

## NEN Close Up Event

### **IFAD-ILO Partnership**

**Mainstreaming youth and women's employment in rural investments in NENA**



## **Report**

5 February 2018  
10:00-12:00  
Oval Conference Room

## Background

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Unemployment rates in Near East and North African countries remain among the highest globally. Young people are especially affected. Youth unemployment rates stand at around 29.7 per cent<sup>1</sup> while only 13.5 per cent<sup>2</sup> of female youth engaged in the labour force in the Arab States. Poor employment outcomes for women in the region can be attributed to a lack of suitable jobs, in particular in the formal private sector, prevailing cultural attitudes, gendered laws and weak support services, for example to combine paid work with unpaid care work. Women generally work in low productivity jobs, and are overrepresented among unpaid family workers.

The challenge of tackling unemployment among rural women and youth gave rise to a unique partnership between IFAD and ILO, also known as the Taqueem Initiative (meaning “evaluation” in Arabic). The jointly supported three-year initiative on “**Strengthening gender monitoring and evaluation in rural employment in the Near East and North Africa**” aimed to develop the capacity of 14 youth- and women-focused institutions, serving more than 10,000 rural women and youth in the NENA region. These institutions received support for evidence-based research and rigorous results measurement of gender empowerment in rural employment-related interventions. This included the production of nine impact evaluations and evidence reviews, as well as impact evaluation training of more than 300 rural practitioners. Four unique Policy Labs and Evidence Symposia were held in focus countries of Egypt, Jordan and Morocco to encourage evidence uptake and policy dialogue.

The Close Up event aimed at sharing and discussing results of the project as well as to jointly reflect on what works in promoting women’s empowerment and youth employment in the Near East and North Africa region.

## Opening remarks

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**Perin Saint-Ange**, Assistant Vice President of the Programme Management Department (PMD), IFAD, opened the NEN Close Up Event and welcomed the 40 participants to a session providing an opportunity to share lessons about improving livelihoods of rural women and youth in the Near East and North Africa region. Mr Saint-Ange stressed that the United Nations system needed to deliver together on the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. Pointing to the challenging environment rural investment projects face in targeting unemployed women and youth, he highlighted the need to learn how to increase impact and make operations on the ground more effective. Only by creating an enabling environment and building on successful projects and programmes could international organizations, governments, private sector organizations and other stakeholders could ensure that the rural space benefits from investments.

According to Mr Saint-Ange, the IFAD-ILO Taqueem partnership has conveyed the message that achieving and maintaining sustainable results requires working together with partners – between UN organizations but also beyond. Mr Saint-Ange pointed out that while IFAD operations can provide young people with much needed tools and skills to improve rural livelihoods, the results

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<sup>1</sup> ILO 2017. [Global Employment Trends for Youth: Paths to a Better Working Future](#). International Labour Organization (Geneva, Switzerland).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

of this partnership will help IFAD to strengthen its existing approaches for evaluating gender-sensitive outcomes in rural employment-related project interventions.

Following the welcoming remarks, **Khalida Bouzar**, Director of the Near East and North Africa Division (NEN), IFAD, recalled the many development challenges young women and men in the region are faced with and pointed to risks for social cohesion when young people lack opportunities. She emphasized that IFAD chose the ILO as a strategic partner to improve gender monitoring and evaluation in youth employment projects and operations in the region, and that there are opportunities to further strengthen the IFAD-ILO partnership. These include:

- Closer collaboration with IFAD country programme teams to assist in measuring job impacts of rural investments and developing methodologies to measure the costs of creating jobs through loan operations.
- Strengthening IFAD-ILO collaboration at the in-country level, for example on training young people on technological innovations in agriculture and changing the mind-sets of young smallholder farmers from “survival” into “entrepreneurial” mode.
- Building a regional “Centre of Excellence” on women and youth rural labour market analysis and diagnostics.
- Examining regional disparities and differences at country level in labour market outcomes.

