

Executive summary

A. Background

1. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a fragile state. Although the war is officially over, the political and security situation remains unstable. Despite a wealth of natural resources and significant potential for agricultural development, DRC remains one of the world's poorest countries, and most rural households are food-insecure. Decades of poor governance and conflict have led to a collapse in the agriculture sector, and the resources mobilized by Government to reactivate the sector, particularly smallholder farming, are extremely limited.
2. In 2016, the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) conducted the first country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) in DRC. The evaluation covered the period 2003 to 2015 and had two main objectives: (i) evaluate the results and performance of the IFAD strategy and programme funded under the country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOP) of 2003 and 2012; and (ii) produce conclusions and recommendations for the next strategic partnership between IFAD and the DRC planned for 2017. The CSPE followed the second edition of the IFAD Evaluation Manual (2015) and covers three closely related levels of analysis: project portfolio performance, non-lending activities and the performance of partners (IFAD and Government) in managing the country programme. It also provides a summary assessment of the relevance and effectiveness of the country strategy and programme as a whole.
3. The main evaluation mission took place in April 2016 and included interviews with stakeholders in Kinshasa (Government, development partners and civil society) and field visits in four provinces where the programme operates (Kinshasa, Kongo-Central, Kwilu and Maniema). IOE conducted a project performance evaluation of the Agricultural Rehabilitation Programme in Orientale Province (PRAPO) a few months before the CSPE, which also included field visits. IOE further prepared a project completion report validation for the Agricultural Revival Programme in Equateur Province (PRAPE) based on an in-depth desk review.

B. IFAD strategy and programme in DRC

4. The 2003 COSOP was designed in the aftermath of the war and focused on the transition from humanitarian aid to development. The four major areas of intervention proposed were: support for agricultural production, commercialization, organization of farmers and rehabilitation of basic social services. The COSOP was extended from 2008 to 2011. Three programmes – PRAPE, PRAPO and the Integrated Rehabilitation Programme in Maniema Province (PIRAM) – were approved during the period. The 2012 COSOP continued to target agricultural production and marketing, and capacity-building for farmer organizations. However, the latest COSOP did not include support for basic social services. Two programmes – the Kinshasa Food Supply Centres Support Programme (PAPAKIN) and the North Kivu Agriculture Sector Support Project (PASA-NK) – were approved under this COSOP.
5. Between 2005 and 2011, IFAD's portfolio in DRC was managed by a Rome-based country programme manager (CPM) supported by a field support officer in Kinshasa. IFAD and the Government signed an agreement in April 2011 to establish a country office in Kinshasa and the CPM has been out-posted since January 2012. The IFAD country team grew gradually and currently numbers six people shared between DRC and the Republic of Congo; four of them are based in Kinshasa and two in Rome.

C. Portfolio performance

6. **Context.** It is important to recognize the particularly difficult intervention conditions in DRC, marked by the remoteness of project intervention areas and a very poor transportation network, highly degraded economic and social infrastructure, very weak government institutions with rampant corruption and

seriously under-resourced public services, and limited capacity of local, private service providers.

