Sudan has faced substantial changes as a result of the independence of South Sudan in 2011, including the loss of human and land resources and three quarters of the country’s oil wealth. Sudan’s land area today is 1.9 million km² and its population approximately 35.5 million. Oil, the principal economic growth driver before the secession, is now largely lost. As a result, budgetary deficits have mounted, both exports and imports have declined substantially and inflation has risen. The economic situation has worsened the already high and widespread poverty.

The rural poverty rate in Sudan is 58 per cent. Most at risk are small-scale farmers and livestock herders in the rainfed sector, landless and internally displaced people, households without assets, and people in areas affected by drought and conflict. Rural livelihoods are impaired by lack of access to markets, access to financial services, unpredictability of rainfall and water shortages, barriers on migratory routes for livestock, and pest and disease outbreaks.

Agricultural productivity in Sudan is low and variable due to erratic climate conditions, degraded soils, low use of productivity-enhancing technologies and limited knowledge among the rural population. Additional factors include civil
conflict that has ravaged traditional rainfed agriculture; disabling agriculture policies; insufficient financing of costs of agricultural services; inadequate land and water policies; and inefficient marketing arrangements.

**Eradicating rural poverty in Sudan**

The Government of Sudan is committed to making structural reforms and addressing the root causes of poverty, for example with its Agriculture Revival Programme (ARP). Agriculture includes crops, livestock, fisheries and forestry, and is seen as the key sector for poverty reduction. A number of pro-poor regulations have benefited the agricultural sector and the poor population. A gum arabic act in 2009 liberalized trade and had a major impact on improving production and benefits to farmers. A seed act was approved in 2010 to ensure plant breeders’ rights and provide sound regulation for seed production. In the area of microfinance, an insurance scheme accessible to all banks has been introduced to mitigate risks associated with the absence of collateral.

**IFAD’s strategy in Sudan**

For more than 20 years Sudan has been a country of priority for IFAD. Since 1979, the organization has funded a total of 20 projects for an amount of US$286.10 million. A further US$463.90 million has been contributed by the government, cofinancers and project participants. These projects have directly benefited 566,000 households. The IFAD-funded projects have demonstrated how appropriate incentives can significantly improve agricultural production and consolidate peace initiatives. Project interventions are fostering community dialogue around sensitive topics like natural resource management, promoting improved land reforms, harmonization of resources for nomads and farmers, and equitable distribution of resources through participation of local communities in decision-making. Projects financed by IFAD have helped increase agricultural production through environmentally sustainable practices and distribution of improved seeds. Projects have improved access to services and markets in rural areas through infrastructure and are enhancing partnerships with private-sector and service-provider networks. In line with current government policy to decentralize local government, IFAD’s programme in Sudan helps empower local communities and promote good local governance.

Projects financed by IFAD have, through gender mainstreaming, worked to ensure representation of women (and youth as well) in grass-roots organizations and on project management teams, as well as ensured access to microfinance for women in remote rural areas.

IFAD’s programme will continue to target the needs of rural poor people in the rainfed sector and help them build resilience against climate change.

Projects are taking a market-driven approach to development in rural areas and engaging the private sector
Ongoing operations

Butana Integrated Rural Development Project
To improve livelihoods and strengthen communities’ resilience in the face of drought, the project targets smallholder pastoralist households in the sand dunes and clay plains of the region, households engaged in irrigated farming, and smallholders who migrate seasonally with their herds. With a total cost of US$30.20 million including an IFAD loan of US$24.80 million, the project covers an area historically known as Butana, within the eastern states of Khartoum, Gedaref, River Nile, Gezira and Kassala. It directly benefits 40,000 households. It also aims to support improvements in natural resource governance to ensure regulated access to land and water resources in the region for all, and improve the access of women and men to livestock markets and strengthen their bargaining position within markets by rehabilitating market infrastructure and by establishing market information systems and organizing producers’ groups.

Western Sudan Resources Management Programme
The objective of the programme is to build up rainfed agriculture and improve economic conditions in communities in the three Kordofan states, which are inhabited by a large proportion of poor or extremely poor small-scale farmers and herders. The total cost of the programme is US$53.40 million with an IFAD loan and DSF grant of US$28.70 million, directly benefiting 38,000 households. Essential elements of the programme include natural resource management for resolving land and water-based conflicts, the establishment of land rights for herders and for traditional and mechanized farming, and improved access to water and strengthening of infrastructure. The programme invests in livestock restocking, vocational training and the introduction of alternative income-generating enterprises, and works towards strengthening community organization, particularly by involving rural women.

Supporting the Small-scale Traditional Rainfed Producers in Sinnar State Project
The project responds to the alarming levels of land degradation in Sinnar State by introducing environment-friendly and productivity-enhancing technical packages, and mobilizing concerted efforts to formulate a regulatory framework for the development of smallholder and large-scale farming. The project targets smallholder crop producers, agropastorals, settled pastoralists with limited access to water and fodder and women-headed households displaced by the civil strife in southern Sudan. It focuses on technology transfer, market access and post-harvest management, and capacity-building and institutional strengthening. The total cost is US$21.20 million including an IFAD grant of US$13.50 million. The project directly benefits 20,000 households.
Seed Development Project

The project, with a total cost of US$17.50 million including an IFAD grant of US$10.10 million, aims to benefit 1,200 households, improving food security, incomes and resilience to shocks of smallholder producers in North and South Kordofan. It supports the development of the seed industry in Sudan, and intervenes at three levels of the seed production and marketing chain by improving the regulatory framework, increasing the supply of good quality and appropriate varieties of seeds, and enhancing the effective demand of certified seeds by small rainfed traditional producers. The primary target group is smallholder farmers engaged in rainfed agriculture as their main source of livelihood with limited access to inputs, services and assets.

Livestock Marketing and Resilience Programme

The goal of the programme is to increase food security, incomes and climate resilience of poor households in pastoralist communities, and to increase earning opportunities and improve living conditions of livestock-based households. The programme intends to directly benefit 100,000 households and focuses on livestock business development, community-led natural resources management and enhanced adaptive capacities, and rural enterprise and social development. The primary target group comprises economically marginalized and poor households, especially poor rural women and young men responding to income-generating opportunities. Private-sector value adders, service providers and operators in the principal livestock value chains are secondary targets. Total cost is US$119.10 million and IFAD contributes with a US$31.50 million grant.

Integrated Carbon Sequestration Project

The intention is to promote climate-friendly rural development in central and eastern Sudan by increasing the carbon stock and reducing net greenhouse gas emissions. Project activities include afforestation/reforestation to increase the carbon sequestration potential and enhance forest ecosystem services; biodiversity conservation; capacity-building among key institutions to monitor and report on carbon stocks; and promotion of sustainable and more efficient energy production at community level to reduce pressure on forest resources and ultimately greenhouse gas emission. The project will directly benefit 10,000 households, and is financed through a US$3.65 million grant from the Global Environment Facility.

Building a poverty-free world

IFAD invests in rural people, empowering them to reduce poverty, increase food security, improve nutrition and strengthen resilience. Since 1978, we have provided US$17.7 billion in grants and low-interest loans to projects that have reached about 459 million people. IFAD is an international financial institution and a specialized United Nations agency based in Rome – the UN’s food and agriculture hub.

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For further information on rural poverty in Sudan, visit the Rural Poverty Portal www.ruralpovertyportal.org

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