

Republic of Mali

Country Programme Evaluation

Executive Summary

1. This country programme evaluation (CPE) is the second carried out in Mali by IOE, the first being completed in 2007. The period evaluated by this CPE ran from 2007 to the beginning of 2012. Detailed analysis focuses on the 2007 country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP), five loans and six regional grants (with regard to the activities carried out in Mali). In addition to analysis of activities in the portfolio, this CPE assesses "non-lending" activities (knowledge management, policy dialogue, partnerships) and the relevance and effectiveness of the strategy of collaboration between the Malian Government and IFAD.
2. Since beginning operations in Mali in 1982, IFAD has financed 12 projects in the country (5 of which were ongoing during the CPE period) for a total cost of US\$474 million, US\$183 million (39 per cent) of which were loans by IFAD on highly concessional terms. The Malian State's contribution corresponds to 16 per cent of the costs, while cofinancing (notably from the World Bank, the European Commission, the West African Development Bank and the Belgian Survival Fund) comes to 45 per cent.
3. Since the reforms of the 1990s, Mali has seen an average annual economic growth in gross domestic product (GDP) of 5 per cent, barely touched by the current global recession and an inflation that has been under control. Mali's economy depends mainly on the primary sector, agriculture and livestock, which accounts for 36.5 per cent of GDP. Economic development must cope with a high rate of population growth (3.1 per cent a year) leading to a yearly influx onto the labour market of hundreds of thousands of young people with no training.
4. The percentage of poor people in the country has fallen from 55.6 per cent (66.8 per cent for the rural population) in 2001 to 43.6 per cent (51.0 per cent) in 2010. Income poverty is lower in the northern regions (Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal) than in the rest of the country, particularly the south (especially Sikasso region). In the northern regions, the main problem is that of vulnerability to drought and the scarcity of basic services, health and education.
5. Mali has approved its most recent Strategic Framework for Growth and Poverty Reduction for the period 2012–2017. Its Masterplan for Rural Development (1992, updated in 2002) and an Agricultural Orientation Law approved in 2006 have been in existence for a long time. On the other hand, although the Agricultural Development Policy and the National Investment Plan for the Agricultural Sector were expected for 2011, they had not yet been approved at the time of this evaluation.
6. There have been conflicts in the north of the country ever since independence and they dominated the scene from 1990 to 1996, when the two sides reached an agreement. However, the situation remained tense, and attacks in the north started to increase again in 2006. The presence of fighters linked to Al Qaida and the return of soldiers and mercenaries from Libya have exacerbated tension in the region. In March 2012, discontent in the Malian army over combat conditions in the north led to a coup d'état, which deposed the President of the Republic, Amadou Toumani Touré. Following the retreat of the army, rebels, Tuareg and Islamist groups took control of the north. Subsequently, the civil authorities regained power, the former President of the National Assembly became interim President, and a new government was formed, but the situation is still volatile. Technical and financial partners initially suspended their operations, but in May 2012 some

bilateral donors and the European Union recommenced emergency operations and some interventions in the south.

Performance of the portfolio

7. In general terms, the relevance of the portfolio is moderately satisfactory. Project objectives are in line with national development strategies, IFAD's COSOPs and the country's needs. This evaluation observed a positive evolution in the adaptation of projects (especially the Sahelian Area Development Fund Programme [FODESA], the Northern Regions Investment and Rural Development Programme [PIDRN] and the Kidal Integrated Rural Development Programme [PIDRK]) to decentralization mechanisms by supporting local communities in planning rural development activities, working with the local governments, following the provision of the decentralization policy. Moreover, for rural finance, the most recent interventions (for example the Rural Microfinance Programme [RMP]) follow an approach focusing on cost-effectiveness and sustainability, seeking to consolidate, restructure and merge existing rural finance networks, and are consistent with the National Microfinance Strategy as well as the new law on microfinance (2010) promoting professionalization and the consolidation of networks.
8. Two projects (PIDRN and PIDRK) operated in the northern regions. Efforts were made to adapt their components to these zones, but the risks linked to conflicts were underestimated. The situation in the north of Mali in recent years has been particularly serious. Nevertheless, a more thorough analysis would have helped to plan mitigation measures from the start.
9. Prepared on the initiative of the World Bank and cofinanced by several donors (the Global Environment Facility [GEF], IFAD, the European Union), the most recent project (the Fostering Agricultural Productivity Project [PAPAM]) focuses on increasing agricultural productivity in Mali's main agrofood production systems, which is relevant to the country's situation. However, problems regarding the institutional set-up have hampered the start-up of this project: the decision to entrust its management to the Planning and Statistics Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture has proven to be challenging and risky, inasmuch as the unit is not a project management body. Despite efforts made, there are still delays, and changes in the institutional arrangements may turn out to be necessary.
10. Effectiveness (the degree of achievement of the immediate objectives of projects) is moderately satisfactory. With regard to livestock, significant results in relation to the objectives have been achieved with bourgou¹ flood plain regeneration, rangeland rehabilitation and animal health initiatives. On the other hand, effectiveness with regard to agriculture is somewhat disappointing. FODESA has financed a limited number of agricultural microprojects. PIDRN has continued to support the irrigation schemes set up by its predecessor (the Zone Lacustre Development Project [PDZL]), but it has not developed the new village irrigation schemes anticipated for growing rice, which amounts to a significant under implementation.
11. With regard to support for basic services, good results were observed regarding the training of elected officials and officials from local communities and decentralized State technical services. The training package for community-level staff drawn up by PIDRN was well designed, encompassing subjects linked to local development (management of natural resources and other public and private resources), administrative services (civil state, judicial and administrative police, administrative terminology) and financial management (procurement, budgetary terminology, community resource mobilization). By contrast, the creation of infrastructure for basic services shows a level of execution that falls short of the objectives, and very