7. **Relevance.** The project portfolio in DRC is in line with the COSOPs and the government strategies regarding poverty reduction and rural and agricultural development, and responds well to the needs of the rural poor. Project design had several positive features, well adapted to the difficult context, which included: placing farmer organizations at the centre of the agricultural development process to enable them – over the long term – to provide much-needed services to farmers; prioritizing rural road construction and rehabilitation to improve the circulation of people and goods; and promoting local multiplication and dissemination of improved seed and planting material. Nevertheless, the project portfolio also had some major design flaws which affected project effectiveness and efficiency. These included: unrealistic targets; dispersed project intervention areas; complex implementation arrangements; limited involvement of deconcentrated government services and the local private sector; insufficient duration of support; limited external support; and inadequate risk analysis and mitigation measures. In addition, the self-targeting approach through the farmer organizations carried the risk of elite capture and excluding the most vulnerable people; the approach was not monitored.
8. **Effectiveness.** The projects improved the circulation of people and goods, and provided agricultural and fisheries technical advice, equipment and other inputs, such as improved seeds, to a large number of producers. This has contributed to reviving agriculture in the programme areas. However, portfolio effectiveness was affected by the difficult intervention context, the downward revision of multiple quantitative targets, poor planning and management capacities of project management units (PMUs), and inadequate duration of project support. The structuring and professionalization of farmer organizations has achieved good quantitative results, but support was insufficient to ensure good performance and viability of farmer organizations and their apex organizations. On the other hand, the projects hardly built capacity among deconcentrated agricultural services. Thus, they achieved limited results in improving sustainable access to production services and appropriate technologies to farmers. The projects significantly contributed to upgrading social infrastructure, and setting up their management arrangements, but failed to meet quantitative targets in this area.
9. **Efficiency.** Project efficiency indicators are low overall and reflect disproportionately high management expenses in relation to activities and results, significant implementation delays, and cumbersome beneficiary support systems. The high management costs are attributable to the challenging context, which generates very high investment and operating costs, but also to: overlapping roles and responsibilities between the liaison office, PMUs, PMU branches and service providers; the need to cover all costs of public services; and the fact that the project areas are very dispersed. The implementation delays are primarily attributable to: poor capacity for planning, anticipating and managing risks and for implementation on the part of PMUs, public services and local service providers; and cumbersome procedures that often involve several levels of decision-making. The beneficiary support system, based on the outsourcing approach, further slows down decision-making and implementation and raises transaction costs for several reasons: poor technical and management capacities of service providers; poor management capacity among project teams; lack of internal control structures and adequate proximity of technical assistance; and limited supervision capacity due to geographic remoteness from projects; and limited IFAD country office staffing. Over the last five years, IFAD and the Government have made numerous efforts to increase project efficiency, replacing project staff, providing trainings, and increasing project supervision and implementation support. These efforts have led, at least for some projects, to significant improvements.
10. **Impact on rural poverty.** The portfolio had a noticeable impact on the incomes and net assets of beneficiary households, on agricultural productivity and food security, and on human and social capital. In the cases of PRAPE and PRAPO,

household monetary incomes, assets and food security improved over the baseline situation, in part as a result of higher yields and increased cultivated areas, better access to fields and markets, and the distribution of improved seeds and farming equipment. However, project impact on child nutrition was limited, as diets remained largely unchanged. People's access to education and health care services has generally improved through upgrades in social infrastructure, rehabilitated access roads and higher incomes in the project areas. Portfolio impact on institutions and policies was low because the role assigned to provincial authorities and deconcentrated government technical services in project steering, monitoring and implementation was marginal.

11. The evaluation has some reservations regarding the reliability of available impact data and the attribution of positive changes in the project area solely to the project interventions. Indeed, the return of stability in the project areas has also helped boost economic activity and incomes, and project impact studies did not include a counterfactual. In addition, there are considerable doubts about the portfolio's impact on the most vulnerable people – women, unemployed youth, the landless and indigenous people. These people may have been excluded from the farmer organizations that channelled most of the project support, because of social exclusion mechanisms.
12. **Sustainability.** The projects adopted an appropriate exit strategy based on beneficiary capacity-building and ownership, to enable them to manage and maintain agricultural services and rehabilitated infrastructure. The projects placed producers and their organizations at the heart of the development process to gradually promote their empowerment. However, continuity in this transformation is under threat because apex organizations (unions and federations) are still immature and their leaders do not always hold their member farmer organizations' interests at heart. In addition, the improvements seen in agricultural production and productivity, and associated increases in incomes and food security, are imperilled by: the lack of public or private production support services; the absence of functional quality-seed production, multiplication and distribution systems; unequal access to land; and the absence of a long-term vision for the development of integrated and environmentally sustainable production systems. Furthermore, the sustainability of the promising results on improving road access are in jeopardy due to the limited capacity of government agencies to ensure regular road maintenance.
13. **Gender and women's empowerment.** Project designs recognized that gender equality and women's empowerment are key components of poverty reduction, but none of the projects had an adequate approach in this regard. This translated into limited resources earmarked for addressing gender issues, insufficient project team capacity, and poor monitoring of project results and impact on gender equality and women's empowerment. As a result, it is difficult to identify where progress was made on reducing inequalities between the sexes in terms of accessing resources, assets and services; or a more equitable household division of labour. Women's participation in farmer organizations and farmer field schools was relatively strong, which may have contributed to their economic empowerment and participation in production-related decision-making. The PRAPO project made specific efforts to reach out to women on social and economic issues through community listening groups and special interest groups for vulnerable people. More recently, UN Women prepared a gender strategy and action plan for the two ongoing projects with an IFAD grant.
14. **Innovation and scaling up.** The project portfolio has locally introduced several innovations, mainly institutional in nature. In the cases of PRAPE and PRAPO, these include: grouping farmers and fishers into grass-roots organizations, unions and federations; reintroducing improved seeds through a local multiplication and distribution network; and setting up community-based listening clubs and farmer field schools based on the models developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). PIRAM promoted official recognition for local road maintenance committees (CLERs) by the Road Maintenance Fund.