**Sukti Dasgupta**, Chief, Employment and Labour Market Policies Branch, ILO, highlighted the joint priorities of both organizations to lift young people and marginalised women and men in rural areas out of poverty, such as through the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. Providing an overview of the main findings from ILO’s recent [Global Employment Trends for Youth 2017](#) report, Ms Dasgupta described the presently tense youth labour market situation, noting that young women in rural areas are often among the most disadvantaged groups. She underlined that youth unemployment, standing at 70.9 million worldwide (13.1 per cent), was only the tip of the ice-berg and that job quality was of equally great concern. While for example the share of young workers in wage employment increased from 2005 to 2015 from 58 to 69 percent, most of this change was driven by an expansion of temporary contracts rather than by stable employment. Presenting results from the ILO Youth and the Future of Work Survey, Ms Dasgupta pointed to the finding that young people in developing and emerging economies look to the future with more confidence than their counterparts in developed countries and are ready to embrace new technologies but at the same time also value traditional aspects of job security and stability.<sup>3</sup> Emphasising ILO’s continued focus on promoting decent jobs for young people, she referred to the “Youth and Employment in North Africa” conference that took place in September 2017 in Geneva. During the high-level meeting, ILO constituents from North African countries adopted a roadmap reconfirming their commitment to youth employment promotion in the region and listing priority areas for action in the period 2017-2021.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, she underlined that the IFAD-ILO Taqueem partnership greatly improved the evidence base on “what works in youth employment” enabling the ILO and its partners to more confidently advise governments and social partners on how to design effective youth employment policies and programmes.

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<sup>3</sup> For more details, see also *ibid.*, chapter 5 (“New forms of youth employment”).

<sup>4</sup> ILO. 2017. [Youth Employment in North Africa \(YENA\) Roadmap: 2017-2021](#) (Geneva, Switzerland).

## IFAD-ILO partnership: Results of the Taqueem Initiative

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**Drew Gardiner**, Chief Technical Advisor of the Taqueem Initiative, Youth Employment Programme, ILO, presented the key results of the IFAD-ILO partnership.

The Taqueem Initiative, part of an IFAD-financed grant project, titled “Strengthening gender monitoring and evaluation in rural employment in the Near East and North Africa”, applies a triangular approach to promote evidence based rural policy-making focused on young people and women. An iterative cycle of capacity development, impact research and policy dialogue aims to strengthen programme management and gender mainstreaming of government institutions, workers and employers organizations, NGOs and other development partners.

Major achievements of the partnership include:

- A community of practice of 14 NENA based organizations focused on rural employment, together they serve over 10,000 women and youth. A knowledge sharing site, [www.ilotaqem.org](http://www.ilotaqem.org), allows Community of Practice members and youth employment practitioners to share best practices and newest evidence from impact evaluation.
- An IFAD-ILO Impact Report series with 9 published impact evaluation and evidence review studies as well as an Impact Brief series with 10 short publications on “what works” in rural youth employment and how to improve gender monitoring in practice.
- More than 300 youth employment practitioners, implementers and researchers supported through basic and advanced evaluation courses for rural youth employment programmes
- A major Guide on Results Measurement of Decent Jobs for Young People (forthcoming) that will support evaluation training courses and other technical assistance projects in the future
- Four unique Policy Labs and Evidence Symposia in focus countries of Morocco, Egypt and Jordan to encourage evidence uptake and social dialogue

### Panel discussion

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The presentation on Taqueem’s key results, was followed by a panel session featuring rural and employment experts from ILO, IFAD and the University of Passau, Germany. **Nerina Muzurovic**, KMO & Grant Manager, NEN, IFAD, moderated the panel session. During the discussion, panel members shared experiences on how to integrate unemployed women and youth into agricultural value chains, improve their access to finance, technology and markets and increase the participation of poor rural youth and women in rural investment projects.

To start with, **Valter Nebuloni**, Head of the Youth Employment Programme, ILO, discussed the newest youth labour market trends. In fact, with youth unemployment rates of 30 per cent in 2017 in the Arab States and 28.8 per cent in North Africa, which corresponds to a total of 6.3 million unemployed youth, the region presents one of the most challenging labour market situations for young people worldwide. Moreover, the region is characterised by low participation of young women in labour markets, 13.5 per cent in the Arab States and 16.6 per cent in Northern Africa. He referred to the MENA gender paradox, that is the fact that while gender disparities in educational attainment have largely vanished over the past decades in the region,

labour market outcomes for young men and women still differ considerably. Finally, Mr Nebuloni stressed that between 25 per cent (Northern Africa) and 28 percent (Arab States) of young people in the region with jobs are often finding themselves in moderate or extreme poverty, with an income below US\$ 3.10 per day.<sup>5</sup>