¹ Bourgou or hippo grass: an aquatic plant used as fodder, for household food and in traditional medicine

little progress has been made on the important objective of building roads under PIRDN.

12. The efficiency of the portfolio is rated as moderately unsatisfactory. The operating costs turned out to be much higher than anticipated, while implementation rates for project components (notably for infrastructure) have in general been fairly modest (for example, only 56 per cent for FODESA and 48 per cent for PIDRN). The underestimation of project management costs when the project was formulated contributed to this situation, together with the specific obstacles to intervention in inaccessible areas in the north of the country. Slow, cumbersome procurement procedures (unsuited to working conditions in the north) are often cited. Moreover, the fact that budget ceilings are too low for some microprojects (especially for FODESA) and that beneficiaries' cofinancing is paid in cash have compounded delays, whereas a contribution in labour would have been a better option.
13. Impact is assessed as moderately satisfactory: the most significant elements are the reduction in the level of infant malnutrition, and the improved capacities of local communities and decentralized services. Despite some methodological weaknesses, data from the RIMS surveys carried out for FODESA and PIDRN suggest a reduction in the rate of chronic malnutrition in children from 0 to 59 months. PIDRN promoted weighing sessions for children in the villages, and the results were shown and discussed with the beneficiaries so as to involve them more closely in improving the community's nutrition status.
14. From the institutional point of view, it is observed that elected officials and community officials have both achieved a better command of their work, while relationships among elected officials, villages and subdivisions have improved. This last point is important, because good functioning of local administrations helps to achieve development objectives, beyond the immediate objectives of projects, and provides grass-roots organizations with participation opportunities in public affairs.
15. Sustainability prospects are moderately unsatisfactory. While the figures provided by projects on the profitability of some agricultural activities (small-scale irrigation schemes and bourgou flood plain regeneration) are favourable, a number of investments have not yet been made, or only partially so. This applies particularly to the new irrigation schemes of PIDRN, feeder roads and some social infrastructures in the north. In all likelihood these investments will not be carried out before the project ends, which makes it impossible to speak of sustainability. The situation of conflict and insecurity, particularly in the north, is also a major threat to sustainability.
16. The portfolio has supported innovation by introducing techniques or products that already exist elsewhere (for example, the regeneration of bourgou flood plains, improved ovens for smoking fish, participatory mapping of poverty, the introduction of veterinary services on a private basis) into project zones. Scaling up the application of these innovations calls for a task of analysis, capitalization, communication and dissemination of information, which has just started. Adoption of these innovations by political authorities must also result in a steady modification of rules and regulations of the relevant legislation. This in turn requires a framework for effective, concerted policy dialogue between Government and partners, which is yet to be established.
17. Lastly, progress with regard to gender equality and women's empowerment is moderately satisfactory. Over the period, this domain received more attention in the design of projects that provided for activities specifically focusing on women as actors and beneficiaries. Even so, projects were less ambitious in terms of the gender analysis to be conducted ex ante and ex post. Also, IFAD did not take part in formulation of the National Gender Policy (2010) steered by the ministry responsible for promoting women, children and the family, although it could have

made a valuable contribution to this process thanks to its knowledge of the rural environment.

