

Project Completion Report Validation

Agriculture Sector Rehabilitation Project

Republic of Liberia

Date of validation by IOE: June 2018

I. Basic project data

			Approval (US\$ m)		Actual (US\$ m)	
Region	West and Central Africa	Total project costs	26.9		22.4	
Country	Liberia	IFAD DSF grant and percentage of total	5.0	19%	4.8	21%
Grant/ Loan number	DSF 8047 Loan no. 898	IFAD loan	2.5	9%	1.9	8%
Type of project (subsector)	AGRIC	Borrower	0.6	2%	0.2	1%
Financing type		African Development Bank – Fragile States Facility	0.7	3%	15.5	69%
Financing terms	DSF grant & highly concessional loan	African Development Bank –Fund	17.6	66%		
Date of approval	17/12/2009 (DSF grant) 15/07/2013 (loan)	Beneficiaries	0.4	2%	Not available	--
Date of signature	22/12/2009					
Date of effectiveness	22/12/2009					
Loan amendments	15/07/2013	Number of beneficiaries (households)	10,080 (Phase I) 5600 (Phase II)		10,090 (Phase I) 5600 (Phase II)	
Loan closure extensions	2	Loan closing date	31/12/2013		31/12/2017	
Country programme managers	Hubert Boirard (May 2009 June 2014) Ndaya Beltchika (July 2014 -)	Mid-term review	05/05/2012			
Regional director(s)	Mohamed Beavogui, Ides De Willebois	IFAD-financing disbursement at project completion (%)	89%			
Project completion report reviewer	Jeanette Cooke	Date of the project completion report	20/12/2017			
Project completion report quality control panel		Project completion report quality control panel	Chitra Deshpande Fumiko Nakai			
[Provide comments, if required]						

Source: Project Completion Report..

II. Project outline

1. **Introduction.** The Agriculture Sector Rehabilitation Project (ASRP) resumed IFAD's activities in Liberia in 2009, following a 20-year suspension due to the country's prolonged civil war (from 1989 to 2003). The ASRP was initiated by the African Development Bank (AfDB) in 2008 and IFAD agreed to provide parallel co-financing of US\$5 million to the project within the context of the Enhanced Strategic Partnership between AfDB and IFAD.¹ The expected duration of financial support was 6 years from AfDB and 4 years from IFAD.²
2. IFAD's Executive Board approved an IFAD grant on 17 December 2009 and it became effective 5 days later. The original completion and closing dates were end-June and December 2013. Additional financing of an IFAD loan of \$2.5 million with a two-year extension was approved mid-year 2013 until December 2015. Following delays in implementation caused by the Ebola virus disease (EVD), a no-cost 18-month extension was approved at the end of 2015, with a new completion date of 30 June 2017 and a closing date of 31 December 2017.
3. Even though the project was co-financed by AfDB and IFAD, each financier had a distinct geographical coverage (see paragraph 4) and the project completion report (PCR) being validated covers only the operations and results in the four counties specifically covered by IFAD.
4. **Project area.** The ASRP target area comprised 30 districts in eight counties (Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, River Gee, and Maryland in the South-East, and Bomi, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, and Montserrado in the North-West). AfDB and IFAD-supported activities were implemented in different counties. The IFAD-supported activities concentrated on 18 districts in four counties (Bomi, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, and Montserrado) where many poor small-scale rice and cassava farmers were located. At the time of design, it was estimated that about 86 per cent of rural households lived in poverty and 80 per cent of them were moderately or highly food insecure.³
5. **Project goal, objectives and components.** The goal of ASRP as stated in the President's report was "to reduce post-conflict poverty and food insecurity, and improve livelihoods and living conditions of rural communities." The main objectives were to: (i) restore capital lost at the household level by channelling direct benefits to vulnerable beneficiary groups; and (ii) provide short-term support for the recovery of rural communities and their farming systems, while laying the basis for long-term rehabilitation and participatory development.
6. Project components comprised: (i) Agriculture Infrastructure Rehabilitation, financed by the AfDB; (ii) Rehabilitation of Productive Capacity, financed by AfDB and IFAD for specific counties; and (iii) Project management, financed by AfDB and IFAD.
7. **Component 1. Agriculture Infrastructure Rehabilitation** was to support the rehabilitation of water management infrastructure for swamp rice cultivation and feeder roads. It also included the development of community infrastructure, such as storage and agro-processing facilities, including multifunctional post-harvest/marketing facilities and mechanised wells and sanitation facilities.⁴ This component was implemented only in the AfDB counties and not in the four counties targeted by IFAD interventions, where infrastructure rehabilitation was not a priority.
8. **Component 2. Rehabilitation of Productive Capacity** aimed to increase the production of staple crops to improve food security and household nutrition and

¹ IFAD 2009b

² IFAD 2009b

³ IFAD. 2009b

⁴ IFAD. 2009b

incomes. The first of two sub-components was **Capacity building** of target households and Community-based organization (CBOs) to enable them to optimise the use of the inputs provided (see below).

9. The second sub-component was the **Recapitalization** of the target households and CBOs. This was to involve the provision of a package of basic inputs consisting of tools, improved planting materials (rice seeds and cassava cuttings), and a set of poultry and small ruminants (goats). The dissemination of improved and certified rice seeds and cassava cuttings was to come from the Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI), that was also supported by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and an Italian government grant (US\$ 2.5 million) managed by IFAD to set up the national seed production and certification system.⁵
10. **Component 3. Project management** was to be implemented through an autonomous Project implementation unit (PIU) under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), which was directly responsible for project coordination and execution. The existing Food Security and Nutrition Technical Committee was to serve as the National Steering Committee (NSC), to give guidance on policy matters related to the project.^{6,7}
11. **Target group.** The project aimed to reach 10,080⁸ farming households, that were the most vulnerable: (i) war-affected small-scale farmers (men and women); (ii) female-headed households (FHHs) and the single mothers; (iii) war widows; (iv) youth (including ex-combatants); and (v) disabled people. The project also aimed to strengthen 500 CBOs so that they could participate in project implementation. MoA staff at the county and district level were also an important target group to improve the institution's capacity to implement and supervise projects and moreover, local extension services.
12. ASRP targeting measures included: (i) the selection of villages with at least 65 per cent of the population living in poverty; (ii) supporting only rice and cassava crops owing to their predominance in household consumption and food security; and (iii) pro-poor targeting by implementing partners based on needs assessments conducted with the communities. At least 50 per cent of target households would be headed by women. Where this was not possible, 50 per cent of the farmers' groups would be women-only or women-dominated groups.⁹ At least 20 per cent of beneficiaries would be youth (from 15 to 35 year olds).¹⁰
13. **Financing.** The total funding for ASRP was US\$ 26.9 million. The bulk of funding came from AfDB amounting to US\$ 18.4 million and IFAD amounting to US\$ 5 million from a Debt Sustainability Framework (DSF) grant and US\$ 2.5 million from a loan. In addition, the Government contribution was valued at about US\$ 0.58 million and beneficiaries' contributions in cash or in-kind were valued at US\$ 0.41 million.
14. Table 1 shows that at project completion, US\$ 15.5 million (85 per cent) of AfDB funds and US\$ 216,000 (37 per cent) from the Government of Liberia had been disbursed. The PCR explains that the Government contribution was lower than planned owing to budget constraints. It also notes that significant beneficiary contributions were made in-kind during implementation, but they were "not captured due to validation difficulties". For IFAD, US\$ 4.8 million (96 per cent) of the DSF grant and US\$ 1.9 million (74 per cent) of the loan were disbursed.

