

profile

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Corporate-level evaluation on IFAD's engagement in fragile and conflict-affected states and situations

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has been involved in fragile and conflict-affected states and situations (FCS) almost since its inception. The Fund's first project dates back in such a context to 1981 when it provided a loan for a rehabilitation project in Uganda following the civil strife of 1980.

Over the years, IFAD has devoted increased attention to its engagements in FCS with around 40 per cent of ongoing operations in the current portfolio taking place in countries classified as fragile. Of its 40 country offices established so far, 19 are located in fragile states.

IFAD's financial commitments to fragile states have also risen. Some 40 per cent of its loans and grants (approximately US\$1.2 billion) between 2013-2015 is allocated to fragile states.

This is the first corporate-level evaluation on IFAD's engagement in FCS undertaken by the Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE). It reflects IFAD's growing involvement in such contexts, growing global interest in FCS and it examines the assumption that the Fund's performance in fragile states is worse than in the rest of its portfolio.

The objectives of the evaluation were to: assess the performance of IFAD's engagement in FCS and identify factors that lie behind current performance; and generate a series of findings, lessons learnt and recommendations to assist management and the Executive Board in deciding on strategic and operations directions for the future.

The evaluation focuses on IFAD's work with FCS over a 10-year period from 2004 until the end of 2013 and sets it within the context of the evolving international approach to fragile states.

This span allows the evaluation to assess and learn from older operations as well as to analyse how

IFAD's approaches in fragile and conflict-affected states and situations have evolved over time. During this period the close connection between fragility and conflict, which often share common causes and feed off each other, has become more explicit.



Guinea - National Programme to Support Agricultural Value Chain Actors. Farmers are threshing rice. Kissidougou, Upper-Guinea.

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IFAD activities in FCS are underpinned by four key policy documents:

- 1998, IFAD Framework for Bridging Post-Crisis Recovery and Long-Term Development
- 2006, Policy on Crisis Prevention and Recovery which formally introduced the concept of fragility into IFAD's work.
- 2008, the Consultation on IFAD's Eighth Replenishment for which guidelines on IFAD's role in fragile states were prepared.
- 2011, Guidelines for disaster early recovery.

Main evaluation findings

The evaluation found that IFAD has a critical and distinct role to play in addressing the problems of fragile states which, in turn, are key to achieving a range of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals including the elimination of poverty, the promotion of sustainable agriculture and productive employment and peaceful and inclusive societies.

In order to achieve better outcomes in FCS and given that half of its recipient countries are currently classified as fragile, IFAD needs to adapt further and sharpen its approach in several core areas. The definition currently used in IFAD dates back to 2006, which does not sufficiently focus on fragility.

The evaluation found that the existing policy framework for FCS is fragmented, lacks a clear focus on fragility and conflict and fails to provide guidance on how IFAD should tailor its support to specific contexts. Apart from the 2008 guidelines, the four existing policy documents deal more with crises and disasters than fragility. None contain specific guidance about conflict situations.

IFAD's current approach to classifying fragile states is ineffective as its based on the classification of countries by other organizations often with different policy and definitions of fragility.

Weak data collection and inadequate monitoring and evaluation pose serious challenges to results measurement and reporting and the identification of good practices and lessons learned. In particular, the evaluation found that more and better data is needed also in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment.

The evaluation also found that the assumption that IFAD's performance in fragile states is worse than in the rest of portfolio is not borne out by evidence. It is only consistently worse in a small group of countries with very limited capacity.

There have been significant improvements in countries that have always been fragile in overall project achievement, project effectiveness, IFAD's performance as a partner and rural poverty impact.

Key recommendations

Policy and strategy

- Draft an overarching policy that defines a set of principles to guide how IFAD engages with FCS.
- Adopt a simpler approach to classification of FCS which is specific to IFAD's mandate and priorities.
- Increase and customize fragility and conflict analysis through the country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) review system.

Project and programme design

- Design programmes to identify where IFAD can and cannot engage.
- Simplify objectives and overall design in countries with low government capacity.

Project and programme implementation

- Increase resources for supervision and implementation support based on country needs.
- Prioritize new IFAD country offices and outposting of country programme managers in FCS.
- Create and build strategic partnerships to maximize complementary skills.

Empowerment of staff

- Introduce specific incentives for staff working in FCS and promote capacity-building and training.

Measurement of results

- Plan and resource project monitoring and evaluation more selectively.
- Revise IFAD's results measurement framework to fill major gaps in indicators such as for women's empowerment and institutional performance.



Tunisia - Agropastoral Development and Local Initiatives Promotion Programme for the South-East. Farmers processing vegetables as part of an agricultural development group in El-Ferech Valley.

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Further information:

IFAD's Engagement in Fragile and Conflict-affected States and Situations, Corporate-level Evaluation, Report No. 3704, May 2015, ISBN 978-92-9072-568-8, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD, Via Paolo di Dono, 44, 00142, Rome, Italy. The report, Profile, Insights and infographic are available online at: www.ifad.org/evaluation; email: evaluation@ifad.org.