

# Islamic Republic of The Gambia Country Programme Evaluation

## Executive summary

1. **Background.** This is the first country programme evaluation (CPE) undertaken by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) in The Gambia since IFAD began operations in the country in 1982. This CPE covers IFAD's cooperation from 2004 to 2014. It takes into account the evolving approaches and assesses the results and impact of IFAD-supported operations since the approval of the country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) in 2003. The CPE analysed the five projects approved and active during the period, two of which are ongoing, as well as the 2003 COSOP.
2. Since 1982, IFAD has supported ten projects and programmes in The Gambia for a total project/programme cost of approximately US\$196.8 million, of which US\$73.1 million was provided as IFAD loans. Counterpart funding accounted for US\$24.1 million and cofinancing amounted to US\$99.5 million.
3. The main objectives of this evaluation are to: (i) assess the performance and impact of IFAD-supported operations in the country; and (ii) generate a series of findings and recommendations to serve as building blocks for future cooperation between IFAD and the Government of The Gambia. This CPE should inform the future country strategy for The Gambia.
4. **Country context.** The Gambia is a small, densely populated West African country with an area of 10,689 square kilometers (km<sup>2</sup>). It had a population density of 190.5 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> in 2014 and a population growth rate of 3.2 per cent in 2010. According to World Bank data, the gross domestic product (GDP) was US\$578 million in 2004, increasing to US\$965 million in 2008, but decreasing to US\$914 million in 2013; for those same years, gross national income per capita moved from US\$430 (2004), to US\$530 (2008) and then to US\$510 (2013).
5. Poverty in the country is pervasive despite the decline in overall poverty rates during the last decade. An estimated 58 per cent of the population lived on less than US\$1 a day in 2003. According to the overall poverty headcount index, in 2012, an estimated 48.4 per cent of the population lived below the upper poverty line (US\$1.25 a day) and 36.7 per cent below the lower poverty line (US\$1 a day). The rural poverty headcount ratio was 73.7 per cent in 2010, and the Human Development Index value was 0.441 in 2014, ranking the country 175<sup>th</sup> out of 188 countries.
6. Although the contribution of the agricultural sector to GDP has decreased from 28 per cent to 20 per cent over the last ten years, it employs about 65 per cent of the national labour force. The agricultural sector is characterized by subsistence production of rainfed crops and semi-intensive cash crops. The country has a total arable land area of 558,000 hectares (ha), of which some 320,000 ha (57 per cent) are cropped annually. Within the agricultural sector, after crops, livestock accounts for 34 per cent of production value, fisheries for 12 per cent and forestry for 4 per cent, making livestock the second-largest subsector.
7. The most important plan of action for the promotion of agricultural development is The Gambia National Agricultural Investment Plan (GNAIP) 2011–2015. The GNAIP is a requirement under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, and its objective is to transform the agricultural and natural resource sectors from subsistence to commercial production, with a focus on smallholders. Another key document, the Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy 2009–2015, defined four strategic objectives to be pursued in 2015: (i) improved and sustainable levels of food and nutrition security in the country in general, and

vulnerable populations in particular; (ii) a commercialized agriculture and natural resources sector, ensuring competitive, efficient, and sustainable food and agricultural value chains, and linkages to markets; (iii) stronger public and private institutions to provide services and an enabling environment, reducing vulnerability to food and nutrition insecurity; and (iv) sustainable and effective management of natural resources.