⁵ IFAD. 2009b

⁶ IFAD. 2009b

⁷ IFAD. 2009e

⁸ The PCR and other project documents refer interchangeably to 10,000 and 10,080 households. The approximate number is 10,000 but the actual target was 10,080 which equates to 504 CBOs multiplied by 20 people (in each)

⁹ IFAD. 2009b

¹⁰ IFAD. 2009c

15. Table 2 shows expenditure by financier, by component.

Table 1
Project costs at completion

Source of funding	Type of financing	Estimated amount (US\$m)	Estimated amount (%total)	Actual expenditure (US\$m)*	Actual expenditure (%total)	Disbursements (%appraisal)
AfDB	Grant	18.4	68	15.5	69	85
IFAD DSF	Grant	5.0	19	4.8	21	96
IFAD loan	Loan	2.5	9	1.9	8	74
GoL	-	0.6	2	0.2	1	37
Beneficiaries	Cash and in-kind contributions	0.4	2	n/a	n/a	0
TOTAL*		26.9	100	22.4	99**	83

Source: PCR

* PCR in agreement with Oracle when looking at IFAD DSF grant and loan disbursements until 30/06/2017.

** Any inconsistencies in percentages owe to rounding

Table 2
Component costs (US\$ 000s)

Component	IFAD			AfDB			GoL			Beneficiaries			TOTAL		
	Approved	Actual	%	Approved	Actual	%	Approved	Actual	%	Approved	Actual	%	Approved	Actual	%
Agriculture Infrastructure Rehabilitation	-	-	-	12 391	8 163	66	-	-	-	-	-	-	12 391	8 163	66
Rehabilitation Productive Capacity	6 463	45 06	70	3 581	4 439	124	-	-	-	412	0	0	10 456	8 946	86
Project management	1 037	1 740	168	2 395	2 935	123	577	216	37	-	-	-	4 009	4 891	122
Initial advance	-	394	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	394	
TOTAL	7 500	6 640	89	18 367	15 537	85	577	216	37	412	0	0	26 856	22 393	83

Source: PCR

16. **Project implementation.** The MOA was responsible for project implementation. A NSC chaired by the MOA provided overall guidance and supervision. The PIU was to coordinate and execute the project and contracted implementing partners (IPs) to directly implement the project, in coordination with the decentralized county and district offices of the MOA and the CBOs. Additional partners for implementation identified at design were the Ministry of Gender and Development (MOGD) and CARI – for seed multiplication and certification.
17. **Changes and developments during implementation.** ASRP was first extended for two years, from 2013 to 2015, with a supplementary loan from IFAD to implement phase II. Following the Mid-term review (MTR), phase II saw a shift in the focus of the project away from rehabilitation and achieving basic food security to a pilot to initiate sustainable extension services for smallholder farmers.¹¹ The MTR also changed the implementation modality from phase I to II. In phase I, four international Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Africare, Concern

¹¹ IFAD. 2017b

Worldwide, Action Aid and Welthungerhilfe), one for each county, were contracted to implement the project. While, in phase II, the PIU contracted a national farmers' organization – the Farmers' Union Network (FUN) – to implement activities in all four counties. ASRP was extended for 18 months, from 2015 to 2017, to compensate for delays in implementation caused by the outbreak of EVD in 2014 and 2015.¹²

18. **Intervention logic.** ASRP aimed to restore and improve agricultural productive capacity and household food security in a post-conflict economy. This would be achieved through facilitating local participatory development and improving the provision of extension services to farmers to increase production and household income. The main activities were the recapitalization of farmers with farming inputs and assets (livestock) and capacity building of stakeholders at all levels of the agricultural sector – farmer CBOs, CARI and MOA county and district staff – to provide and make the most of extension services.
19. The emphasis placed on these activities varied significantly between phases I and II. Phase I was designed to quickly recapitalize smallholder farmers' asset base to recommence farming and establish and build the capacity of community facilitators and the CBOs in which they belong to increase production levels to pre-war levels. Phase II took a longer-term approach through (i) a pilot to promote and support the establishment of CBO-centred, demand-driven and participatory extension services; and (ii) developing the MOA's capabilities to provide capacity building services to CBOs.¹³
20. **Delivery of outputs.** The PCR presents the physical outputs achieved during project implementation and compares them to the targets set during project design (phase I) and redesign (phase II). In the most part, actual outputs were from 88 to 100 per cent of planned targets. The notable exception concerns the livestock activities, which were met with various problems beyond the project's control and are detailed under Effectiveness, below. The results of physical output delivery are tabulated in Annex III.

III. Review of findings

A. Core criteria

Relevance

21. **Project objectives.** The effect of the Liberian civil war on agriculture was extensive. Many farms and rural areas had been abandoned and villages had been burnt down and looted. Many farmers had lost vital assets, especially seeds and livestock.¹⁴ There was a clear logic to the design of ASRP to restore capital lost at the household level through channeling direct benefits to smallholder farmers and to support short-term recovery of rural communities and their farming systems, while laying the basis for longer term development and extension services.
22. Project objectives were consistent with key Government policies and strategies for rural and agricultural development: the 2008 National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy; the 2008 Food and Agricultural Policy and Strategy (FAPS)¹⁵; the 2008–2011 Joint Food Security and Nutrition Programme of the Government of Liberia (GOL) and the UN agencies in Liberia; and, the 2008–2011 Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). Both rice and cassava were identified by the PRS and the FAPS as priority crops to bring "quick-wins" in improving household food security.
23. The PCR acknowledges the ASRP's alignment with all three strategic objectives of the IFAD Results-based Country Strategic Opportunities Programme (RB-COSOP) for Liberia, 2011-2015. It is worth noting, however, that the RB-COSOP was

¹² IFAD. 2017b

¹³ IFAD. 2013b

¹⁴ IFAD. 2009b

¹⁵ In response to global food price increases, to promote a rapid supply response from farmers.

designed at the end of 2010, after ASRP was underway. Project objectives were aligned with IFAD's strategic framework 2007–2010 to improve rural livelihoods by strengthening their own organizations and enabling them to access productive technologies and resources. The ASRP also complied with IFAD's Post-Conflict and Recovery Strategy in terms of its intentions to carry out reconstruction and development interventions to build community resilience and help to restore people's livelihoods.

