

IFAD: Environmental Mandate & Activities
International Fund for Agricultural Development

Environmental Mandate

IFAD is dedicated to eradicating rural poverty in developing countries. Seventy-five per cent of the world's poorest people – 900 million women, children and men – live in rural areas and depend on agriculture and related activities for their livelihoods.

Working with rural poor people, governments, donors, non-governmental organizations and many other partners, IFAD focuses on country-specific solutions, which can involve increasing rural poor peoples' access to financial services, markets, technology, land and other natural resources.

IFAD uses a sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) to improve understanding of the livelihoods of poor people. It draws on the main factors that affect poor people's livelihoods and the typical relationships between these factors and peoples access to resources and the benefits they can provide. Important factors related to environment and sustainable development include natural resources, technologies, their skills, knowledge and capacity, their health, access to education, sources of credit, or their networks of social support. IFAD uses SLA in planning new development activities and in assessing the contribution that existing activities have made to sustaining livelihoods.

Environmental Activities

IFAD's activities are guided by the Strategic Framework for IFAD 2002-2006: Enabling the Rural Poor to Overcome Their Poverty. The framework's three strategic objectives are to:

- strengthen the capacity of the rural poor and their organizations
- improve equitable access to productive natural resources and technologies
- increase access by the poor to financial services and markets

Underlying these strategic objectives is IFAD's belief that rural poor people must be empowered to lead their own development if poverty is to be eradicated. Poor people must be able to develop and strengthen their own organizations, so they can advance their own interests and dismantle the obstacles that prevent many of them from creating better lives for themselves. They must be able to have a say in the decisions and policies that affect their lives, and they need to strengthen their bargaining power in the marketplace.