8. The Gambia's development agenda goal, enshrined in the country's "Vision 2020," is to ensure a transformation of "The Gambia into a dynamic middle-income country, socially, economically and scientifically, over a 25-year period." The National Youth Policy and the Gender and Women Empowerment Policy 2010–2020, both approved in 2009, show the Government's commitment to youth and women.
9. Official development assistance in The Gambia rose from US\$120 million in 2010 to US\$139 million in 2012, with the European Union, the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank accounting for more than US\$60 million between 2011 and 2012. Other key donors include the African Development Bank (AfDB), Japan and the United Kingdom.
10. **IFAD country strategies and operations.** In 2003, the Fund formulated its first COSOP, which focused on four strategic objectives: (i) strengthen and empower farmers' organizations and community-based self-help groups in: (a) planning and managing their lowlands and uplands; (b) developing and running sustainable microfinance institutions and networks; (c) improving their living conditions and working together; (ii) support agricultural production by promoting and disseminating adapted technologies designed to increase productivity of rice and a variety of diversified crops selected on a market-driven basis; (iii) support the development and consolidation of rural microfinance institutions by strengthening the Village Savings and Credit Associations (VISACA) network, improving marketing channels and information, and providing support to commodity market organization; and (iv) develop a community-based awareness campaign on HIV/AIDS. The COSOP was partially revised in 2012, although the revision was never formally approved. This revision regrouped the objectives into three strategic areas: (i) integrated watershed management; (ii) improved rural finance; and (iii) diversification of on- and off-farm sources of income.
11. IFAD supported five projects preceding the COSOP, and five more after its development: the Rural Finance and Community Initiatives Project (RFCIP); Rural Finance Project (RFP); Participatory Integrated Watershed-Management Project (PIWAMP); Livestock and Horticulture Development Project (LHDP); and National Agricultural Land and Water Management Development Project (Nema). The latter two projects are still active. Under these five most recent projects, the portfolio concentrated on water and soil management (54 per cent), building irrigation and water control infrastructure, promoting lowland water management schemes, supporting village upland soil management and conservation farming, providing extension and promoting adaptive research on declining soil fertility and erosion.
12. The Ministry of Agriculture is the lead implementing agency for the IFAD country programme, while the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs is the coordinating agency and the borrower to IFAD. Up to 2008, when IFAD direct supervision was formally introduced for the RFP, the programme's supervising institutions were the AfDB, the World Bank/International Development Association and the United Nations Office for Project Services.
13. There is no country programme officer or manager based in The Gambia. In 2009, project offices and a central project coordination unit were established in the Ministry of Agriculture to coordinate all donor projects. The country programme approach introduced in 2010 has helped coordination and sharing across IFAD-financed projects.

### **Project portfolio performance**

14. **Relevance** of the evaluated portfolio is rated as moderately satisfactory (rating four out of a maximum of 6). The projects were generally found relevant in their design, although the targeting approach was not aligned with IFAD strategies: rather than targeting specifically for poverty, targeting followed a country process, focusing on bottom-up planning and budgeting for the different levels of government. IFAD did not use structured geographical targeting based on poverty data or poverty-related mapping. Most of the designs took into consideration traditional gender roles and women's key role in agricultural production, but not the time constraints and workload experienced by women.
15. The goals and objectives of IFAD's support to water and watershed management were found to be consistent with the COSOP, but climate change was not given sufficient consideration. Together with the watershed component, the crop-related interventions were intended to increase productivity, reduce post-harvest losses, improve product range and quality, enhance efficiency of processing and improve marketing and thereby generate additional income for producers and other operators in the rice and vegetable markets. Support for commercializing rice, vegetable value chains and small animals was found relevant to poor farmers and women who face various constraints in marketing.
16. The focus on livestock was aligned with the priority subsectors both in the national strategy for pursuing the Millennium Development Goals and the Government's "Vision 2020" line of action. Poor rural women were rightly targeted in activities that improved livestock performance, and synergies between crops and livestock were found in the productive use of waste from crops and manure from animals. Grazing on cropped land in the dry season was found to be a productive use of land in the absence of irrigation.
17. The rural finance design conformed to IFAD's Regional Strategy for West and Central Africa, as well as IFAD's Rural Finance Policy. The rural finance support has been instrumental in transforming the Rural Finance Unit into a stronger Microfinance Department within the Central Bank of The Gambia, and in providing training and technical assistance to its staff. The VISACA concept and positioning – with broad rural coverage operating close to communities – were found relevant in the context of rural Gambia, where commercial banks are not operational or involved in primary agriculture financing. The type of implementation and nature of the services and products provided by the VISACAs suffered from several flaws at design.
18. **Effectiveness** of the evaluated portfolio is rated as moderately unsatisfactory (rating 3). The overall findings are that a large number of outputs were achieved, with variations in quantity and quality between projects.
19. For water and watershed management, diversion bunds, gully plugs, dikes and spillways have helped control water movement in upper catchment and lowland areas. These measures increased the area of land available for cultivation and improved water infiltration through longer retention of fresh water on the land. An increase of over 350 per cent in household food self-sufficiency in lowland sites was reported. However, this did not match information from field visits that self-sufficiency was experienced for roughly two months a year. Large early gains in productivity and area cultivated under the project dissipated due to increased salinization and the breaching of dike walls and spillways, leading to less land available for cultivation.
20. Regarding crop production and productivity, the CPE found that, overall, results were partly achieved. For instance, in LHDP, improved returns to horticultural enterprise groups were constrained because only a limited portion of the ten group gardens was cultivated. Although lower than planned, RFCIP achieved incremental production increases, which improved food security. Capacity-building activities such as farmer training, extension training and village auxiliary training could not be conducted. IFAD supported increased production, which led to more producers