24. **Project design.** IFAD's President's report and project design report (PDR) refer to how the components financed by the AfDB and IFAD would complement each other. However, this appears to be left over from earlier design missions of IFAD and the AfDB¹⁶ that envisaged that both institutions would fund the project in all eight counties. The IFAD post-design mission concluded that this would stretch IFAD financing for recapitalization and capacity building too thinly and refocused activities in four counties. The Government also requested that the two institutions focus their support on separate counties because the priority counties for food security (in the North-West) differed to the priority counties for infrastructure (in the South-East). Nevertheless, it was appropriate for IFAD to partner with AfDB in ASRP as its initial re-entry point into the country.
25. The sub-components to recapitalize farmers and build their capacity were relevant and complementary to restore farming capacity and production back to pre-war levels in the short-term. Given the limited capacity of the MOA after the war, it was appropriate that the PIU contracted international IPs to implement the project effectively and quickly. However, the design of a small PIU team to cover a range of thematic and operational tasks proved too limited to implement the project satisfactorily.
26. Various challenges to the distribution and management of small livestock are reported in the PCR that were beyond the project's control. They included a general scarcity of stock in Liberia, lack of quarantine for imports and poor access to veterinary services. Together, these challenges meant the targets set at design regarding the distribution of poultry and goats to farmers who would then care for and breed them, were overly ambitious.
27. **Project adjustments.** The changes to ASRP from phase I to phase II were not in line with the draft IFAD 2011 COSOP that stated "*the scaling up of ASRP may be extended to the South East when access (to) infrastructure is present*" (following AfDB financing of infrastructure rehabilitation in phase I). In practice phase II aimed to target the same counties as before owing to an identified need to continue building farmers' capacity for organization and cooperative development and to improve farm production and productivity.¹⁷ Other justifications for the changes from phase I and II included: (i) the planned outputs of phase I were largely achieved; (ii) the country and agricultural development context had changed from a post-conflict environment focused on rehabilitating farming to a peaceful environment focused on cultivating a wider range of crops and production systems and developing markets and value chains;¹⁸ (iii) there remained significant institutional weaknesses that needed to be addressed to build a sustainable extension services delivery system; and (iv) contracting and building the capacity of the national farmers' organization, FUN, rather than the international NGOs from phase I was a more sustainable approach.¹⁹ The changes were also in line with the second PRS paper, called the Agenda for Transformation 2013-2017 and the more recent Liberia Agricultural Transformation Agenda 2015-2017.

¹⁶ AfDB 2009 and IFAD 2009a

¹⁷ IFAD 2013a

¹⁸ IFAD 2013a

¹⁹ IFAD 2014

28. During the implementation of phase II, the project supported farmers' groups in becoming cooperatives, pilot-tested cassava processing and its beneficiaries also stood to benefit from rice milling services of local entrepreneurs supported by a US\$ 2.1 million grant secured by IFAD from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This more market-orientated approach was in line with government requests as well as the Quality assurance concerns regarding constraints to marketing surplus products.²⁰ The PCR remarks that beneficiaries' poor access to markets to sell surplus products warranted more attention at design, while the Project completion report validation (PCRv) finds that this would not have been appropriate for phase I or II given the initial challenges to production and recapitalization and subsequent limited financing and institutional capacity. Considering the importance of addressing market constraints and the scale of the challenges involved, the issue would have warranted a new project altogether.
29. **Targeting.** The design of ASRP targeted the most vulnerable households, in line with the GOL's principle of inclusive development²¹ through geographic, commodity (rice and cassava), self and direct targeting measures. The four target counties were identified by the GOL because they included villages with some of the highest poverty levels in the country (from 65 to 80 per cent) and included many poor small-scale rice and cassava farmers. In addition, they were not served by other donors and had less damaged infrastructure, easing the movement of goods. Activities were designed to be largely self-targeting to attract the poorer households rather than the better-off. For example, the project would focus on the staple crops of rice and cassava, use the CBO-approach and provide literacy classes that would not appeal to wealthier households. This was to be complemented by needs assessments conducted by the IPs and the communities themselves to ensure relevant households were involved.
30. The PCR explains how the design of the ASRP was a direct response to the needs of the target group. Indeed, it started addressing the weak capacity of the MOA at county and district levels through capacity building and contracting IPs. The weak organizational capacity at the community level was addressed through the capacity building of community agriculture facilitators (CAFs – in phase I) and lead farmers (LFs - in phase II) and the formation of CBOs (in phase I)/farmer-based organizations (FBOs, in phase II). It addressed the lack of training prospects at all levels by capacity building on how to deliver and/or make the most of extension services. Low levels of literacy were also tackled through literacy classes. The limited availability of good quality inputs and assets was overcome in the short-term through the provision of vital inputs and small livestock to all farmers in phase I and the LFs in phase II. Constraints faced by resource poor households, especially FHHs to prepare their land, and the unemployment and underemployment of youth were partly addressed through youth mobilisation for land clearing.
31. **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).** The logframe in the design report was clear and straightforward, although it focused mainly on outputs and lacked many targets. The lack of targets was to be addressed by the impending baseline survey in 2011. The logframe was changed twice during implementation to reflect changes to design and it was subject to regular reviews during supervision missions.
32. Considering the high relevance of project objectives, most of the design and adjustments as well as the targeting measures and the logframe, but also the design of a thin PIU team, the ambitious livestock activities, the rating for relevance is satisfactory (5), in line with PMD.

Effectiveness

²⁰ IFAD 2009a

²¹ IFAD 2009b

33. The PCR provides a thorough analysis of the ASRP M&E systems in phases I and II, which were generally found wanting. The main issues were an overstretched officer in the PIU responsible for M&E, gender and knowledge management, an incomplete and unreliable baseline survey^{22,23}, inconsistent data collection techniques used between IPs in phase I and large scope for error, inconsistency and inaccuracy at farm, district and county level in phase II. As a result, there is limited data available and the accuracy of data that is available is questionable, limiting analysis. For exact output figures, please refer to Annex III. The following discussion on effectiveness is split into phase I and II given some of the different activities, approaches and outcomes between them.
34. **Phase I Outreach and poverty focus.** Outreach targets were met with the project reaching 10,090 households versus the target of 10,080 and ensuring at least 50 per cent and 20 per cent of beneficiaries would be women and youth²⁴, respectively. Based on reports from the international NGOs in Phase I, the approach used by the MOA, IPs and communities together to identify poor communities and beneficiary households was satisfactory,²⁵ with a weaker poverty focus in Grand Cape Mount, where Africare was responsible for implementation.
35. **Phase I Objective: Restore capital lost at the household level.** At the end of phase I, 89 per cent and 95 per cent of planned rice seeds and cassava cuttings were distributed to farmers, respectively. A larger number of farmers also benefitted from access to planting materials through the *habanaye* approach adopted by the project. It involved delivering the input packages in two instalments, first crops then livestock. An impressive 90 per cent of farmers reimbursed 100 per cent of crops and gave them to other farmers, before receiving livestock. The supply of improved and certified rice seeds and cassava cuttings posed a challenge for the IPs however. The planned CARI seedbank and certification process did not materialize so the IPs had to source seeds and cuttings from the open market at higher costs and it was difficult to ensure consistency in terms of quality and volume. Several seed varieties were distributed that were mostly improved in quality, some did not meet all specifications. Indeed there was evidence of mosaic virus problems in some cassava cuttings in phases I²⁶ and II.²⁷
36. Livestock distribution was limited to less than one-fifth of the planned goats and poultry. Various challenges were met including a general scarcity of stock in Liberia, lack of quarantine for imports and poor access to veterinary services. Among the livestock that was procured and distributed, there was a high mortality rate (from 10 to 55 per cent²⁸) and disease was spread to existing livestock.²⁹ In response the project introduced alternative interventions in line with farmers' demands – the provision of 2.4 Metric tonnes (MT) of groundnuts and 3.1 MT of corn and the mobilization of 8,096 youth for land clearing/preparation for FHHs. The latter activity should have improved the human capital available to FHH to prepare their land for cultivation, however the extent to which this occurred is not reported. Given that an average of three youths were hired by each household³⁰, the PCR estimates that the FHHs benefitting from youth land clearing numbered approximately 2,698.
37. The PCR does not mention that farming tools, such as wheel barrows, files, rain boots, cutlass, hoes and shovels, were also distributed to CBOs in phase I, for use on demonstration plots. This may be due to the lack of output data available in