Sharing an example how youth employment interventions can produce meaningful results in challenging environments, **Dina Saleh**, Country Programme Manager, NEN, IFAD, presented findings from the IFAD funded Rural Financial Services and Agribusiness Development project in Moldova. Focusing on creating jobs in agriculture and related value chains, this IFAD intervention combined financial support with appropriate and cost-effective advisory services for young women and men to set up their own businesses. These newly established enterprises, in turn, created an additional 1,700 new jobs, nearly 40 per cent of which are held by women. The project also received the IFAD Gender award in 2015 in recognition of its work to empower women. In a country where migration is one solution for Moldovan young people seeking access to work, the intervention provided training and support to create rural employment and enterprise options that are appropriate for young people, in both the farm and the non-farm sector.

**Vrej Jijyan**, Programme Officer, NEN, IFAD discussed some of IFAD's efforts to empower young people in rural areas. He presented results from the IFAD funded Small Ruminants Investment and Graduating Households in Transition project in Jordan. The project has introduced a grant-financed component for graduation into sustainable livelihoods. The intervention is carefully sequenced, including income support, skills training courses and provision of seed capital to jump-start economic activity (both on- and off-farm). The intervention targets women and youth, with particular focus on Syrian refugees, while also supporting the Jordanian host communities. Mr Vrej also mentioned that the project will be working with the Jordan River Foundation which has recently concluded an agreement with an international furniture company to offer Syrian refugee women involved in the project activities steady, year-round jobs. Adding to this message, **Lenyara Fundukova**, Programme Officer, NEN, IFAD, discussed the role of young women in rural value chains. Citing the example of the IFAD funded Dairy Value Chains Development Project in Uzbekistan she emphasized the multiple roles women play as producers and consumers both upstream and downstream in agricultural value chains. In particular, women are heavily involved in on-farm activities which are often not recognized and valued. She reminded the audience that projects need to be delivered in a gender-sensitive way, ensuring not only active participation of women in programme activities but also designing and implementing gender-transformative activities in the first place.

To conclude the presentations from panellists, **Michael Grimm**, Professor of Economics, University of Passau, Germany, shared some lessons learned from ongoing research on women's empowerment in Tunisia. Together with a team of international and national researchers, Dr Grimm adjusted the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) to the Tunisian context and conducted a representative survey among over 1,000 households covering almost 2,800 individuals. Importantly, the WEAI features five dimensions: production, access to resources, income, leadership and time use allowing for a complex description and analysis of drivers and determinants of empowerment. Preliminary results suggest that rural women show high empowerment levels regarding time use (e.g. workload, leisure) and low empowerment levels in the areas of production and access to resources. While men show higher empowerment

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<sup>5</sup> For more information, see ILO 2017. [Global Employment Trends for Youth: Paths to a Better Working Future](#). [International Labour Organization](#) (Geneva, Switzerland), Chapter 2.

levels than women in nearly all dimensions, absolute levels in the production and resource dimension are low as well – a reminder of the often difficult labour market situation in many areas of Tunisia, Mr Grimm concluded.

A question and answer session followed and touched upon a variety of topics: members from the audience and the panel agreed that while youth unemployment is a global challenge, it requires comprehensive and context specific solutions. Multi-pronged interventions should include a focus on technology and skills development. Moreover, the panel discussed the operational challenges of conducting rigorous impact evaluations in a development context. For some interventions, randomized controlled trials (RCT) might be feasible while in particular for large scale policy evaluation quasi-experimental methods and evaluations that combine qualitative with quantitative approaches can be more promising. Moreover, the panel highlighted the persisting lack of detailed labour market data for and adapted to rural areas. The audience also inquired which age groups should be considered “youth”. Panellists agreed that while the UN definition used for most indicators and reporting purposes covers 15-24 year olds, this age bracket might be adapted depending on the country context and target group of interventions. Finally, it was discussed how the WEAI in Tunisia has been adapted to capture employment related activities within the agricultural sector, including women’s influence over the sales dimension (control of income) at the lower end of the value chain.

