



# IFAD/Belgian Survival Fund Joint Programme 25 years of cooperation





## Mutual interests, different strengths

### A collaborative partnership

The **Belgian Survival Fund (BSF)** was created by the Belgian Parliament in 1983 in response to the more than one million drought- and famine-related deaths in East Africa. BSF provides grants to pay for rural development projects, with a focus on food security and nutrition, in some of the poorest countries in Africa, helping extremely poor people to become healthier and more productive and lowering the risk that they will face starvation.

The **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)**, a specialized United Nations agency, was established as an international financial institution in 1977 as one of the major outcomes of the 1974 World Food Conference. It is dedicated to eradicating poverty and hunger in rural areas of developing countries. Through low-interest loans and grants, it develops and finances programmes and projects that enable poor rural people to overcome poverty themselves.

The **IFAD/BSF Joint Programme** was formed in 1983 to pursue a common goal: helping poor people in rural areas to overcome poverty. Since then, BSF and IFAD have designed and funded 57 projects in 16 African countries for a total amount of more than US\$200 million.

BSF and IFAD also rely on the expertise of non-governmental and community-based organizations, such as local farmers' cooperatives and women's and church groups, which play a crucial role in most projects. They know the local reality and have built a relationship of trust by working closely with community members.

BSF and IFAD each offer unique expertise. But, these individual strengths create synergy and bring added value to our joint projects. This has proven to be a successful formula for more than 25 years.

BSF provides grants that address basic needs such as health and family nutrition. BSF grants may fund a new village well or build and equip a medical centre. Strong, healthy children grow to be strong, healthy adults who are able to participate in, and benefit from, other projects funded by IFAD loans. These projects help people increase their food production, raise their incomes, improve their education standards, secure rights to land, water and other natural resources, and gain power to shape the decisions and policies that affect their lives.

Our joint projects:

- offer improved technologies that boost crop, dairy and livestock yields
- increase market access so that farmers can receive higher, more reliable incomes from their hard work
- support financial services that help poor people save money or get a loan to start a small business
- provide education and training to encourage farmers to expand their income-earning activities
- help women acquire new skills that help raise their incomes
- empower communities to develop and strengthen their organizations so they have a stronger voice and are able to influence institutions and policies, including laws and regulations of relevance to rural poverty
- help communities to rebuild lives after the devastation caused by HIV/AIDS, natural disasters and armed conflict



## Working with the most vulnerable people

The Joint Programme operates in the poorest countries in Africa, focusing on regions of high food insecurity and malnutrition.

A country or region is selected on the basis of:

- its Human Development Index, which measures life expectancy, literacy, educational attainment, and GDP per capita
- whether it is in a post-conflict or crisis situation
- how much Overseas Development Aid it receives
- good governance during the previous 10 years

For example, Moma district in Mozambique is one region in which the Joint Programme operates. The district has 52,000 inhabitants, but only one poorly equipped hospital with two medical doctors. Medication to combat malaria, diarrhoea, HIV/AIDS and other diseases is rarely available. Less than 1 per cent of the population has improved sanitary facilities and more than 50 per cent has no access to potable water. Only 40 per cent of children attend primary school and the teacher-pupil ratio is 1:120. No other donors are active in the district.

## Multisector approach adds value

A recent study conducted in Kenya, Mali and Mozambique by the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium) on behalf of the Joint Programme, illustrates – qualitatively and quantitatively – how combined support to both the social and economic sectors can increase synergy and add value to both sectors.

When household members have access to better health care, they feel fitter, more protected and confident, and are more eager to seek and embrace innovation. This boosts their capacity to be more productive, which leads to higher incomes.

More than 20 per cent of women who have improved access to water have about 30 extra minutes a day to invest in other activities such as economic pursuits, childcare and personal development. In places where improved access to water used for agriculture is combined with adequate training and extension services, there are significant positive effects on productivity, poverty reduction, food security and nutrition.

Investments in education, including training, capacity building in school committees and local governments, and new or improved infrastructure, boost economic performance. These investments encourage people to participate more in networks, improve household, business and farm management, and be innovative when it comes to accessing information and markets. People have better awareness of health, hygiene, nutrition and food security issues. Significantly, women who are literate take a more active role in reducing poverty and establishing preventive health measures in the household.

This multisector approach contributes to stabilizing migration. New opportunities in agriculture, combined with better access to social and marketing infrastructure, keep young people closer to home, as long as land and water are available and there are opportunities for trade, fresh cash injections and networking.

The study showed that, through the social components of the Joint Programme, it is possible to improve the well-being of very poor people. In combination with adapted agricultural interventions, 13 per cent more poor households take part in economic sector activities.



## Challenges for tomorrow

After 25 years of on-the-ground experience, the Joint Programme has learned important lessons that could be replicated in the coming years.

We understand that social sector support is a crucial entry point. It increases the chances that economic activities will succeed, especially in the most vulnerable households. Our goal is to further develop specific household targeting mechanisms and strategies to ensure that very poor people are included. We will also continue to work with local, regional and national governments to strengthen policies that improve people's lives.

As climate change, fluctuating food prices and diminishing natural resources have an increasing impact on poverty and food security in Africa, our projects and their design must remain flexible and adaptable to these changing conditions.

Ensuring that social infrastructure and services are sustainable is vital to project sustainability. However, the capacity of local committees, communities and governments to cover recurrent costs, staffing and project management is sometimes over-estimated. The Joint Programme will therefore intensify training and coaching so that communities are able to maintain facilities and services, and to support the pro-poor dynamics created by the social sector interventions.

Based on its past successes, the Joint Programme is also seeking other donors to help us establish an enlarged facility that would support future projects for rural people living in poverty in the poorest countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

### Where we work

