

INOFO AT IFAD ESA REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOP – Joint statement made by FaFo and IFAD

by Julie Nakalanda Matovu & Charles K. Mubanga.

IFAD¹'s commitment to fulfill its mandate of fostering rural development has taken on yet another strategic approach of engaging with farmer's organizations for more effective smallholders' development. The February 2016 FaFo² meeting in Rome unanimously agreed to decentralize FaFo to regional levels in the different parts of the world for increased farmer representation, and participation in the development process under the IFAD programmes worldwide. INOFO³ soon after the onset of IFAD- INOFO project, which was implemented by IFOAM⁴, went to the polls and elected the 3rd INOFO Council, during the General Assembly in Istanbul in October 2014. The council applied for representation on the FaFo steering committee, during the Rome meeting, which was operating at global level, then, and were unconditionally accepted.

Early 2017, the Global FAFO steering Committee, working closely with IFAD began the process of rolling out FAFO at Regional level. The INOFO council was contacted and elected **Charles Mubanga** from Zambia as the INOFO representatives on the ESA⁵ FAFO steering committee, deputized by **Julie Nakalanda Matovu**, from Uganda.



L – R: Roberto Longo, IFAD; Elizabeth Mpofu, La Via Campesina representative; Charles K. Mubanga INOFO Convenor Southern Africa; Julie Nakalanda Matovu, INOFO Convenor Eastern Africa; Alessandro Marini, Country Director Uganda, IFAD.

The major purpose of the meeting was to discuss and work out functional synergies between IFAD and FAFO at the regional and Country levels. On 20th to 23rd May 2017, 40 Farmers' Leaders from 12 countries and 28 farmers' organizations, representing millions of small-scale farmers, artisanal fishers, pastoralists met with IFAD ESA Division in Kampala, Uganda, for the First Regional Farmers' Forum in Eastern and Southern Africa.

¹ IFAD – International Fund for Agricultural Development

² FaFo – Farmers' Forum

³ INOFO – Intercontinental Network for Organic Farmers' Organization

⁴ IFOAM – International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements

⁵ ESA – Eastern and Southern African

The Regional Farmers' Forum meeting was also attended on 22nd and 23rd of May by around 260 representatives from IFAD funded projects in 17 countries and staff from IFAD HQ. In fact, the Regional Farmers' Forum was organized in conjunction with the IFAD Regional Implementation Workshop dedicated to the theme of *Financial Inclusion for Rural Transformation* that took place from 22nd to 25th May 2017. The four-day meeting was kick started by the first physical meeting of the Regional Steering Committee whose membership currently draws from ESAFF, EAFF, SACAU, INOFO, WFF, WFFP, WFO, La Via Campesina and IFAD.

IFAD Regional ESA Division welcomes and supports the decentralization of the Farmers' Forum process and takes it as a key accountability instrument for development effectiveness of the its supported investments in the region. The ESA FaFo Process is steered and monitored by the Regional Steering Committee. Together, the committee members agreed that the committee should be as representative as possible and include, in the near future, representatives of pastoralists from the region.

Key elements of the ESA IFAD-FOs⁶ Partnerships. ESA FAFO participants jointly decided to focus the collaboration in the region country by country and to articulate country-level action plans. The action plans have been developed during break-out sessions that brought together IFAD Country Teams, Project Coordinators; staff from IFAD funded Projects, and Farmers' Representatives. Country level action plans were developed for 14 countries, namely for Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The action plans are attached and are an integral part of the joint IFAD/FOs commitment. Elements of the 14 country-level action plans comprise the following:

- periodic consultations to monitor country level collaboration and for proposing corrective measures to improve cooperation between IFAD supported projects and FOs ;
- support the development of country-level Farmers' or Rural Producers' Forums to foster dialogue between national government, FOs and development partners for sustainable rural development;
- joint mapping of FOs at country level to explore ways of developing cooperation with IFAD Country Programmes;
- Contracts between IFAD funded projects and Apex FOs in support of institutional development of local FOs.

This statement and the specific Country Action Plans were jointly developed by IFAD ESA Regional Division and Farmers' Delegates and represent a joint commitment that will guide IFAD/FOs country level partnerships between Mid-2017 and end of 2019.

Other Regional FAFO platforms will be established in sequence, which will include other regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America, where INOFO already has representation. This is a true reflection of progressive capacity building for OFOs, which was championed by the IFOAM academy under the three-year IFAD-INOFO project, who worked closely with local partners, NOGAMU, in Africa, and OFAI, in India. The INOFO representatives at the ESA FAFO platform hope to continue working with other strategic partners such as the NOAMs⁷ within the region, OFOs⁸ at local level, IFOAM, and IFAD at country and regional levels to further strengthen INOFO at all levels to utilize the space, participate and benefit from the IFAD facilitate but farmer-led inclusive development process for rural smallholder communities.

INOFO recognizes and appreciates the support from IFAD and other development partners for the recognition of principles of inclusiveness, pluralism and heterogeneity of farming systems while working towards the sustainable development goals.

⁶ FOs – Farmer Organizations

⁷ NOAMs – National Organic Agriculture Movements

⁸ OFOs – Organic Farmer Organizations