having to sell their produce at the same time and in the same location, as their access to markets was limited. Support to poor farmers in market access and value chains had been included in the project designs, but in practice, most of the support still focused on production, with very few groups benefitting from increased returns from market access. Despite the innovative approach aiming at addressing the diverse needs of poor rural farmers including inputs, production, finance and livelihoods, the effectiveness of the project was lower than expected, especially for *kafo* (traditional village groups) farms and cereal banks.

21. As for livestock support, in most cases IFAD-supported poultry businesses are run by young women, whose success was determined largely by their business skills.
22. In terms of rural finance, against the target of 450 mini-projects to promote household food security, 359 projects initiated by communities and *kafos* were established by RFCIP. The implementation of VISACAs has been supply-driven, with limited consultation and participation from local communities. The creation of an apex institution for the village savings and credit associations (V-APEX) did not materialize under RFCIP as planned, and was again included in the design of the RFP, to ensure the sustainability and strengthening of the VISACA network. Under RFCIP, 75 cereal banks were established between 2000 and 2006. Reportedly, despite the need, none of these structures has been functioning as a cereal bank; instead, they have been used as storage facilities.
23. **Efficiency** is rated as moderately unsatisfactory (rating 3). Throughout the projects, there were many delays and the costs have been high compared to the outcomes. Management costs were also high, in some cases much higher than planned.
24. The high turnover of project staff is one reason for the increase of actual operating costs versus budgeted ones. In PIWAMP and Nema, the percentage of operating costs versus total costs was below or close to 10 per cent; the other projects reported percentages ranging from 19 to 38 per cent. At completion, actual operating costs versus total project costs range from 25 to 52 per cent. A number of outputs have been realized, but sometimes at considerable cost. There were few efforts to adapt unit costs to the local context; the beneficiaries' capacity to sustain interventions was taken for granted, but was not demonstrated.
25. In the end, the disbursement rate of the rural finance activities was close to 100 per cent, but delays were often caused by frequent changes in management. Poor connections and time-gaps between related projects hampered efficiency and had a negative impact on overall performance.
26. For the five projects under review, the time passed between the project approval date and project effectiveness was an average of 11 months; however, in two cases delays were longer (25 and 19 months).
27. **Rural poverty impact** is rated as moderately unsatisfactory (rating 3). A positive impact was found in food security and income, as well as on institutions in rural finance. The impact was less on other institutions, natural resource management and resilience to climate change.
28. The sense of ownership and capacity within the farmers' associations were found to be generally low. Considerable capacity development and further support are required to enable farmers' associations to become functional and self-sufficient.
29. A number of beneficiaries reported that they used eggs and various vegetables from the gardens for household consumption. Although the impact on nutrition and food intake was not specifically measured, it may be assumed that dietary variety has increased to some extent. VISACAs' operations expanded access to basic agricultural inputs and food commodities, and facilitated access to markets

through the collective buying of inputs and selling of food that their members produced.