### **Closing remarks**

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In her closing remarks **Sukti Dasgupta** reminded the audience of the importance of international organizations contributing to impacts at larger scale. She underlined the need for integrated approaches for youth employment encompassing not only government but also international agencies, social partners, civil society organization and the private sector. Ms Dasgupta highlighted that young people are highly mobile and willing to migrate if decent employment opportunities are not locally available. She also reminded the audience that in situations where jobs are scarce, young women were often crowded out of the labour market. This has severe repercussions on women’s empowerment given the close link between paid work and the control over relevant decisions at the household and community level, Ms Dasgupta added. She stressed that while the IFAD-ILO Taqueem partnership had laid a foundation in term of “what works” in certain contexts, there was still a severe lack of data for rural areas and when it comes to analysing women’s empowerment in particular. There was still a lot to be done for young women in rural areas and a huge case to be made for more and better jobs for young people, Ms Dasgupta concluded.

Wrapping-up the NEN Close Up event, **Khalida Bouzar** reminded the audience of the priority to help shifting mentalities, so that women can play a bigger role transforming rural societies into sustainable societies. Projects and intervention should focus on providing women with jobs, also because this often leads to increased investments in communities and in the education of children. To sum up, Ms Bouzar emphasized the need for a comprehensive approach to rural development, including greater inclusion of women and youth in green jobs - decent and sustainable jobs that contribute to preserving or restoring the environment.

# Programme

10:00-10:10

Welcome

**Speakers:** Perin Saint-Ange, AVP PMD; Khalida Bouzar, Director, NEN

10:10-10:20

Introductory remarks

**Speaker:** Sukti Dasgupta, Chief, Employment and Labour Market Policies Branch, ILO

10:20-10:30

IFAD-ILO partnership results

**Speaker:** Drew Gardiner, Chief Technical Adviser, YEP, ILO

10:30-11:30

Panel discussion

**Panellists:** Valter Nebuloni (Head, YEP); Michael Grimm (Professor of Economics, University of Passau); Dina Saleh (CPM, NEN); Lenyara Fundukova (Programme Officer, NEN); Vrej Jijyan (Programme Officer, NEN)

11:30-11:50

Open discussion

**Moderator:** Nerina Muzurovic, KMO & Grant Manager, NEN

11:50-12:00

Way Forward

**Speakers:** Sukti Dasgupta; Khalida Bouzar

## BIOS



**Sukti Dasgupta** is Chief of the Employment and Labour Market Policies Branch at the ILO in Geneva. She was previously Senior Economist and Head of the ILO's Regional Economic and Social Analysis Unit and also worked in field offices in South Asia and East Asia. Dr Dasgupta holds a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Cambridge, UK, has published widely in the area of employment, poverty and gender, and has extensive experience in working with policy-makers on labour market policies.



**Valter NEBULONI**, a national of Italy, is the Head of the Youth Employment Programme Unit at the International Labour Office in Geneva, Switzerland. Mr Nebuloni began his career with the ILO in 1993 when he joined the Employment and Rural Development Section of the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok, Thailand. From 1995 to 1998, he was assigned to the Development Policies Department of ILO Geneva. He then moved to Dakar, Senegal, where he worked as Employment Specialist with the ILO Multidisciplinary Team for Sahel. From 2002 to 2015 he served at the ILO's International Training Centre where he occupied different senior positions prior to his last assignment as Manager of the Employment Policy and Analysis Programme of the Centre. Mr Nebuloni holds a Master's degree in Development Cooperation from the University of Perugia, Italy. The early stages of his professional experience include assignments with the European Commission and private consultancy firms in the development field.



**Drew Gardiner** is a member of the Global Technical Team of the ILO's Employment Policy Department. He is the Chief Technical Adviser of the IFAD-ILO partnership "Strengthening gender monitoring and evaluation in rural employment in the Near East and North Africa", which undertakes impact evaluation of policies and programmes on women and youth employment. He is an accomplished researcher, speaker and adviser on evidence-based active labour market policies. Drew has mobilized and managed a portfolio of labour market programmes on skills, entrepreneurship and employment services across Africa and the Middle East, working with stakeholders from the UN, private sector and government. Drew has a bachelor's degree in international relations and French from the University of Calgary and an MBA from the University of Geneva.