²² IFAD 2011a

²³ IFAD 2017b

²⁴ IFAD 2013a

²⁵ IFAD 2013a

²⁶ IFAD 2012

²⁷ IFAD 2017b

²⁸ IFAD 2011a

²⁹ IFAD 2012

³⁰ IFAD March 2013a

early project reports. However, according to the MTR (2012), the distribution proceeded well.³¹

38. **Phase I Objective: Support short-term recovery of rural communities and their farming systems, while laying the basis for long-term rehabilitation and participatory development.** The short-term recovery of communities and their farming systems was supported in phase I by: (i) the recruitment and training of 446 CAFs out of the planned 504 to demonstrate improved crop production techniques; (ii) creating 453 demonstration plots out of the planned 504; (iii) establishing 498 CBOs out of the planned 504; and (iv) training all 10,090 CBO members on improved crop production techniques. The PCR does not report on the quality of the training given by CAFs or the demonstration plots across the four counties. The PCRV finds that the CAFs themselves received a variable quality of technical support and that the demonstration plots also varied in quality³² but the extent and implications of these variations are not clear. The quality of the CBOs is unclear but early project reports suggest that in terms of membership and articulated guidelines for operations, they improved over time.³³ As a result of these activities, an average of 78 per cent of cassava farmers (ranging from 71 to 89 per cent per county) adopted improved mound planting rather than the traditional flat planting.³⁴
39. In addition, a total of 345 literacy facilitators were trained that were not planned in project design and 6,255 people received basic literacy and numeracy training. Unlike in earlier project reports, the PCR does not report how the literacy classes were in great demand³⁵ and highly regarded by the beneficiaries.³⁶ Moreover, it does not reflect on how improved literacy benefitted beneficiaries in general and enabled them to use other project activities more effectively.
40. In summary, phase I performance was satisfactory. It achieved a good outreach to the target group and targeting mechanisms were pro-poor. The proportion of women and youth participating in the project was also in line with quotas set at design. The objective to restore capital lost at the household level through the distribution of inputs was attained using the *habanaye* approach in phase I, although challenges to input supply and the supply and management of livestock restricted effectiveness. Phase I contributed to the short-term recovery of farming systems by forming CBOs and training their members on improved production techniques, with some evidence that these were adopted. Recovery efforts were also supported by literacy training which was highly appreciated by beneficiaries.
41. **Phase II Outreach and poverty focus.** The planned number of households was reached (5,600 versus the target of 5,600). Women represented 56 per cent of LFs and 15 per cent of FFs, but overall they represented 16 per cent of the beneficiaries compared to the quota of 50 per cent.³⁷ It is unclear how many youth were reached, although evidence suggests their representation was close to the quota of 20 per cent - a 2016 report by FUN suggests that youths made up 15 per cent of LFs and they were also engaged in land clearing for vulnerable households, especially FHHs.³⁸ As noted above, the four target counties in phase I and II were identified by the GOL because they included villages with some of the highest poverty levels in the country (from 65 to 80 per cent) and included many poor small-scale rice and cassava farmers. However, within the communities it is

³¹ IFAD 2012

³² IFAD 2013a

³³ IFAD 2013a

³⁴ LISGIS 2014

³⁵ IFAD 2012

³⁶ IFAD 2013a

³⁷ IFAD 2017b

³⁸ IFAD 2017b

unclear the extent to which the targeting of farmers in Phase II was pro-poor, given that the targeting measures used did not prioritize poverty or vulnerability.³⁹

42. Following the successful formation and training of community facilitators and CBOs in phase I, there was an identified need to continue building their capacity for organization and cooperative development and to improve farm production and productivity in phase II.⁴⁰ However, this opportunity was lost because: there was no strategy to hand over the target group from phase I to phase II; FUN had less capacity and experience than the international Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to continue building the CBOs; and, the MOA preferred to reach more people than further build the capacity of those already reached.⁴¹ As a result, FUN identified new farmers to become LFs and FFs and only a few of Phase I farmers were "accidentally" included under Phase II.⁴²
43. **Phase II Objective: Restore capital lost at the household level.** In phase II, only LFs received inputs, including tools, seeds and planting material, in addition to cash for clearing and de-stumping 1 ha and a monthly remuneration of US\$ 50 for the upkeep of the demonstration site. In most cases, the inputs were successfully used on the demonstration sites to train FFs. However, some LFs also used the money individually, for school fees, medicines or other personal items, creating feelings of unfairness amongst the FFs.⁴³ In groups using a demo plot on communal land, LFs often shared the harvest (in kind or in cash once sold) and seeds with the FFs, contributing to capital accumulation in households. However, those demonstrating on their own farm reportedly kept the harvest for their families, creating feelings of unfairness once more among FFs. The resulting dissatisfaction amongst the FFs was a contributing factor to more than half of them dropping-out of the groups (from 5,320 to 1,892) after they had received the training.⁴⁴
44. **Phase II Objective: Support short-term recovery of rural communities and their farming systems, while laying the basis for long-term rehabilitation and participatory development.** Phase II focused on laying the basis for long-term rehabilitation and development. The pilot to establish a CBO-centred, demand-driven and participatory extension service reached its output targets and involved: mobilizing and training 280 LFs and 280 corresponding demonstration sites; the identification and training of 5,320 FFs on enhanced planting techniques, farm record-keeping, seed preservation, basic marketing, post-harvest loss reduction and value addition. Project completion field visits and discussions with farmers suggested that all farmers in phase II, including FF drop-outs, had adopted an improved planting technique. There is limited information available on the adoption of other improved technologies and techniques, except for an increased number of farmers trying to maintain record-keeping at farm level. The PCRV also found that training on post-harvest and value addition matters resulted in "some" farmers sorting/grading their production before marketing it, decreasing losses and improving the price per sorted kilogram sold.⁴⁵
45. The development of extension capabilities at county and district level to implement and supervise the pilot involved: recruiting and training 17 FUN and 13 MOA extension officers at county and district level, plus 3 extension officers at the district level from the Johnsonville Women Farmers Multipurpose Cooperative Society (JWFMCS).⁴⁶ The activities were sufficient to cover basic implementation of the pilot and represented important first steps, but as discussed under the

³⁹ IFAD 2017b

⁴⁰ IFAD 2013a

⁴¹ Communication by CPM 10 May 2018

⁴² IFAD 2017b

⁴³ IFAD 2017b

⁴⁴ IFAD 2017b

⁴⁵ IFAD 2016

⁴⁶ Already a functional cooperative before ASRP but also a beneficiary of the project

sustainability of benefits, they did not and could not fulfil long-term development needs.