30. Improved natural resource management was promoted through compost preparation, and the use of organic manure, solar pumps in the gardens, organic pesticides, improved livestock breeds, local and adaptable vegetable seeds, and fodder plantations. Training on good agricultural practices was also provided; some youths used their improved knowledge and practice, but wider adoption has been slow. Few exchange visits have been conducted, although successful exchange has led to the adoption of ram-fattening schemes and the integrated poultry-aquaculture scheme.
31. **Sustainability**, although increasingly incorporated into the design of projects, is rated as moderately unsatisfactory (rating 3). In general, sustainability has been limited by lack of engagement and ownership by beneficiaries in the planning, implementation, maintenance and oversight of project activities and infrastructure: two factors that are essential if any project gains are to be sustained. Key sustainability concerns regarding infrastructure include: (i) lack of ownership of structures by village associations as shown by the absence of any maintenance and repair work; (ii) constraints on the utilization of land made available by the project due to insufficient access by beneficiaries to land preparation machinery; (iii) low yields due to limited access to external inputs, particularly fertilizers and high-quality seed; (iv) establishing the right balance with wildlife; (v) maintenance of soil and water conservation infrastructure and access to markets and social facilities; and (vi) suitability of some of the water management structures under changing climatic conditions.
32. Sustainability of the cereal banks is uncertain; some were not found and others were being used as warehouses. In *kafo* farms, the level of ownership is very low or non-existent. Capacity utilization rates were very low, sometimes due to inappropriate site locations. Value chain development support has not been found sustainable because structural linkages to the market have not been established and few contractual arrangements with the private sector have been set up.
33. Financial sustainability of VISACAs is a major issue, as they still need support in setting up a proper accounting system and an integrated loan-tracking system, linked to a management information system that can deliver performance indicators in a timely fashion. Financial sustainability is also heavily dependent on harvest and agricultural seasons. Since more than 75 per cent of the loan portfolio is related to agriculture, any bad year affects the financial performance of VISACAs.
34. **Innovation and scaling up** are also rated as moderately unsatisfactory (rating 3). The projects did promote the piloting of new and innovative approaches. For instance, the introduction of alternative energy sources, such as biogas and improved cooking stoves, as pilot initiatives has the potential to reduce the impact on the environment. Other examples can be found: the recruitment and training of volunteer extension workers represented an important innovation and the "auxiliary" system could be easily replicated throughout the country. Furthermore, the introduction of the voucher-based system to guarantee the extension work was an innovation in The Gambia. It minimized false claims by extension workers, encouraged coverage of remote areas and involved beneficiaries in the evaluation of services.
35. Despite such achievements, support for innovation has been lacking. Beneficiaries were not exposed to existing initiatives in marketing and food processing. Moreover, innovations were not sufficiently coupled with an exchange of learning with and among project staff, government bodies and beneficiaries. In general, no scaling up has been pursued or planned in the country following such innovations.
36. **Gender equality and women's empowerment** is rated as moderately satisfactory (rating 4). The impact of infrastructure on women's lives has been

found to be considerable. Women had reported access to the farms as a major challenge; the footbridges in the rice fields and inter-village roads have improved their access to rice fields, markets and social facilities. This has positively affected their health and productivity.

37. Women participated in microfinance institutions, including at management level, but gender mainstreaming was not implemented consistently at all levels of project initiatives. Women mostly reported spending their profit on school fees, health and household nutrition. Although these are valuable expenditures, the projects do not seem to have guided them into reinvesting profits to sustain their activities.
38. Although a large percentage of beneficiaries are female, the number of women among project and extension staff is extremely low. In view of gender mainstreaming, equal access to employment, and feasibility of communication to local women on issues related to their empowerment, it would have been more effective to have had a project team composed of at least 50 per cent women. However, IFAD and the Government have made little effort to instigate such change.
39. The delivery of the interventions has at times overlooked the issue of women's drudgery. The additional tasks in rice fields and in newly established or refurbished gardens increased their already heavy workloads; this contradicts the IFAD Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, which advocates for a decrease in women's share of the production burden and workload.
40. Evidence on gender empowerment seems inconclusive, and results regarding improved decision-making of women at the community level were mixed. In some villages, women had become part of the power structure through their economic empowerment, but in other cases, this had not translated into leadership roles for women in the household or community.

#### **Performance of partners**

41. **Performance of IFAD** is rated as moderately unsatisfactory (rating 3). IFAD has been active in the country for more than three decades and is seen as a key partner in agriculture and natural resource management. Most stakeholders found the designs of IFAD's interventions relevant and useful. IFAD has consistently provided diversified support throughout the project phases, in particular for the development of microfinance and rural finance.
42. Efforts were made to coordinate joint missions with the Government and AfDB, but these did not always materialize. To the extent possible, IFAD has consulted the Government and key partners before reaching conclusions on key issues; similarly, all mission outcomes were discussed with key stakeholders before finalization and disclosure.
43. IFAD does not have a strategy to address the major issue of rapid staff turnover in projects across a range of functions. Though this turnover threatens the interventions' efficiency, effectiveness and impact, as well as the integrity of project staff, IFAD's response to date has not been coherent and consistent, and has lacked a firm standpoint and the support that project staff deserves.
44. **Performance of the Government** is also rated as moderately unsatisfactory (rating 3). The Government has strongly prioritized agricultural investment with high-level commitments, but actual and consistent prioritization of corresponding resource allocation has not been fully pursued. The implementation of projects through government line agencies gave little impetus or opportunity for innovation or exposure to new models. Additionally, because of the numerous services involved, the number of people visiting each project site sometimes became confusing for communities, highlighting a lack of planning and coordination.

