating evidence-based results to inform future action plans to national governments, the international community, the business sector and local communities;</p> <p>2) Increased availability and use of evidence for youth policy and decision-making.</p> <p>3) Strengthened ability of key stakeholders and policy-makers to better use an evidence-based approach in youth economic empowerment in policy development.</p>	<p>Objective 1: Quality of research proposal (target 80) % of female awardees (target 50%) Quality of research papers produced and disseminated (target 80) Quality of training</p> <p>Objective 2: # and quality of policy papers (target 30) Intermediaries satisfaction with the training (target 50)</p> <p>Objective 3: Quality of policy documents produced and disseminated % of stakeholders providing feedback/engaged in dialogue No of published advocacy materials to reach different stakeholders (target 30) No of published media materials (30) No of people attending knowledge events</p>	Project evaluation reports and project completion report Adoption and impact studies. Policy documents Research papers Survey	Sustained policy support and investment targeting youth; Continued collaboration from African governments, development community, youth groups
Outcomes	<p>1) Evidence on youth in agribusiness is made more available and accessible</p> <p>2) Better informed decisions for youth engagement in agribusiness and rural economic activities</p> <p>3) Enhanced capacity for research in youth engagement in agribusiness and rural economic activities</p> <p>4) Enhanced capacity of youth to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effectiveness of engagements in policy processes ▪ Number of training events ▪ Number of participants ▪ Quality of training courses ▪ Type and amount of activity carried out to inform policy-makers ▪ The number and nature of contacts made with specific stakeholders 	Applications from scholars Research papers Policy papers Meetings with policy-makers Web pages Project reports Media coverage Survey	Scholars and policy-makers are willing to collaborate and remain committed to the project and want to improve policies Political conditions remain favorable to carry out project activities

¹ Quantification of indicators will be developed during project inception phase.

	Objectives	Objectively Verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
	communicate and engage in evidence-based advocacy and policy dialogue 5) Intermediaries are more-research informed to support policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of activities targeted at different stakeholders ▪ Number of policy makers engaged in evidence-based analytical processes for informing policy-making 		
Key outputs and activities	<p>1) Key research areas and topics identified for consideration through completed desk review</p> <p>2) Research capacity developed among young scholars</p> <p>3) Capacity in production of research evidence for policy enhanced among young scholars</p> <p>4) Increased dissemination, communication and advocacy of research evidence for policy making</p>	<p>Research desk review completed</p> <p>80 research grants awarded # of high quality, relevant peer-reviewed research completed by awardees # of % of scholars satisfied wit training courses to conduct research</p> <p>80 scholars trained in producing research evidence for policy % of scholars satisfied with training courses to produce research evidence for policy # of policy briefs made available in open access format # of policy dialogues and briefings # of meetings/discussions facilitated within relevant policy-making institutions or groups 2 regional workshops conducted</p>	<p>Desk review report</p> <p>Progress reports; Training materials/ reports; Scholars feedback on mentoring and coaching; research papers, web pages, survey.</p>	<p>Availability of data and information; Partners willing to provide info</p> <p>Outreach among young scholars Young scholars apply for the grants</p> <p>Scholars willing to use research evidence</p> <p>Policy-makers are interested in using the evidence</p>