46. A more market-orientated approach was adopted during the implementation of phase II in response to MOA demands, but budget constraints limited activities and several problems were experienced. A cassava processing pilot supporting two entrepreneurs to serve as sales outlets for the ASRP target group had serious weaknesses and failed to come about. The project sought an alternative arrangement through partnerships with other projects working with cassava processors.⁴⁷ Seven cassava processors were selected and enhanced with equipment and training. It was not clear by March 2017, the extent to which the ASRP target group used the services of processors and benefitted. Similarly, under the Japanese Rice grant secured by IFAD in 2016, the ASRP target group should benefit from the development of local entrepreneurs' rice milling services, but by project completion, results had not been reported.
47. The MOA and FUN established links with CDA to transform FBOs (LF and FFs) into cooperatives. The process was halted by the outbreak of the EVD, but by project completion, four FBOs had received training and attained pre-cooperative status pending the fulfilment of all cooperative stipulations. The next steps required and the potential of the CBOs to take them is not documented.
48. During phase II, the PCR notes significant challenges to implementation, including: delays in ratification of supplementary financing by the GoL (with no explanation as to why this occurred), delays in input supply, and issues with FUN concerning institutional development, the EVD crisis, a shortage of MOA staff and a reduction of FUN extension staff towards the end of the project. Despite these challenges, phase II did manage to meet the output targets. However, targeting performance was restricted by reaching a minority of women, the lack of a poverty focus in targeting measures and no strategy to hand over the target group from phase I to phase II and the resulting change in the beneficiaries reached. The objective to restore capital lost at the household level was met to a limited extent by distributing inputs to LFs, but with only a minority of them sharing the benefits with FFs, contributing to the high drop-out rate of FFs. The pilot contributed to laying some of the foundations for long-term participatory development through the training of FUN and MOA county and district extension officers and the formation and training of new FBOs. Although many FBOs disbanded, the PCR field visits found that farmers had adopted improved planting. Initial steps were also taken to improve farmers' access to post harvest processing and markets (through cooperatives) but various problems prevented them from coming to fruition before project completion. In short the performance of phase II was moderately unsatisfactory.
49. Overall, the rating for effectiveness of the ASRP is moderately satisfactory (4), one level lower than PMD.

Efficiency

50. The project internal rate of return (IRR) was not computed at design. Instead, the project's economic and financial viability was justified in terms of the expected increase in average annual income for 10,000 households from US\$ 130 to US\$ 1,016 by 2014 and the ensuing generation of new jobs for about half a million person days. The PCR calculates a respectable 10 per cent IRR at completion, considering the increase in average income of US\$ 882 for 15,690 households over seven years, actual project costs from components 2 and 3 and a discount factor of eight.

⁴⁷ CHAP (Community of Hope Agricultural Project), currently implementing the J-Rice Project and SAPEC (smallholder agricultural productivity enhancement and commercialization) project, financed by AfDB

51. Total project management costs were 22 per cent of total project costs, instead of 15 per cent as foreseen in design and overall, they were significantly higher by 22 per cent than anticipated with the additional financing.
- IFAD spent 68 per cent more on project management than expected owing to additional costs incurred during the extension, covering some costs that should have been shared under a joint PIU with AfDB, such as accounting software, utilities, and operational costs and GOL covering only 37 per cent of the costs anticipated at design, owing to budget constraints. Despite these cost overruns, the cost of IFAD financing per beneficiary household at completion (US\$ 423 per household⁴⁸) was slightly lower than the ratio at design (US\$ 500 per household).
52. Disbursement trends in the PCR show a higher rate of disbursement in phase I (2010-2013) than phase II (2013-2017). This is understandable given the initial procurement of equipment and implementation by four IPs in Phase I. While phase II was implemented by just one IP, with lower levels of capacity that were being addressed during the project and it was interrupted by the outbreak of EVD (2014-2015). Excluding the period affected by the EVD outbreak, the execution of annual budgets was low in both phases I and II, ranging from 60 per cent to 70 per cent. Reasons given for this include delays in signing contracts and protocols to release funds to PIU and FUN.⁴⁹ At the end of phase I, the final disbursement of the IFAD grant was 96 per cent. Although the overall rate of disbursement of IFAD's pledged contributions (89 per cent) compares well to the AfDB's (85 per cent) considering the latter covered infrastructure development, the final disbursement of IFAD's loan at the end of phase II stood at a low 74 per cent.
53. The efficiency of phase I is satisfactory: coming out of a long civil war, the project was able to economically convert resources and inputs into results largely due to implementation by four NGOs. Phase II was less efficient and is moderately unsatisfactory. It is appreciated that the institutional and technical capacity of project implementers (the MOA and FUN) was low and that there was the EVD outbreak, however, phase II did not succeed in using all the resources at its disposal within the extended time allocated to improve the effectiveness of project activities and outcomes. Overall, in line with PMD, the rating for efficiency is moderately satisfactory (4), considering the bulk of IFAD financing went into phase I.

Rural poverty impact

54. The project carried out a baseline survey in 2010/2011 but project reports invariably describe the data as unreliable. An impact survey was conducted in 2013 after the mid-term review providing useful data on the results of phase I, but it was not followed up by a final impact survey at project completion to understand the results of phase II and trends over time. To counter the lack of data, the project completion mission conducted a mini client survey, involving 71 people, both LFs and FFs, and retrieved data from reliable secondary information sources. The PCR acknowledges that impact cannot solely be attributed to the activities financed by ASRP, but no mention is made of other development activities in the target area.
55. **Food security and agricultural productivity.** Farmers in phase I and II report increases in production. According to the 2013/2014 impact survey, 73 per cent of rice farmers experienced an increase in production. Focus group discussions with farmers in phase II showed the widely held perception that production and yields were higher than before the project. Log frame indicators measure an increase in rice and cassava yields. Rice yields increased from 1.2MT/ha in lowland areas and

⁴⁸ IFAD 2017b appendix 10

⁴⁹ IFAD 2017b

from 0.8MT/ha⁵⁰ in upland areas to between 2.3 and 2.8 MT/ha⁵¹ - exceeding the targeted increase of 50 per cent. Cassava yields increased from 6MT/ha to 9.2MT/ha, attaining the targeted increase of 50 per cent.

56. The PCR compares the results of the Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition (CFSN) surveys in Liberia in 2010 and 2013. The proportion of people whose food consumption was poor or borderline decreased over this period in three counties - Montserrado (75 to 68 per cent), Bomi (74 to 55 per cent) and Grand Cape Mount (54 to 38 per cent) – but significantly increased in Grand Bassa (34 to 60 per cent). The review notes that there is also a 2015 CFSN survey which provides more recent data and shows how countrywide food consumption steadily improved and only 5 per cent of the population in 2015 had poor food consumption. The general improvements in food security in Liberia were demonstrated in 2012 when food aid was discontinued. Although not directly comparable, the results of the ASRP impact survey and mini client survey also show improvements in beneficiary food security during the project period, although the PCR does not clearly report this. The 2013/2014 impact survey shows that only 14 per cent of the sample (133 / 900 people) had enough food to eat for the whole year, while in the mini client survey in 2017, nearly half (48 per cent) of the sample (29/61 people) had not experienced a hungry season in the last 12 months. It is plausible that the increased production and productivity in rice and cassava yields reported by ASRP beneficiaries contributed to improving household food security.
57. The results of the 2010 and 2013 CFSN survey show that the rate of child stunting, indicating chronic undernutrition, increased in 3 target counties and decreased only in Montserrado, suggesting that the ASRP did not generally have a positive impact on chronic child malnutrition. Based on secondary sources, the logframe reports a reduction in the prevalence of child malnutrition (in this case stunting) in the country as a whole from 41.8 per cent in the period 2008 to 2012 to 31.6 per cent in 2016. However, it is not known how attributable this reduction is to the outcomes of the project.