45. The capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture staff was often limited, and the number of staff and amount of resources available were often too low to ensure good quality implementation. Weak public extension was a major challenge. Staff members were sometimes unavailable in the field or did not have the skills needed. Moreover, implementation capacity at the central project coordination unit was limited due to high staff turnover within the Ministry of Agriculture at both central and decentralized levels. Discontinuity of leadership at the level of Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture resulted in inconsistencies in policy dialogue and key decisions affecting implementation.

#### **Non-lending activities**

46. **Policy dialogue** is rated as moderately unsatisfactory (rating 3). The COSOP highlights IFAD's commitment to engage in policy dialogue with the Government in: (i) microfinance policy; (ii) promotion of integrated watershed management; and (iii) support for the implementation of the master plan for lowland development.
47. Dialogue among donors and between donors and the Government tends to be on a one-on-one basis. This restricts the sharing of experiences. IFAD and the Government engaged in fruitful policy dialogue, which led to the reform of the microfinance sector in the country. The Government fully embraced microfinance, supported by the development of a microfinance policy and complemented by a microfinance bill.
48. Apart from rural finance, although achievements were made, policy dialogue was mainly conducted without an apparent strategy. Improvements in land tenure arrangements were not achieved. In terms of agricultural input policy, the Government is committed to establishing a regulatory framework. In this regard, agricultural policies could be better adjusted to support the needs of women farmers, for example in relation to access to farm inputs. Although women's empowerment and gender equality are a high priority for IFAD, no related policy dialogue seems to have taken place.
49. **Knowledge management** is rated as moderately unsatisfactory (rating 3). All projects implemented in The Gambia from 2010 onwards have developed knowledge and communication action plans, leading to the launch of a national knowledge management approach by the central project coordination unit within the Ministry of Agriculture. IFAD encouraged close cooperation with ongoing projects in Senegal, and various supervision missions have recommended the same, but after 2012, little exchange has taken place.
50. Project achievements have been filmed and lessons learned have been collected, but limited documentation has been produced with the aim of sharing project experiences and lessons learned. Inter-project learning and exchanges for project staff and targeted beneficiaries were planned, but these do not appear to have taken place frequently. Few lessons were shared or exchanged across districts and villages, or between projects.
51. **Partnership-building**, an area for improvement, is rated as moderately unsatisfactory (rating 3). For agriculture and sustainable land and water management, IFAD is acknowledged as the Government's key long-term partner. However, in PIWAMP, LHDP and Nema, IFAD's main partnership has been with the public sector, providing support and some degree of inbuilt continuity, but leading to little participatory learning with communities.
52. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been involved at the design stage of interventions, but were not visible during implementation, even though their constituencies are the priority target population. LHDP has engaged the private sector by offering technical assistance to the EMPAS Poultry Processing Company, which now uses the LHDP set up in its outgrower scheme funded by the World Bank's Growth and Competitiveness Project. Further partners include institutions that have been supported by RFP or RFCIP, such as The Gambia Microfinance

Network, the National Association of Cooperative Credit Unions of The Gambia or the Gambia Women's Finance Association.

53. IFAD reports that strong partnerships with key donors (AfDB, Islamic Development Bank, World Bank), United Nations agencies and others have been established, but in practice, apart from cofinancing with AfDB, there is little coherent cooperation and coordination, partly because most donors lack an in-country presence. There is no extensive cooperation or regular coordination with other United Nations agencies, notwithstanding efforts made.
54. **Grants.** Eight regional and interregional grants were implemented in The Gambia from 2004 to 2014, and one was to start in 2015. Only some of the grants were found to have previous or ongoing links and relevance to the country portfolio. The other grants may have produced good results, but were not found to have contributed significantly to the COSOP objectives; nor have the grants provided input for policy development or future country strategy.
55. Grants are supposed to play an important role in knowledge management, but only a few have strong links with the project portfolio. Overall, project staff and government partners had little to no knowledge about grants and grant-financed activities.

