

profile



© IFAD/Michael Carbon

Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation Republic of Cameroon

Since 1980 the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has been a reliable, dynamic and innovative partner for the Republic of Cameroon in addressing the challenge of rural poverty reduction. Today that challenge is even greater given the effects of climate change and violent conflicts in neighbouring countries that are having a palpable impact on the country's economic and social fabric. Nevertheless, IFAD has continued to support the Government's efforts by increasing the resources allocated to its rural development programmes.

Over the past decade Cameroon's social indicators linked to rural poverty have stagnated and even deteriorated. Today close to 57 per cent of rural people live in poverty, and 10 per cent of them are food-insecure.

Since 1980 IFAD has funded 11 projects in Cameroon worth an estimated US\$374.3 million in total, of which IFAD has contributed US\$143.1 million. This first country strategy and programme evaluation conducted by the Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) covers the period from 2007 to May 2017, during which there were two country strategies. The objective was to evaluate the results and performance of the IFAD-funded programme, and to generate recommendations to guide the partnership between Cameroon and IFAD in future for greater development effectiveness and rural poverty reduction.

Main evaluation findings

Over the past decade, the country programme has taken several distinct approaches to rural development – local development, agricultural development, organizing producers, value chains, rural finance and young entrepreneurship – all of them well aligned with the strategies of both the Government and IFAD. It addressed the very real constraints facing poor rural people, targeting the country's poorest regions in the North, Extreme North, Centre, West and Northwest. However, the country context was not sufficiently taken into account in project design which was often overly ambitious and complex.

The project portfolio has achieved good results in terms of raising yields for major crops of importance to poor rural people, through effective extension of farming techniques

and improved varieties. Other income-generating activities, upstream and downstream of agricultural value chains have been supported in rural areas, often through producer's organizations. These two elements have quite likely had a positive impact on incomes and food security for the beneficiary households. The country programme has also strengthened the capacity of many producers' organizations to provide services to their members, which is important for sustainability.

However, the projects' limited effectiveness and efficiency in combination with inadequate knowledge management and policy engagement at the country programme level have restricted the depth and scope of country programme impact. Portfolio effectiveness was hindered by significant delays, and project efficiency was impeded by excessive operating costs and imprudent financial management.

The targeting of the most vulnerable rural people by the projects was not effective and their attention for gender equality issues was limited. In addition, the focus of the projects seems to have gradually shifted away from the poorest and most vulnerable people. Furthermore, the sustainability of results and scaling up of innovations are unlikely. Frequent simplification of conceptual **development** approaches and limited efforts to consolidate, monitor and evaluate, and manage new knowledge, have reduced the opportunities to come up with effective approaches to rural poverty reduction.

Government leadership in coordinating and harmonizing interventions in the rural sector has been insufficient and little progress has been made on public policies in favor of poor smallholders. The IFAD country office in Yaoundé, which covers three countries in the sub-region, is tied up with project supervision and implementation support and has little time available to support projects in knowledge management, develop strategic alliances or engage in dialogue with the Government and its development partners on rural development policies.

CAMEROON AT A GLANCE

Population: **23 million** (est. 2017)

Rural population: **47%** (2016)

GDP growth: **5.8%**

National poverty rate: **37.5%** (2014)

Life expectancy at birth: **55.5 years**

Human Development Index: **0.512** (2015)

Total number of project loans: **11**

Amount of IFAD project financing approved since the first country loan: **US\$143.1 million**

Sources: World Bank, United Nations Development Programme

Main recommendations

- 1. Continue to pursue the country programme's two flagship approaches of supporting producers' organizations and promoting youth entrepreneurship, while continuing to promote access by poor rural people to appropriate financial services.** IFAD and the Government should continue to consolidate producers' organizations, particularly in managing collective infrastructure and equipment. Projects promoting rural entrepreneurship should focus on setting up sustainable incubation and financing mechanisms for rural micro- and small enterprises.
- 2. Ensure the inclusion of very poor and vulnerable rural people in the country programme to combat inequality, by improving geographical and social targeting.** Portfolio coverage should continue to focus on the country's poorest regions. The projects' gender strategy should directly address economic and social inequalities between men and women. In business incubation programmes, the Government should provide for specific ways and means and positive discrimination to favour young people from poor families.
- 3. Ensure that financing reaches targeted populations quickly and fully, by accelerating project start-up and implementation, and rationalizing operating costs.** It is imperative for the Government to ensure that project teams have better, results-based planning and management capacities. The Government should implement stricter controls and the IFAD country office should be strengthened to support project fiduciary management.
- 4. Strengthen project performance and the scaling up of approaches and results with stronger government leadership in rural sector coordination, more strategic alliances and better monitoring and evaluation (M&E).** The Government should provide stronger leadership in the coordination of development partners operating in the rural and agricultural sector. IFAD and the Government should provide better M&E support to contribute to project management and steering, and to knowledge management.

Further information:

Republic of Cameroon, Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD, Via Paolo di Dono, 00142 Rome, Italy | www.ifad.org/evaluation | e-mail: evaluation@ifad.org | [www.twitter.com/IFADeval](https://twitter.com/IFADeval) | www.youtube.com/IFADEvaluation