IFAD
Investing in rural people

profile

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The Gambia Country Programme Evaluation

IFAD started its engagement in The Gambia in 1982, and to date has supported 10 projects and programmes for a total cost of US$196 million, of which IFAD has contributed US$73.1 million. In 2003, the Fund formulated its first country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP), which was partially updated in 2012 and focused on four strategic objectives: (1) strengthening and empowerment of farmers' organizations and community-based self-help groups; (2) support to agricultural production through the promotion and dissemination of adapted agricultural technologies; (3) support to the development of rural microfinance institutions; and (4) development of community-based awareness campaigns on HIV/AIDS.

This country programme evaluation (CPE) by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD is the first to be conducted in The Gambia and covers the period 2004-2014.

Participatory Integrated-Watershed Management Project. Land-owner harvests rice with her farm workers in Aljamdou village, Gambia. "Formerly, when we harvested rice, we lived on it for only one month. Now, after the dike was built, we can live on the rice we harvest for nine months."

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Main evaluation findings

The CPE finds that in general, IFAD's country programme in The Gambia was well designed in some of its components such as the **promotion of innovations**, for instance the setting up of alternative energy sources (e.g. biogas and improved cooking stoves), the digitalization of community maps and the recruitment and training of volunteer extensionists.

IFAD's project portfolio has incorporated, in its design, a strong focus on **gender**, and women have increased their productivity and income and have become more empowered. The portfolio has also concentrated on the development of **value chains** - i.e. the set of activities that are performed in order to receive raw materials as input and add value and transform them until they can be sold as finished products to markets - which was included in the design of IFAD-financed projects and was in line with the Government policies and strategies.

With IFAD support, the Ministry of Agriculture has developed a new **monitoring and evaluation system** with a view to enabling better planning as well as developing clearer strategies for the agricultural marketing components, although to date no outcomes or impacts have been measured. Overall, the **design of the projects** was consistent with the beneficiaries' needs, IFAD's strategic objectives and the Government's objectives, strategies and policies by addressing food security, employment creation and poverty reduction.

Nevertheless, the portfolio performance was found to be weak in its **effectiveness** - the extent to which the programme achieved its objectives. Though many outputs were achieved, it was only in crop production that objectives were reached to a reasonable extent, whereas the achievement of rural finance activities was much poorer. Moreover, the programme lacked an adequate **targeting strategy**, that is the way through which organizations identify the locations and populations to target and, subsequently, the components of the intervention. The programme was weak in including a description of how geographical targeting should be used to focus on pockets of poverty and therefore failed to tailor interventions to the needs of the beneficiaries.

Sustainability – i.e. the likely continuation of benefits from a development intervention beyond the phase of external funding support - is also found to be weak area. Although there were some improvements in recent years, in general, sustainability has been limited by lack of ownership and engagement by beneficiaries in the planning, implementation and maintenance and oversight of project activities and infrastructure, two essential factors in order to sustain the gains made by projects. For instance, Local Management Committees were set up to manage resources and maintenance of livestock infrastructure, but no planning or saving was reported for maintenance. The cost of repair and maintenance for the housing for animals was not taken into account, when calculating long-term profitability. Enterprises were covering the recurrent costs with some profit, but labour and upkeep of housing were not factored in, compromising sustainability.

Despite the good design in **value chain initiatives**, the lack of a structured value chain approach prevented beneficiaries from enjoying the full profit of their improved production. Value chain activities were not linked with agricultural production or building on agricultural knowledge, and often beneficiaries had to sell their agricultural produce at the same place and time. Although the projects have piloted some **new and innovative approaches**, not enough support and stimulation for innovation have been realized by fully including such activities and by exposing beneficiaries to existing initiatives in marketing and food processing. Moreover, innovations were not sufficiently coupled with an exchange of learning with and between project staff, government bodies and beneficiaries.

Overall, the evaluation finds that **engagement of beneficiaries** could have been improved. In most cases, beneficiaries were consulted at the very onset and they also were able to request support, but the existence of predefined checklists limited their freedom to fully voice their needs.

With regard to **non-lending activities**, in **policy dialogue** IFAD has focused on microfinance policy, promotion of integrated watershed management and support to the implementation of the master plan for the lowlands. The evaluation finds that IFAD did not make sufficient use of **partnerships** by engaging partners from various backgrounds. The situation was complicated by the fact that few donors are represented in-country and limited coordination or cooperation takes place with other United Nations agencies including the Rome-based Agencies.

IFAD's involvement with the **private sector** has played a role in policy discussions on liberalization of the import sector, but partnerships were confined to singular occasions and the approach was found to be piecemeal.

THE GAMBIA AT A GLANCE

Population: **1.928 million (2014)**

Rural population: **41% of total population and 65% of national labour force**

Poverty headcount ratio (% of population): **36.7% (2012)**

Life expectancy at birth: **59 (2013)**

Human Development Index: **0.441 (2013)**

Total number of IFAD loan-funded projects: **10**

IFAD lending approved since 1982: **US$73.1 million**

Sources: World Bank: World Development Indicators, United Nations Development Programme: Human Development Report 2014; IFAD Flex Cube.

Key recommendations

- **Develop a new COSOP prior to further financing, based on lessons learned, including from this evaluation.** The new COSOP should give clear guidance to partnership opportunities and contain a detailed targeting strategy to reach the rural poor. The COSOP should also contain a description of the needs of the various target groups and their location, and how these should be best addressed in the light of existing IFAD regional and corporate policies, strategies and priorities.

- **Improve sustainability of benefits.** The Government should take responsibility for and acknowledge specific infrastructures (for tidal control, due to the highly technical nature of them) as public goods. Only by this acknowledgement will there be a certainty that these infrastructures will be maintained in the long run. Other infrastructures are the responsibility of the local communities for ongoing repair and maintenance. Moreover, ownership building should become an intrinsic part of IFAD's future engagement. Whether it be infrastructure, equipment, draught animals or livestock, beneficiaries need to be made aware that providing these valuables will not be a recurrent external event, and that they need to plan and implement oversight, replacement, repair and maintenance, and ensure that the cost thereof is incorporated into price setting and financial calculations.

- **An in-depth gender analysis should underlie the new COSOP and become an inextricable part of each project design.** In targeting and implementation, support needs to be tailored to female-headed households and reducing women's drudgery.

- **Value chain support needs to be adapted to the local situation and be more structural, covering the various value chains from production to sales.** The capacity of beneficiaries needs to be built in order for them to be able to store and process locally and transport their products to markets, thus enjoying the opportunity for higher prices and incomes.

Further information:
Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD, Via Paolo di Dono, 44, 00142, Rome, Italy. www.ifad.org/evaluation; email: evaluation@ifad.org.