

Concerns about insufficient progress toward the Millennium Development Goals have prompted a renewed interest in agriculture as a source of growth and as an effective tool for poverty reduction and environmental stewardship. With a target of taking 80 million rural poor out of poverty between 2012 and 2015, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has positioned itself as a significant financier for low-income developing countries and fragile states, a provider of knowledge services to middle-income countries, and a source of inspiration for like-minded partners. IFAD has extensive experience helping countries scale up successful interventions—sometimes by design, but more often by serendipity. Now the challenge is to become more systematic and proactive about going from pilot to scale and to help countries operate rural development programs at scale in a sustainable manner.

Taking stock of IFAD's scaling-up experience

In 2009 IFAD undertook an institutional scaling-up review. Experts from the Brookings Institution conducted a desk analysis of IFAD's country and thematic operational approaches. The review also considered IFAD's corporate strategy, operational policies, processes, and instruments as well as its budgetary and human resource management practices to determine whether they were supportive of a systematic scaling-up approach to development. In parallel, IFAD's Independent Evaluation Office carried out a corporate evaluation of IFAD's approach to innovation and scaling up. This first phase of analytical and evaluative work was completed in 2010 and led to a number of important conclusions:

- Scaling up is mission-critical for IFAD if it is to achieve its goals of reducing rural poverty.
- IFAD has effectively supported the scaling up of successful agricultural and rural development programs in a number of countries, including in Peru. (See brief #4.)
- However, this has not always been the result of a systematic operational approach, but is often due to fortuitous circumstances.
- Therefore, IFAD's strategies, operational policies, processes, and instruments, as well as its budgeting and staff incentives, need to evolve to support a more proactive and systematic approach to scaling up.

Consequently, IFAD management decided to expand its understanding of the scaling-up experience by carrying out eight in-depth country reviews and four cross-cutting thematic studies. The latter cover (i) scaling up through support for sectoral strategies and partnerships, (ii) scaling up through institutional capacity development, and (iii) providing support for scaling up in value chains and adapting results to management and monitoring and

evaluation to facilitate effective efforts. This analytical work is ongoing, again with the support of the Brookings Institution, and will help inform future operational decisions by IFAD management when it is completed by the end of 2012.

Building on the lessons of the stock-taking

In the meantime, IFAD's management has moved ahead on a number of fronts to ensure that scaling up is effectively mainstreamed in its operational activities. First, scaling up is explicitly incorporated as an institutional objective in the formulation of IFAD's Medium Term Strategic Framework 2011–14.

Second, IFAD management, with the strong support and encouragement of its member countries, committed to pursuing a scaling-up agenda under the program to be funded by the ninth replenishment of IFAD's resources during 2013–15, approved by IFAD's Governing Council in February 2012.

Third, management concluded that planning for operations and impact at scale has to begin as early as possible in each country, specifically with the formulation—in close collaboration with government—of IFAD's Country Strategy and Programme. This is a results-oriented framework for IFAD's medium-term country engagement through investments, policy dialogue, partnerships, and knowledge management. Projects identified for preparation, financing, and implementation will henceforth include a plan for scaling up whenever applicable. The plans will identify pathways for scaling up, the drivers that can be mobilized, and the spaces (fiscal, environmental, policy, institutional, political, cultural, partnership, and learning) needed for a successful model to be taken to scale.

To this end, IFAD's internal guidelines for formulation, implementation, and monitoring of country programs have been adjusted to reflect a scaling-up mind-set. Likewise, project preparation guidelines have now been adapted to include a set of standard "guiding questions" that require the project management team to explore the scaling-up pathways, drivers, and spaces, and the related monitoring and evaluation practices. The guidance given to reviewers in IFAD's project-quality-enhancement and -assurance processes is also being progressively refined to reflect the institutional scaling-up agenda.