#### **COSOP performance and overall Government-IFAD partnership assessment**

56. Overall, the relevance and effectiveness of the COSOP were found to be moderately unsatisfactory (rating 3). In terms of effectiveness, objectives have been only partially achieved. Although incomes and productivity increased, and capacity was built to some extent, productivity increases were often temporary and resilience was not sufficiently created. In addition, access to new technology could have received more emphasis. Access to rural finance improved to some extent, but it is not clear to what extent this has led to increased incomes or poverty reduction.
57. **Relevance.** At the time the COSOP was designed, lessons learned from the five older projects were taken into account. After 2003, four new projects were initiated and the Government launched numerous new strategies. This would have been adequate and suitable had the revision of the 2003 COSOP in 2012 been officially approved and used.
58. The COSOP addressed the combination of needs identified by the Government in the following areas: capacity for land development, value addition and rural infrastructure, and strengthening institutions. The COSOP was therefore in line with national priorities and current strategy papers, but its design was rather generic.
59. Reaching the rural poor is one of the most important priorities for IFAD. The COSOP did not create a detailed targeting strategy and thus provided insufficient guidance for targeting at various levels of the portfolio and projects. The nationwide coverage of the COSOP tends to spread resources thinly, with many project sites and smaller interventions. This has led to high operational costs and a large need for staff and capacity on the ground.
60. **Effectiveness.** The first COSOP objective – to support the strengthening and empowerment of farmer organizations and community-based self-help groups to plan and manage their lowlands and uplands – has only been partly achieved. Farmers' organizations were set up and supported, but many of them remained weak and only moderately empowered. The second objective – to support growth in agricultural production through the promotion and dissemination of adapted technologies – has been achieved to a moderate extent. Productivity has increased, but often only temporarily, and access to adapted technology should have received more emphasis. The third objective – to support the development and consolidation of rural microfinance institutions through the strengthening of the VISACA network – was also only partly achieved. IFAD supported VISACAs, but only a handful of them are able to operate independently. Even after 10 years of support there are a



large number of issues to be addressed. Regarding the fourth objective – to support the development of a community-based awareness campaign on HIV/AIDS – no achievements could be identified.

### Summary of evaluation findings

<i>Assessment area</i>	<i>Rating</i>
Overall project portfolio achievement	3
Performance of partners	3
Non-lending activities	3
COSOP performance	3

Rating scale: 1 = highly unsatisfactory; 2 = unsatisfactory; 3 = moderately unsatisfactory; 4 = moderately satisfactory; 5 = satisfactory; and 6 = highly satisfactory

### Recommendations

61. **Recommendation 1: Develop a new country strategy, clearly reflecting on IFAD's niche and comparative advantage.** The new country strategy should, inter alia, present a broad targeting strategy with due attention to women and youth as a basis for future interventions. It should also indicate how partnership with various actors will be enhanced. Furthermore, the strategy should discuss opportunities for IFAD to support much needed reforms in the agricultural sector, in partnership with other key stakeholders and development partners, with the aim of improving investment and delivery in the sector.
62. **Recommendation 2: Strengthen project management performance and oversight for effective and efficient delivery mechanisms in the Government.** It is recommended that the Government establish a transparent procedure for staff recruitment and for their performance management in consultation with IFAD. Any change in staff assigned to IFAD-supported projects should be undertaken following the required consultation between the Government and IFAD. IFAD and the Government should ensure that project steering committees have the appropriate representation, fulfil their mandate and provide good quality advisory guidance on strategic and policy-related matters in projects. Furthermore, IFAD should support the capacity-strengthening of the Ministry of Agriculture, particularly in relation to the development and implementation of a framework and systems for agricultural monitoring and evaluation.
63. **Recommendation 3: Establish strong and comprehensive partnerships.** In particular, IFAD should extend its partnership to more and varied institutions, including other development partners, NGOs and civil society organizations, the private sector, relevant government departments/agencies and United Nations agencies.
64. **Recommendation 4: Improve sustainability of benefits generated from investments.** For agriculture-related infrastructure, in general, greater attention needs to be paid to building the communities' sense of ownership and their operation and maintenance capacity. For complex and costly infrastructure, the Government should clearly define the operation and maintenance arrangements and responsibilities. A more structured approach to value chain support and due consideration for inclusive rural financial services would also be important to enhance sustainability prospects.
65. **Recommendation 5: Strengthen gender equality and women's and young people's empowerment.** An in-depth gender and youth analysis should underlie the new country strategy and become an inextricable part of each project design. In targeting and implementation, support needs to be tailored to households headed by women and be aimed at reducing women's drudgery.