PAPAKIN furthered the structuring of farmer organizations to enable them to evolve towards professional organizations and make them key operators in providing services to their members. However, the portfolio could have been more innovative in targeting vulnerable people, women and young people, and natural resource management. Some innovations – such as CLERS and the seed multiplication system – show good potential for scaling up beyond the intervention areas. The role of other development partners in scaling up could be enhanced by better capitalization of experiences, exchanges and coordination among partners.

15. **Natural resources management and adaptation to climate change.** DRC encounters serious environmental challenges, and both IFAD and the Government have clearly stated their awareness of such issues since at least 2010. Because the two COSOPs prioritized sectors that could have an immediate impact, natural resources management and climate change adaptation received a backseat. The project portfolio could have paid more attention to environmental issues and adaptation to climate change, both at the design stage and during project execution. The projects had little impact on destructive fishing practices and have involuntarily contributed to deforestation and soil degradation by promoting crop intensification and expansion of cultivated areas. They have also contributed very little to climate change resilience in the face of increasingly frequent hazards. Nevertheless, several indirect positive outcomes can be noted, such as the dissemination of farming techniques that make little to no use of mineral fertilizers and pesticides, well adapted to the context of scarcity of these products.

D. Non-lending activities

16. **Policy dialogue.** The themes identified in the COSOPs were very relevant, and included increasing government budgets for the agriculture sector, capacity-building for farmer organizations, the role of young people in agricultural development, and coordination of agricultural research and advisory assistance at the provincial level. However, these issues were barely touched on by the country programme due to a lack of time and conclusive results at portfolio level. In practice, policy dialogue was largely confined to active participation by the CPM in donor-government coordination mechanisms. Topics covered were closely related to project intervention areas such as funding CLERs and promoting seed production, and some progress was made in these areas. Several opportunities for dialogue were missed, such as participation in formulating national strategies and policies; putting in place political conditions during negotiations for new project financing; conducting studies on policy issues to be addressed under the 2012 COSOP; and capitalizing on project results. IFAD is supporting apex organizations with a grant to engage in dialogue with the Government on policies relating to the agriculture sector, such as establishing agro-industrial parks. The outcomes of this dialogue remain modest to date, but the voice of farmers' confederations in political fora has certainly increased.
17. **Knowledge management.** The 2012 COSOP presented knowledge management as an important activity with well-defined mechanisms. Knowledge management is a joint responsibility of the PMUs and the IFAD country office, but, in practice, it is seen as the main responsibility of the communication and knowledge management officer employed by the liaison office since 2011. The IFAD country office organized a few workshops in Kinshasa, and the communication and knowledge management officer prepared a limited number of leaflets and articles to present project innovations and achievements. Overall, however, knowledge management lacked an operational strategy and strong engagement by the PMUs. Efforts to set up a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system at programme level have not been successful so far given the limited capacity of the project teams and the lack of external support, specifically from the IFAD country office.
18. **Partnerships.** The country programme strengthened and diversified its partnership with government institutions and piloted partnerships with associations and the private sector. IFAD successfully mobilized major co-financing for upgrading social services and rural roads, which complemented the portfolio's support to the rural productive sectors, although the results obtained from the

Belgian Fund for Food Security grants were rather disappointing. The country programme was less successful in developing new partnerships that might have opened up new prospects for scaling up, or to garner greater influence on policies in favour of smallholder farmers. At the project level, partnerships with deconcentrated government technical services did not perform well because of their limited capacities. Projects did, however, identify interesting synergies and complementarities with other projects, enabling them to avoid duplication and to better focus resources on other needs. There were also a few cases of successful partnerships with FAO funded by IFAD grants, for instance to set up farmer field schools and community-based listening clubs.