Human and social capital and empowerment

58. The PCR does not explicitly assess the impact of ASRP on this domain. Yet, through the recapitalization of inputs and capacity building of smallholder farmers, as well as classes teaching basic literacy and numeracy, ASRP has contributed to empowering individual farming capacities, evident from increases in agricultural production, yields and income. The formation of CBOs/FBOs also fostered social cohesion and enhanced interaction among group members and the wider community in local development processes. This is evident to an extent from the reported increase in community and group meetings. However, phase II also saw the number of FFs drop dramatically, showing the lack of perceived value of working in FBOs and the training itself. The PCR attributes the dramatic fall in numbers to the FF's dissatisfaction from not receiving monetary incentives or tool packages, like the LFs and the labour-intensive nature of the work, such as de-stumping. FFs also appeared to have a poor understanding of the programme itself.
59. The empowerment of FBOs to graduate into cooperatives was limited and only four groups involving roughly 100 farmers achieved their temporary permit status. They still needed support from CDA to achieve full cooperative status⁵² and it is not known if they will manage to become established cooperatives. However, the CDA process to transform FBOs into cooperatives was put in motion and the FBOs received additional training to function as cooperatives. These were still important

⁵⁰ Design estimates of rice and cassava yields were used in the PCR instead of yields identified by the baseline survey because the latter were not considered reliable.

⁵¹ From the LISGIS 2014 impact survey in 2013. It did not distinguish between lowland and upland yields, hence the range given.

⁵² IFAD 2016

developments and perhaps more realistic in a two-year extension and given the lack of farmer organization at the beginning, rather than the establishment of fully fledged cooperatives.

60. ASRP phase II provided support to JWFMCS from 2014/15, among other donors. This support enabled them to establish their management team and run an office and improve their production capacity through access to inputs (tools, seeds, fertilizer) and a power tiller. The JWFMCS has been empowered to improve access by farmers to fertilizers - on a sustainable basis using farm profits - and to training, but it still requires financial and institutional support.
61. **Household income and net assets.** The impact of the project on household income was not measured. Instead, the PCR economic and financial analysis calculated an increased income of US\$ 882 in 2017, from the US\$ 130 during design and compared it to the target of US\$ 1,016 in 2014. This is a notable achievement considering the debilitating effect of the EVD on the agricultural sector and the economy in general. During the outbreak, the Government put restrictions on movement all over the country and closed schools and rural markets. As a result, there was a general decline in economic and social activity. In the mini client survey, 87 per cent (59 out of 68 people) indicated that their income had increased as a result of the training received from ASRP. Respondents also reported that with the higher income they were able to spend more on assets (mobile phones and radios), farming tools, health and education.
62. **Institutions and policies.** The PCR does not explicitly assess the impact of ASRP on this domain, however the ASRP worked with and had a limited impact on the capacity of the MOA, FUN and the Cooperative Development Agency (CDA), at least to implement the pilot. Project support to MOA to fulfil its role of supervising and monitoring implementation was through the provision of motorbikes, equipment and technical assistance. Although MOA field staff received some training, for example on report writing and presentation skills⁵³ none of those interviewed during the completion mission had been trained in extension, trainers of trainers (ToT) or agro-business, or M&E data collection/analysis and system development. ASRP also strengthened the MOA's institutional capacity by building the capacity of the PIU that was later integrated into the Project Management Unit (PMU) of the MOA that is responsible for all MOA donor funded projects. That being said, the PCR reports the capacity building of technical staff in the PIU was not done to the extent necessary.
63. FUN extension officers attended a ToTs course on extension service provision to farmers and were provided with mobility incentives so they could work with farmers. FUN also received some support and training to increase their capacity as an organization. The PCR reported nonetheless that the skills FUN had to train trainers or develop farm manuals appeared weak. A weakness of CDA was to monitor and assist pre-cooperatives, so CDA worked with ASRP through the process of supporting four FBOs to attain pre-cooperative status.
64. **Overall rural poverty impact.** Evidence suggests that the project had a moderately satisfactory impact on human and social capital and empowerment of farmers and their organizations, and to a limited extent on institutions. Impact analysis and proxy and secondary sources also suggest that ASRP had a positive impact on household income, agricultural productivity and food security. The project's impact on rural poverty is rated moderately satisfactory (4), in line with PMD.

⁵³ IFAD 2016

Sustainability of benefits

65. Phase I was primarily concerned with the short-term recovery of farming systems but both phases shared the objective to *lay the basis* for long-term rehabilitation and participatory development.
66. At the farm level, continued improvement to farm production, productive capacity and income depends in part on farmers making the most of what they have received and learned from the project as well as their improved access to inputs, value addition technologies and markets. The PCR provides ample evidence that farmers – LFs, FFs and "other followers of FFs" - will continue to use the technical farming knowledge that they have learnt and are already successfully applying. Farmers' access to improved inputs did not go as planned because the CARI seedbank and certification process was not achieved (outside the ASRP). Instead in phase II, the project encouraged LFs to share rootstock with FFs, which proved a suboptimal yet workable alternative. In addition, the pilot on cassava processing failed and alternative arrangements, also concerning rice processing, had not been realized before project completion, nor is it clear if they are now likely to occur. So, there is no evidence that the market for raw materials has improved.
67. The sustainability of the FBOs in phase II varies. For some it is highly questionable given that more than half of the FFs had already dropped out by project completion. For the more successful groups however, where LFs shared inputs and the harvest on the demonstration plot with FFs and used the monetary support for the benefit of the whole group, it is likely they will continue functioning. For example, they started using the traditional kuu system⁵⁴ to meet each other's labour demands and to explore collective marketing activities. The capacity of CDA to take these successful FBOs on the long road to becoming cooperatives is reportedly restricted without financial support from donors.⁵⁵
68. Maintaining the benefits realized by farmers and CBOs/FBOs also depends on their access to a functional extension service by the MOA. As such, the exit strategy for ASRP was to hand over the target groups to MOA extension services at county and district level. However, the PCR explains that it is highly unlikely that the ability of the MOA to provide extension services to farmers altered much due to the project, because: the training received by extension staff was insufficient; and, there is little or no decentralized budget in MOA to cover recurrent expenses. Furthermore, FUN extension officers working for ASRP in collaboration with the MOA will either be laid off or deployed elsewhere with other project funding.
69. The PCRV acknowledges that neither phase I nor the pilot programme in phase II were meant to address the serious issues affecting the sustainability of the extension service and the continuing transformation of FBOs into cooperatives by CDA. Instead, ASRP has demonstrated (and learnt how to improve) a farmer-centred participatory extension service through FBOs, a national farmers' organization and the MOA – laying some important foundations for long-term rehabilitation and participatory development. The LF-FF approach used in ASRP was scaled-up by the AfDB in Liberia (see scaling-up below). The benefits enjoyed by farmers would have been more sustainable had ASRP better addressed the market for raw materials and the LF-FF working dynamics. The overall rating for sustainability of benefits is moderately satisfactory (4), the same as PMD.

B. Other performance criteria

Innovation

70. The PCR briefly notes two innovations: (i) the approach of farmers paying back inputs in kind to other farmers in need; and (ii) the write-shop at the start of the ASRP completion process involving staff from other IFAD-supported projects. The

⁵⁴ Members take it in turns to carry out field activities on each other's farms

⁵⁵ IFAD 2017b

payback system was innovative in terms of being new in the rural communities, beneficial to farmers access to essential inputs, a cost-effective way to empower direct and indirect beneficiaries and prevent the tendency to sell the inputs to meet immediate cash needs, and instrumental in changing attitudes of beneficiaries to otherwise free gifts.⁵⁶ The write-shop to start the project completion process was not an innovation contributing to the project objectives but is considered positively under the quality of the PCR in section IV.

71. The President's report also identifies an innovation in the hiring of young people to support FHH to clear their land for cultivation. This may have been an innovative activity but there is limited data and explanation in the PCR and previous reports to substantiate this. The pilot testing of crop processing experienced several implementation problems and final results were not available by completion to report. However, given the success of the input payback system in phase I, the rating for innovation is moderately satisfactory (4), in line with PMD.