**Michael Grimm** is a Professor of Economics at the University of Passau. He is also a research fellow at IZA and RWI - Leibniz Institute for Economic Research. He holds a master's degree from the University of Frankfurt and Sciences Po, Paris, and a Ph.D. from Sciences Po. His research covers problems related to poverty and growth such as education, health, labour and entrepreneurship, including the evaluation of policies in these domains. He has recently led a World Bank-funded project on informality. Currently, he is directing an IFAD-ILO Taqueem Initiative study on Young Women's Empowerment in Agriculture in Tunisia. He has published in the Journal of Development Economics, the World Bank Economic Review, Economic Development and Cultural Change and Labour Economics, among others.



**Périn L. Saint-Ange** is the Associate Vice-President, Programme Management Department, at IFAD. He is responsible managing the delivery of the Programme of Loans and Grants (POLG) in compliance with operational policies and procedures, and in accordance with strategic priorities and corporate commitments. Saint Ange joined IFAD in 1998 as a Country Portfolio Manager and held other senior positions including Director of the East and Southern Africa Division and Director and Chief of Staff, Office of the President and the Vice-President. Prior to joining IFAD, Saint



Ange worked as a Team Leader in the FAO Investment Centre, World Bank Cooperative Programme as an economist and financial analyst. Previously he served in the Government of the Seychelles as Animal Husbandry Officer and later as Director General Agriculture. Saint Ange studied at Kesteven Agricultural College in Lincolnshire, England, and the School of Agriculture, Aberdeen in Scotland. He holds a post-graduate diploma and a Master in Economics from the University of New England, Australia.



**Khalida Bouzar** brings more than 30 years of national and international corporate leadership experience, of which 20 years in the UN system, where she has worked on sustainable and rural development, environment and natural resource management, economics and industry in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, the Near East and North Africa regions. Since 2012, she is Director of the NEN Division at IFAD. Under her leadership, IFAD established a Facility for Refugees, Migrants, Forced Displacement and Rural Stability (FARMS). Earlier, Dr Bouzar was Deputy Director of the UNEP's Paris-based Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, where she led the Division's strategy, policy and portfolio development, and established key

partnerships, including with the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. Her earlier positions include Head of the Regional Office for West and Central Africa for UNDP Bureau for Development Policy, Regional Sustainable Development Advisor, and International Technical Expert in Drylands Development at UNDP. She holds a Ph.D. in Sciences from the Pierre-and-Marie-Curie University in Paris.



**Dina Saleh** is a development practitioner with over 20 years international experience in development projects and programs in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia. She is currently the IFAD Country Programme Manager for Turkey and Georgia. She also served as the Regional Portfolio Adviser for the Near East, North Africa and Europe Division and previously, as the Supervision Support Officer. Prior to joining IFAD in 2007, Ms. Saleh worked at the United Nations Office for Project Services in Nairobi, Tunisia and Rome. She holds an MSc from the University of London in

Development Finance.



**Lenyara Fundukova** is a development professional with over 20 years of experience in various UN organizations. She is an Economist who studied Doctorate of Business Administration at the University of Liverpool, UK. Her studies focus on management of organizational reforms and changes. In her current capacity, Ms Fundukova is working with the IFAD country portfolios in several Middle Eastern, Eastern Europe and Central Asia countries. Her extensive communication and negotiation skills resulted in successful accession of 5 new IFAD member states: Estonia (2012), Hungary (2011), Montenegro

(2015), Russia (2014) and Uzbekistan (2011), and increased contributions to the Fund. She has been instrumental in formulating effective country strategies for positioning the IFAD programmes in country contexts and implementing investment projects that contributed to the development of agricultural sector in those countries. Previously, she worked with UNOPS on Parliamentary reforms in Bangladesh and UNDP Conflict prevention programme in Ukraine.



**Vrej Jijyan** works as Programme Officer at IFAD's Near East, North Africa and Europe Division. He has extensive experience in programme design and implementation in Near Eastern and North African countries, with a special focus on countries in fragile situations and programmes tackling refugee issues. Previously, he worked at the United Nations Development Programme, where he was involved in different projects on rural and urban development, small and medium enterprises support, vocational educational training and public-private partnerships. He lectured

at Yerevan State University and is the author of 10 articles and 3 research papers on the economics and political systems of Near Eastern countries. He holds a Ph.D. in economics from Yerevan State University.