Non-lending activities

18. IFAD has strengthened and diversified its partnership with Government institutions, both at the national level (especially in the spheres of the environment, industry and trade, the economy and finance, and local government) and at decentralized levels (de-concentrated State services, local communities, agricultural research, the National Investment Agency for Local Communities [ANICT]). With regard to donors, new partnerships have been formed, notably with the World Bank and the African Development Bank. IFAD has set up a policy dialogue unit, which has participated actively in the coordination of donors, especially in the discussion group on agricultural and rural economics.
19. The involvement of private enterprises as partners has been fairly limited, but some recent experiences are a starting point for the future, especially the establishment of private veterinary services in the PIDRK zones and the support initiated with Mali Biocarburant for the growing of jatropha.
20. Knowledge management activities started in the past two years. More recently, an IFAD mission on communication visited Mali and a workshop was organized with the projects in January 2012. Alongside these efforts, articles and videos on FODESA and PIDRN have been produced. The opening of the IFAD office in Bamako should encourage the sharing of knowledge, including experience of development other than initiatives supported by IFAD.
21. Policy dialogue is confined to participation of the policy dialogue unit in mechanisms for coordination between donors and the Government. Little information from the field has been properly capitalised upon in order to provide solid input to this dialogue rather than simple information. For example, no document on the role of small farmers' associations in rural development was produced until 2011, despite the fact that this role had been the basis of FODESA's work since the first phase of the project. And there is still no document to reflect on innovations that could be scaled up. Contribution to policy dialogue was also constrained by limited strategic guidance from the national counterpart, and by the multiplicity of interventions and project management structures, straining the capacity of the ministries concerned.

Performance of the COSOP

22. The participatory approach adopted in drawing up the 2007 COSOP was a significant step forward. This COSOP took full account of the current national poverty reduction strategy and the main sectoral policies. It sought to integrate IFAD's actions into the context of the coordination of technical and financial partners. Even so, the degree of analysis underpinning strategic orientations reveals some weaknesses, especially in establishing geographical priorities and anticipating risks (especially conflict-related).
23. Since the earliest COSOP in 1997, IFAD has responded to the Malian Government's request to invest in the sensitive northern zones of the country. However, neither the 1997 nor the 2007 COSOP discussed the poverty situation sufficiently. Income poverty is not concentrated in the north, but is in fact highest in the south. Moreover, population density is fairly low in the northern regions, which means that providing services to the beneficiary population implies higher intervention costs.
24. The issue of risks in conflict zones seems to have been underestimated. As was indeed noted in a regional review by the West and Central Africa Division in 2009, the 2007 COSOP identified risks in general terms and mentioned measures to reduce them, but the impact these measures have on the current risk factor or on the residual risk that could result from these reduction measures is not clear.

25. The COSOP lacks a clear framework that would allow the results of individual projects to be aggregated into strategy-level results. Annual reviews were conducted between 2008 and 2011, a mid-term review was conducted in 2010, and final review planned for 2012 has been suspended because of the security situation in the country. Unfortunately, there is little consistency among the documents that have been produced, as if there were no frame of reference to follow and no connection between the various reviews.
26. Even today, there is still strictly speaking no common frame of reference for the COSOP, with objectives and expected results against which the contribution of each project can be measured and analysed.

Summary of the CPE overall assessment

	<i>Rating^a</i>
Portfolio performance	4
Non-lending activities	4
Performance of the COSOP	4
Overall achievement	4

^a Ratings: 6 = highly satisfactory; 5 = satisfactory 4 = moderately satisfactory; 3 = moderately unsatisfactory; 2 = unsatisfactory; 1 = highly unsatisfactory.

Conclusions

27. This evaluation focuses on the period 2007–2012, which was marked by a reduction in the incidence of poverty, but also by an increase in the number and intensity of armed conflicts in the north of Mali. The destabilizing effects of these conflicts were felt nationally during the March 2012 crisis, which led to President Touré's being deposed by the armed forces and to Tuareg and Islamist rebel movements' seizure of power in the north.
28. Despite this unfavourable situation, the cooperation programme between the Government of Mali and IFAD improved in several areas (adaptation to national policies, scaling up of partnerships, institution-building). From the point of view of strategy, the programme has suffered from insufficient analysis, especially in the definition of geographical priorities and the a priori identification of risks from conflict. The two main consequences of this weakness in analysis are: (i) a concentration of operations in the north of the country, which suffers from problems of recurrent drought but where the prevalence of poverty and the population density are below the national average; and (ii) an overexposure of the portfolio to risks from conflicts in the north. This has affected the effectiveness and efficiency of rural poverty reduction efforts.