Fourth, deepening country and local leadership in strategy, project design, and execution will strengthen ownership and commitment to replication and scaling up. IFAD-financed projects would increasingly capitalize and rely on country systems—strengthening them when appropriate—so that successful activities can be more easily absorbed into mainstream government, NGO, and private sector activities when project financing ends. IFAD will devote more effort to building local capacity for managing scaling-up efforts, especially among national and local governments, farmers organizations, and civil society.

Fifth, impact at scale requires enabling government policy and an adequate public expenditure program. Policy that does not enable private investment in agriculture, for example, will inhibit

scaling up, given that agriculture activities lie in the private sector and require private investment. Good pilot projects supported with donor money tend neither to gain traction nor be replicated and scaled up when they reside in a poor policy environment that inhibits private investment. IFAD is committed to supporting improvements in countries' agricultural and rural policies and to working closely with private actors to ensure that they have the space to invest and produce.

Sixth, IFAD will work closely with its partners to ensure that promising innovations, successful pilots, and best practices are replicated and scaled up through joint or coordinated planning, financing, and implementation. A corporate partnership strategy is under preparation that will reflect these principles. Meanwhile, IFAD has already undertaken systematic outreach activities in an effort to promote a scaling-up community of practice, involving client governments, multilateral and bilateral financing agencies, research and technical support institutions, think tanks, foundations, and NGOs. Examples of IFAD's outreach and partnership-building activities from 2009 to 2011 include mutual peer reviews and learning events to foster a common understanding of scaling-up concepts and issues and the implications of a scaling-up mind-set in our respective ways of doing business.

Finally, managing for results, monitoring of project activities, and measurement of impact are important in order to know what to scale up, how to scale up, and what the impact is likely to be. IFAD has already adapted its corporate-level management framework and is refining its project portfolio management approach to report explicitly and separately on the scaling-up dimension of its work. IFAD's monitoring and evaluation approach at the project level will be enhanced to make it fully supportive of a scaling-up agenda at project, program, and/or sector levels. Meanwhile, IFAD's Independent Evaluation Office has already adapted its evaluation criteria to reflect a focus on scaling up in evaluating IFAD's country programs and individual projects.

Next steps

IFAD has only recently started on the journey of turning itself into a scaling-up institution. But its membership and management are

committed to pursuing this agenda. The next step for IFAD is to expand its knowledge through in-depth case studies and thematic reviews, which are currently under way. IFAD will at the same time enhance its country-level engagement with the development of guidance and training tools and through support for local capacity development. Management will review IFAD's operational instruments and its budgeting and human resource management practices to ensure that the necessary instrumentalities, resources, and incentives are put in place to support the scaling-up process. A scaling up mind-set is not necessarily more costly or effort-intensive than the traditional way of operating, if it is done in the right way and given the opportunities to benefit from economies of scale and from partnerships in managing for greater impact and effectiveness.

Part of the challenge is to set achievable and measurable targets, monitor progress and impact, define mutual accountability frameworks and performance metrics at both country level and agency levels, and achieve efficiency gains. Risks associated with this institutional change include creating a new rote "mantra," adopting excessively burdensome processes, or spreading resources too thin. There is an overarching need to keep IFAD's goals focused and its processes simple. The effort will entail introducing and enforcing staff incentive systems that reflect the commitment to the scaling-up agenda. IFAD will monitor progress and results and adapt as it learns—and it will share.

For further reading: International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Independent Office of Evaluation, "Corporate Level Evaluation of IFAD's Capacity to Promote Innovations and Its Scaling Up." Rome: 2010; IFAD, "Partnership Building and Outreach on Scaling Up: An IFAD Hosted Learning Event," Rome, October 26-28, 2011, background documentation and presentations available at www.ifad.org/events/scalingup/index.htm; J. Linn, A. Hartmann, H. Kharas, and R. Kohl, "Scaling Up the Fight against Rural Poverty: An Institutional Review of IFAD's Approach." Global Working Paper 39, Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2010.

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