Scaling up

72. Following the war there was widespread wariness to group formation because it was viewed as an activity driven by Government.⁵⁷ The relative success of the LF extension model to form acceptable FBOs was therefore considered notable. The AfDB therefore scaled up the LF extension model in the counties it supported under ASRP that were distinct from IFAD-supported areas. In this case, IFAD financing of the extension model leveraged additional resources to implement the approach on a larger scale, which is in line with the IFAD definition of scaling up.
73. The PCR states that the innovative payback system could be scaled-up in IFAD-supported cash crop sectors but there is no evidence provided to suggest that this has taken place. Overall, the rating for this criterion is moderately satisfactory (4), in line PMD.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

74. The PCR and early supervision mission reports do not provide a useful assessment of the project's promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. In its absence, the PCR provides a more detailed assessment in Annex IV. In short, the ASRP has made a partial contribution to addressing gender needs and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Efforts to facilitate the participation of women were successful in phase I but less so in phase II. ASRP directly promoted women's economic empowerment (one of the three IFAD gender policy objectives),⁵⁸ and according to the PCR, it improved women's and young people's status in the household and community, to a certain extent. Opportunities were missed however to improve gender sensitization among farming households, reduce women's workload burden and increase their levels of literacy and participation as FFs and CAFs. Reasons for this include weak supervision of the project's gender focus in early missions and inadequate operational measures to implement the gender strategy and recommendations from later supervision missions.⁵⁹ The rating for this criterion is moderately satisfactory (4), one level lower than PMD.

Environment and natural resources management

75. The Environmental and Social Review Note of the project design report assesses the environmental implications of ASRP as predominantly positive with insignificant negative impacts. The effect of the ASRP on the environment and natural resource

⁵⁶ IFAD 2013a

⁵⁷ Communication by CPM 10 May 2018

⁵⁸ Strategic objective 1: Promote economic empowerment to enable rural women and men to have equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, profitable economic activities. Strategic objective 2: Enable women and men to have equal voice and influence in rural institutions. Strategic objective 3: Achieve a more equitable balance in workloads and in the sharing of economic and social benefits between women and men.

⁵⁹ IFAD 2013a, IFAD 2016, IFAD 2017a, IFAD 2017b, communication by CPM 10 May 2018

management was not analysed during supervision missions or the mid-term review and the PCR refers to it as neutral. Indeed any land clearing involved secondary forests and land that had been cropped in the past. The extent of fertilizer use by farmers is not reported but it is not likely to be significant to cause harm. The rating for this criterion is therefore moderately satisfactory (4), in line with PMD.

Adaptation to climate change

76. This criterion was not rated by PMD and is not rated by the PCRV also given the lack of evidence provided in the PCR.

C. Overall project achievement

77. Phase I successfully managed to quickly recapitalize beneficiary farming households with essential inputs and improve their capacities in CBOs to increase production and productivity. Implementation by four INGOs proved a highly relevant approach given the need for quick results and the lack of MOA resources and capacity levels at the time. Phase II made important in-roads in demonstrating and learning how to improve a farmer-centred participatory extension service through FBOs, a national farmers' organization and the MOA – laying some of the foundations for long-term rehabilitation and participatory development. However, implementation was beset with difficulties, some of which were beyond the control of project management and although output targets were reached, the effectiveness of activities and outcomes were limited. Major issues affecting performance in phase II included poor targeting of vulnerable farming households and women, a high drop-out rate of FFs, insufficient training of extension staff and low disbursement rate.
78. Other limitations to project performance in both phases included the weak M&E system and insufficient operational measures to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. That said, positive impacts were reported overall on agricultural productivity, household income and food security as well as the human and social capital of farmers and their organisations. Overall, project achievement is rated moderately satisfactory (4), in line with PMD.

D. Performance of partners

79. **IFAD.** IFAD was an attentive partner providing quarterly supervision and implementation support missions at the outset to iron out problems. Once these were resolved, IFAD provided bi-annual supervision and implementation support missions. The Country programme manager (CPM) was present on all missions and more recently, also the IFAD Country Officer for Sierra Leone. IFAD also funded an international expert on Administration and Fiduciary Management for the project for four years. IFAD's support was timely except in some instances when its responses to "No objections" were delayed.⁶⁰ IFAD was flexible when the need arose to change activities (livestock distribution was halted and replaced by crop distribution) and during the EVD crisis. Although forced to stop activities for a year and suspend missions to Liberia because of the EVD, IFAD continued providing support through two distance fiduciary implementation support meetings and subsequently gave an 18-month no-cost extension to implement outstanding activities. However, in view of the delays in giving "no objections" and the absence of a gender specialist in early supervision missions, the performance of IFAD is rated as moderately satisfactory (4), in line with PMD.
80. **Government.** In phase I the MOA had almost no resources to provide an extension service to farmers so IPs were contracted to implement activities. However, the MOA was involved in project design and supported changes made during implementation. The MOA also established and supervised the PIU and the NSC, approved reports, the Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWPB) and provided political guidance. The MOA became a greater participant in phase II when a

⁶⁰ IFAD 2017b

minimum number of field staff were appointed to monitor and supervise implementation by FUN, learn from their extension services and verify data collection.⁶¹ Supervision missions repeatedly raised the issue of insufficient MOA field staff to cover the ASRP target districts⁶², but the issue – clearly larger than a project-level problem - does not seem to have been resolved.

81. The performance of PIU project management was relatively good regarding financial management and, in the most part, procurement - with some shortcomings identified. As foreseen in design, the PIU was later integrated into the PMU of the MOA that is responsible for all MOA donor funded projects. The main drawback to project management, which reflects on the performance of IFAD and the Government at design and during implementation, stems from the skeleton team in the PIU. Although staff were competent, they had to cover an array of tasks in ASRP as well as another IFAD-funded project and missions from phase II. Supervision missions report that individual officers were overstretched, resulting in inadequate supervision of IPs' activities as well as poor coverage of many technical areas, including extension, agronomy, gender, M&E, communication, knowledge management and training. The project did not have a Communication Plan, nor a management information system, but it did produce a Knowledge Management compendium of lessons learned by the end of the project. There is little evidence to suggest that M&E data collected were used for project management decision-making. The M&E issues raised in supervision missions were largely unresolved.
82. The Government covered 37 per cent of anticipated project costs owing to budget constraints. It also delayed the ratification of the supplementary IFAD loan – eventually completed during the EVD outbreak - which postponed the start of Phase II implementation.⁶³ Given real budget constraints, the Government performed relatively well, particularly through the MOA and to a certain extent the PIU, but the thin PIU team put in place and delays in ratifying financing keep the rating of its performance at 4, in line with PMD.

IV. Assessment of PCR quality

Scope

83. The structure of the PCR follows the outline proposed in the PCR guidelines and most sections are adequately covered. Although the sections on innovation, scaling-up and gender equality and women's empowerment are covered, the quality of the content is relatively low compared to most of the report. Some of the innovations and scaled-up activities mentioned in the text are not well explained and therefore seem unjustified. The section on gender lacks coherence. Performance is not assessed against the gender strategy in design and the gender balance amongst beneficiaries, facilitators and staff is not analysed. Overall, the report is moderately satisfactory (4).