19. **Grants.** The evaluation identified 20 IFAD grants in DRC, of which 13 were regional and seven were country-specific. These grants are administered by several IFAD entities with very limited involvement of the IFAD country office in their design and monitoring. Nevertheless, the interventions and support funded by these grants are quite well aligned with the general directions of the two COSOPs. In view of the poor performance of IFAD-funded projects in DRC, several grants provided support to different stages in the project cycle and contributed to improving programme performance. However, none of the grants have addressed environmental or land issues or youth employment specifically, despite the importance of these issues for the country programme and their limited consideration by the project portfolio. Similarly, no support was provided for key cross-cutting components of the country programme, such as knowledge management and M&E. The bio-economy project implemented by the United Nations Development Programme mobilized substantial financing – an IFAD grant plus allocations from PRAPE and PRAPO – but performed well below expectations.

E. Performance of partners

20. **IFAD.** IFAD has funded a portfolio of projects with relevant objectives and gradually evolving approaches that were, however, too ambitious, complex and spread out considering the enormous challenges and limited implementation capacity currently available in the country. Until 2010, the portfolio was supervised by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), and from 2005 onwards with support from an IFAD field operations officer posted in Kinshasa. Supervision missions made candid accounts of the projects' logistical and human resources-related difficulties, but little was done from IFAD's side to address these problems. Since 2010, the portfolio has been under IFAD's direct supervision, and since 2012, the IFAD CPM has been out-posted to DRC. Since then, supervision, monitoring and technical assistance to the projects have dramatically increased. As the projects suffered from poor fiduciary management, the CPM gave priority to this aspect, thus giving much less attention to non-project activities such as policy dialogue, consultations with other donors or knowledge management. The IFAD country office was strengthened in 2013 with the arrival of a country programme officer, and further in 2015 with a programme officer.
21. **Government.** The policies and strategies developed by the Government pay little attention to strengthening smallholder farming. Also, the Government makes very few resources available to deconcentrated services of the Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development, thus affecting their effectiveness in providing support for project implementation and strongly limiting the sustainability of results. The Government plays an active role in project steering and supervision, but frequently encounters delays in processing such matters as recruitment and tenders. The performance of PMUs, considered the executing agencies of the line ministry, was very weak for all projects for the first three or four years of implementation, seriously reducing their effectiveness and efficiency. Recurring ineligible expenses owing to poor compliance with administrative, accounting and financial procedures are the most acute symptom of the poor command of procedures, the weak culture of transparency and accountability, and the limited effectiveness of *a priori* control mechanisms. The liaison office has played an important role in supporting logistics and representing the project coordinators in Kinshasa, but its mandate has

gradually grown far beyond these roles, reducing the authority and autonomy of the project coordinators.

F. Performance of country strategy and programme

22. **Strategic relevance.** The COSOPs are well aligned with the Government's evolving policies and strategies, consistent with IFAD's strategic frameworks, and responsive to the needs of poor rural people. Still, key elements receive too little attention, such as rural finance, livestock and fisheries, natural resources management (including land tenure) and adaptation to climate change. There were clear improvements from one COSOP to the next, particularly with respect to COSOP preparation and identifying risks and fragility factors, but they did not translate into better taking risks and fragility into account in the country programme. Risks not well considered relate primarily to targeting vulnerable people, limited capacities of deconcentrated government services, and low levels of private investment in rural areas. In addition, the abandonment of the objective to improve basic social services in the 2012 COSOP was a poor strategic choice, as these services are essential to complement the support of IFAD-funded projects focused on the rural productive sectors. Although the projects' geographical targeting and thematic focus can be justified from one project to the next, their dispersion affects their efficiency, and the limited duration of their local presence reduces the likelihood of attaining sustainable impact.
23. **COSOP effectiveness.** The country programme contributed to the achievement of its strategic objectives, although in a rather fragmented way and in most cases falling short of design targets. Among the most significant positive changes supported by the country programme are: improved access to education and health care services; enhanced physical access to fields and markets through improved rural roads; increased agricultural production and higher yields; and a host of nascent farmer organizations and apex farmer organizations. In contrast, the country programme's effectiveness to date remains below expectations with respect to the professionalization of apex farmer organizations, management arrangements for economic and social infrastructure, transformation and marketing of agricultural produce, and large-scale quality-seed production – all essential to ensure sustainability of the positive impacts attained so far. In addition, hardly any progress was made on institutional or policy objectives owing to the limited policy dialogue conducted by the country programme on the priority topics identified in the COSOPs.