Recommendations

29. The north of Mali is now out of the Government's control, but the situation is still volatile in the south. A new interim government was installed in April 2012. Some bilateral donors and the European Union resumed emergency operations and some interventions in the south, while the main multilateral donors (the African Development Bank and the World Bank) are examining conditions for the resumption of operations. IFAD decided to use the resources of projects in the north (PIDRN and PIDRK) to finance activities to support the population (supplies of seed and other inputs, restocking of community health centres) in collaboration with bilateral agencies and through NGOs.
30. IFAD and the Government should take advantage of this "forced pause" to define the thrusts of the new COSOP. This evaluation highlights how important it is to take great care in preparing the COSOP in order to establish a consistent, well-structured programme. Given the limited resources allocated to preparing COSOPs, IFAD could use grants in order to ensure an adequate level of expertise in

formulating the COSOP and a participatory preparation process. The following measures will be needed in order to revise and correct strategic orientations:

- (i) Presentation in the COSOP of a diagnosis of the poverty situation and rural development opportunities (agricultural and non-agricultural), and a more thorough analysis of conflict-related risks and measures to reduce these risks.
 - (ii) Preparation of a plan for communication and policy dialogue activities, which should include in particular: (a) experience gained in supporting local communities (for example, issues related to the responsibility for local development interventions and to those national norms that are ill-suited to fragile zones, and weakness in supervision of the ANICT); (b) lessons learned in involving grass-roots and umbrella organizations in project management and policy dialogue; and (c) issues connected with ensuring the sustainability of productive and environmental microprojects.
 - (iii) More weight to the south of the country in setting geographical priorities, and encouragement of more thematic approaches. This recommendation is justified not only by the recent crisis in the north of the country, but also by the prevalence of poverty and considerably greater population density in the south.
 - (iv) It would be desirable for the portfolio to encompass interventions with a thematic or subsectoral focus, thus allowing a greater focus on structural aspects, reforms and policy dialogue. Moreover, in the case of conflict, this would allow the reallocation of activities and resources to zones where operations can continue in conditions of security. Taking into account the findings of the evaluation, the issues and subsectors that need special attention include rural finance, small-scale irrigation schemes, protection of natural resources and rangelands, basic infrastructure (see also below) and capacity-building for local communities, with a special focus on the economic integration and training of young people.
 - (v) Greater involvement of other donors in financing basic infrastructure and services. IFAD's last two corporate-level strategic frameworks and the joint evaluation by the African Development Bank and IFAD in Africa have already pointed in this direction. Institutions such as the African Development Bank, the West African Development Bank and the European Union are active in financing transport and basic infrastructure. A more precise definition of the respective roles would mean that the experience of other donors with regard to infrastructure could be used to greater advantage and that IFAD's experience in agricultural development and rural poverty reduction could be maximized.
 - (vi) More systematic involvement of private entrepreneurs and their professional organizations in programme activities, beginning with the project design phase but also during implementation. This also entails focusing right from the start on the economic viability of production activities and paying closer attention to processing, enhancement and marketing. In parallel, risks of a negative impact from the social (for example, land tenure issues) and environmental points of view must be taken into account before intervening.
31. **Definition of an action plan for current operations.** With regard to operations in the south of Mali, the plan should focus on the institutional bottlenecks encountered during implementation of PAPAM in order possibly to review IFAD's contribution to this programme. For operations in the north (PIDRN and PIDRK), it would be appropriate, given the conflicts and the risks of misappropriation of resources, to plan for a definitive termination of these projects if the situation does not change within a clearly defined period.

32. **Improvement in the management system at the programme level.** The COSOP is an important tool in implementing the strategy in intervention countries. IFAD should give this tool all the attention and human and financial resources it deserves. This evaluation recommends:
- (i) Boosting of the management and monitoring system at the country programme (strategic) level. A common logical frame of reference needs to be developed, within which the respective contributions of each project can be measured and evaluated, and which would be integrated into a harmonized monitoring and evaluation system. This also requires a greater involvement of IFAD, the Government and other partners in Mali in the regular monitoring and annual review of strategy; examples from other countries indicate that this requires the allocation of sufficient resources.
 - (ii) Dedication of more attention to analysis and capitalization, and to consolidation of the experience of IFAD projects, in order to discuss and share them with development partners and provide input to policy dialogue based on concrete experience.
 - (iii) Improvement in the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems for individual projects by strengthening their methodology (particularly for impact studies) and monitoring of the quality of activities and their costs (anticipated and actual), by allocating the necessary human and financial resources and support to national monitoring capacities in collaboration with other donors.
 - (iv) A better match between objectives and human and financial resources among: IFAD headquarters, the IFAD country office and the National Programme and Project Coordination Unit within the Ministry of Agriculture, so as to take account of the priorities described above.