G. Conclusions

24. IFAD's country programme in DRC has shown courage in addressing severe rural poverty in a particularly difficult socio-economic, political and institutional context. The COSOPs and project portfolio are broadly relevant to national and IFAD strategies and the needs of the rural poor, but the country context of fragility and accompanying risks are not sufficiently taken into account in the analysis of the operating context, strategies, approaches and partnerships. The country programme's ambitious objectives and complex arrangements, short project duration (which was progressively lengthened), and limited external support are not commensurate with the major operational challenges and the limited management and planning capacities of the project teams. The portfolio is too dispersed across the country, and social targeting, based mainly on self-targeting through the farmer organizations supported, is not sufficiently precise and carries real risks of excluding vulnerable people or of elite capture.
25. The programme's short-term impact on agricultural productivity and food security, household incomes and human and social capital is quite significant as a result of the strategic choice to focus on quick-impact actions in a highly precarious baseline situation. The programme had very good quantitative results in terms of organizing producers, using farmer organizations as the main point of entry for supporting the revival of agriculture. By investing heavily in better access roads, improved seed distribution and agricultural extension, the programme unquestionably contributed to raising productivity and incomes, and to improving food security in the project

areas. Rehabilitating basic social services and infrastructure had an immediate impact on people's access to education and health care services.

26. Nonetheless, low levels of effectiveness and efficiency for both projects and non-lending activities limited the breadth and depth of country programme impact. Portfolio effectiveness was severely affected by: poor planning and management capacity among project teams dealing with complex projects and procedures; poor technical and financial capacity among local enterprises and public services; and design target adjustments required, in view of the challenges encountered and the very slow pace of progress. Portfolio efficiency was undermined by: very high operating costs as a result of project areas that were both vast and difficult to reach; and administrative bottlenecks as a result of weak government institutions and overlapping responsibilities between IFAD headquarters in Rome, the country office, the liaison office, PMUs and project branches.
27. Government resources available to national and deconcentrated services of the Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development are very limited, making them less effective in supporting project implementation and affecting the sustainability of results. IFAD lobbying in favour of higher government budget allocations for agriculture and the rural sector and the importance of smallholder farming did not meet with much success in a context where the government budget is insufficient to fund the country's multiple development needs.
28. With direct supervision from mid-2010 and the out-posting of a CPM to DRC in early 2012, IFAD stepped up its efforts to support portfolio implementation, through closer project supervision and backstopping, and increased technical assistance. The establishment of a country office in Kinshasa and the gradual expansion of the country team represent significant progress and should enable greater attention to be paid to policy dialogue, knowledge management and partnerships.

H. Recommendations

29. The country programme in DRC represents an opportunity for IFAD to learn from its experience in a highly challenging and fragile context. In view of the rather unsatisfactory performance of the country strategy and programme, the Government and IFAD should take the necessary decisions and measures to strengthen the institutional arrangements, the country strategy, project management and non-lending activities. Only by improving its performance and impact will the country programme be able to persuade the Government to improve its policies in favour of smallholder farmers, aspire to scaling up, and trigger a possible increase in funding allocations to DRC. The CSPE puts forward four recommendations:
30. **Recommendation 1. Adjust and strengthen the institutional set-up of the country programme by strengthening the PMUs and the IFAD country office, scaling back the liaison office, moving financial supervision responsibilities to the Ministry of Finance, and increasing the involvement of decentralized and deconcentrated public services.**
 - (a) **Project management units.** The Government should re-centre all project management functions in the PMUs, including results-based management of personnel, procurement, communication and knowledge management. The Government and IFAD should make additional joint efforts to ensure highly qualified personnel in key PMU positions. It is also recommended that a procurement specialist be hired for each PMU to manage local and national procurement, while procurement for large international contracts should be managed by an independent specialized agency. The Government should accept that PMUs receive long-term technical assistants in results-based management (planning, fiduciary management, M&E) and in the essential technical areas.
 - (b) **Liaison office.** In line with the preceding sub-recommendation, and considering the evolution of the IFAD country office and progress made in

information and communication technology, the Government should scale down as much as possible the role of the liaison office and put its reduced staff under the authority of the project coordinators. The liaison office should no longer be involved in fiduciary and human resources management. The Government should revise its decrees and orders accordingly, and also, with IFAD's concurrence, the project financing agreements.

- (c) **IFAD country office.** IFAD should strengthen its country office in terms of fiduciary management competencies, to better support PMUs with procurement and the preparation of withdrawal applications, among others. The Fund should also provide its country office with adequate resources to operate, commensurate with country realities.
 - (d) **Financial supervision.** To ensure the firewall between technical and financial supervision of the project portfolio, the Government should place financial supervision with the Ministry of Finance, which is mandated for this responsibility. This would include management of project start-up funds and signature of withdrawal applications.
 - (e) **Decentralized and deconcentrated public services.** The Government should strengthen the involvement of provincial agriculture and rural development ministries and inspectorates in portfolio steering, monitoring and strategic decision-making, in line with decentralization. Projects should involve deconcentrated public services more in project implementation, and build their technical and management capacities. The Government and IFAD should provide for an adequate budget in each project for strengthening capacity of public partners.
31. **Recommendation 2. Strengthen strategic relevance and impact of the country strategy and programme by improving the fragility context analysis and geographic and social targeting of interventions.**
- (a) **Fragility context analysis.** IFAD should foresee adequate time and resources and make use of the in-depth work done by other development partners, to strengthen its analysis of the causes of rural poverty and how these are linked to fragility in their political, institutional, social and economic dimensions. The Fund should then use this better understanding of the fragility context in formulating the new COSOP and projects. Land tenure, which is a key factor in poverty and conflict, should receive special attention.
 - (b) **Geographical targeting.** The Government and IFAD should concentrate all projects and grants on a limited number of provinces with high poverty rates but a stable security situation, and remain there for a sufficient length of time – 10 to 20 years of effective work. They should limit the geographical coverage of individual projects to a single province, but at the same time promote exchanges with other provinces when supporting agricultural value chains that cross provincial borders, to allow scaling up.
 - (c) **Social targeting.** The Government and IFAD should ensure that projects have a specific targeting strategy to reach the most vulnerable people, based on a sound vulnerability analysis, and leading to differentiated support according to the needs of vulnerable groups – women and youth in particular. Projects should conduct participatory monitoring of conditions of poverty and vulnerability in the project villages, and endeavour to better understand the mechanisms of possible elite capture and exclusion within farmer organizations to ensure that vulnerable groups benefit from support. Projects should also ensure that apex organizations pay attention to the needs of the most vulnerable members of the farmer organizations they represent.
32. **Recommendation 3. Make the project portfolio more effective and efficient, with projects better suited to context, an annual, joint portfolio review, and an appropriate outsourcing approach.**
- (d) **Project design.** The Government and IFAD should design simple and sufficiently simple projects, allowing for swift adjustments according to the

evolving socio-economic context at the national and provincial levels. IFAD should, in performing identification studies, include a rigorous analysis of risks in the targeted areas, in order to develop a risk management strategy and adapt the design and scope of projects to the context. IFAD should foresee a realistic timeframe for project preparation and launch, to maximize time for effective project implementation.

- (e) **Annual joint portfolio review.** The Government and IFAD should set up a framework for a regular (at least annual) joint portfolio review, to take stock of project implementation and agree on any necessary corrective measures or reorientations, which is current practice in numerous other countries.
- (f) **Outsourcing.** For capacity-building components, projects should foresee project-long collaboration agreements with execution partners, with periodically renewable performance-based contracts. For rural infrastructure components, the role of project owner should be delegated entirely to agencies that have solid collaboration with IFAD and experience working in DRC, selected on a competitive basis.

33. **Recommendation 4. Improve relevance and effectiveness of non-lending activities.**

- (a) **Integrating interventions.** IFAD should improve the integration of projects and non-project grants to ensure complementarity, in particular on cross-cutting issues that call for specialized technical support such as gender, environmental management (including land tenure and adaptation to climate change), rural finance and small rural enterprise development, taking interventions by other development partners into account. The Government, with IFAD's support, should actively seek other development partners to take care of improving social services in project intervention areas, in order to complement the support to rural productive sectors financed by IFAD. It should also ensure that IFAD-funded projects are integrated in provincial agricultural investment plans.
- (b) **Capitalizing on experiences.** IFAD, in collaboration with the Government and project teams, should identify strengths and weaknesses, and document project approaches related to farmer organization, agricultural extension (community radios and farmer field schools, among others), improved seed multiplication, and rehabilitation and maintenance of agricultural access roads, to promote lesson-sharing between projects and countries.
- (c) **Policy dialogue.** The above themes should also provide the basis for policy dialogue, targeting the provincial level as a priority. Another important topic for dialogue is the adaptation of the national agricultural investment plan to the provincial level, making sure that full benefit is drawn from smallholder agriculture. To increase its voice at the political level, the country programme should strengthen its partnerships with other influential donors that have experience in DRC, such as the African Development Bank, Belgian technical cooperation, FAO and World Bank.