Quality

84. The PCR process was inclusive of all relevant stakeholders. A stakeholder workshop was held in each county involving beneficiaries (LFs and FFs), the MOA and FUN county and district officers. In addition, interviews and focus group discussions were held with LFs, FFs and extension staff. County and district extension staff from MOA and FUN were also interviewed separately. During the mission, the PCR process also involved the PIU, CDA, JWFMCS, other cooperatives, the IPs from phase I and phase II and LFs and FFs.
85. The PCR did not have adequate data of sufficient quality to assess the performance of the project. Data collected were reportedly not standardized and largely focused

⁶¹ Introductory paragraph from IFAD 2017b

⁶² IFAD 2016 and IFAD 2014

⁶³ IFAD 2016

on output indicators of dubious quality and reliability. The quality of analysis of outcomes and impact was therefore adversely affected. The PCR process made an effort to overcome this shortcoming through a basic mini-survey conducted during the mission involving 71 farmers and the use of secondary data sources.

Nevertheless, the quality of the assessment of ASRP's impact on rural poverty was relatively low. There are various errors in numbers and information in the report and some of the narrative is overly convoluted.

86. The write-shop to start the project completion process was an interesting initiative because: (i) it had not been held in Liberia before; (ii) it started the project completion process one year in advance so project teams had time to understand, plan and implement the necessary activities such as qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis; (iii) it generated a zero draft of the project completion report; (iv) it promoted the countries' ownership of the completion process; and (v) it brought together project staff from two countries so that they could learn the process together.⁶⁴ The rating for quality is therefore moderately satisfactory (4).

Lessons

87. The PCR identifies 10 lessons learned based on the design and implementation of ASRP, although some are formulated more as general recommendations. In addition, appendix 14 on selected knowledge products details three case studies with useful lessons learned on the lead farmer model, the JWMCS and the CDA turning FBOs into cooperatives. The rating is satisfactory (5).

Candour

88. The PCR narrative appears objective and identifies both positive and negative approaches and results. The PCR ratings are in line with the narrative, except for scaling-up, which lacks explanations and gender equality and women's empowerment, which generally lacks coherence. The rating for candour is satisfactory (5).

V. Lessons learned

89. A crucial lesson for project design concerns the need to thoroughly analyse the human resource needs of the PIU, and then structure the unit accordingly. In turn, any inadequacies in PIU staffing should be addressed during implementation in a timely manner. The training and refresher training needs of staff should be identified from the outset and budgeted for, to ensure they have the necessary skills to fulfil their tasks. The PCR also notes that in a post-war context where the MOA has real budget constraints, national or international technical assistance may be required to cover fundamental technical areas and build the capacity of national staff (in addition to contracting IPs to implement projects).
90. Important lessons were learnt regarding the development of the LF extension model that could be applicable in other rural contexts when linking rehabilitation to development: (i) demonstration sites on communal - rather than private land - work better because LFs share the harvest among followers rather than keep it for their families, and CBOs/FBOs are more likely to continue working as a group on communal land after project training and gatherings have finished; (ii) one-off training given to farmers on the LF model, and the benefit of working in groups are insufficient to transform farming practices and facilitate a cooperative culture. Regular support is required from extension service providers (MOA and FUN) to ensure farmers understand the project and the longer term approach; (iii) staff of the extension service providers need training on gender mainstreaming to promote and support the participation and empowerment of women LFs and FFs; and (iv) LFs should be trained and required to use the inputs, tools and financial support that they receive (and FFs do not) in the interest of the whole group and

⁶⁴ Communication by CPM 10 May 2018

not just for themselves to avoid feelings of unfairness by FFs and their subsequent drop-out.

Definition and rating of the evaluation criteria used by IOE

Criteria	Definition *	Mandatory	To be rated
Rural poverty impact	Impact is defined as the changes that have occurred or are expected to occur in the lives of the rural poor (whether positive or negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended) as a result of development interventions.	X	Yes
	<i>Four impact domains</i>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Household income and net assets: Household income provides a means of assessing the flow of economic benefits accruing to an individual or group, whereas assets relate to a stock of accumulated items of economic value. The analysis must include an assessment of trends in equality over time. 		No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human and social capital and empowerment: Human and social capital and empowerment include an assessment of the changes that have occurred in the empowerment of individuals, the quality of grass-roots organizations and institutions, the poor's individual and collective capacity, and in particular, the extent to which specific groups such as youth are included or excluded from the development process. 		No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food security and agricultural productivity: Changes in food security relate to availability, stability, affordability and access to food and stability of access, whereas changes in agricultural productivity are measured in terms of yields; nutrition relates to the nutritional value of food and child malnutrition. 		No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutions and policies: The criterion relating to institutions and policies is designed to assess changes in the quality and performance of institutions, policies and the regulatory framework that influence the lives of the poor. 		No
Project performance	Project performance is an average of the ratings for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of benefits.	X	Yes
Relevance	The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, institutional priorities and partner and donor policies. It also entails an assessment of project design and coherence in achieving its objectives. An assessment should also be made of whether objectives and design address inequality, for example, by assessing the relevance of targeting strategies adopted.	X	Yes
Effectiveness	The extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.	X	Yes
Efficiency	A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results.	X	Yes
Sustainability of benefits	The likely continuation of net benefits from a development intervention beyond the phase of external funding support. It also includes an assessment of the likelihood that actual and anticipated results will be resilient to risks beyond the project's life.	X	Yes
Other performance criteria			
Gender equality and women's empowerment	The extent to which IFAD interventions have contributed to better gender equality and women's empowerment, for example, in terms of women's access to and ownership of assets, resources and services; participation in decision making; work load balance and impact on women's incomes, nutrition and livelihoods.	X	Yes
Innovation	The extent to which IFAD development interventions have introduced innovative approaches to rural poverty reduction.	X	Yes
Scaling up	The extent to which IFAD development interventions have been (or are likely to be) scaled up by government authorities, donor organizations, the private sector and others agencies.	X	Yes
Environment and natural resources management	The extent to which IFAD development interventions contribute to resilient livelihoods and ecosystems. The focus is on the use and management of the natural environment, including natural resources defined as raw materials used for socio-economic and cultural purposes, and ecosystems and biodiversity - with the goods and services they provide.	X	Yes
Adaptation to climate change	The contribution of the project to reducing the negative impacts of climate change through dedicated adaptation or risk reduction measures	X	Yes

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Definition</i> *	<i>Mandatory</i>	<i>To be rated</i>
Overall project achievement	This provides an overarching assessment of the intervention, drawing upon the analysis and ratings for rural poverty impact, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability of benefits, gender equality and women's empowerment, innovation and scaling up, as well as environment and natural resources management, and adaptation to climate change.	X	Yes
Performance of partners			
• IFAD	This criterion assesses the contribution of partners to project design, execution, monitoring and reporting, supervision and implementation support, and evaluation. The performance of each partner will be assessed on an individual basis with a view to the partner's expected role and responsibility in the project life cycle.	X	Yes
• Government		X	Yes

* These definitions build on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management; the Methodological Framework for Project Evaluation agreed with the Evaluation Committee in September 2003; the first edition of the Evaluation Manual discussed with the Evaluation Committee in December 2008; and further discussions with the Evaluation Committee in November 2010 on IOE's evaluation criteria and key questions.

Rating comparison^a

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Programme Management Department (PMD) rating</i>	<i>IOE Project Completion Report Validation (PCRVR) rating</i>	<i>Net rating disconnect (PCRVR-PMD)</i>
Rural poverty impact	4	4	0
Project performance			
Relevance	5	5	0
Effectiveness	5	4	-1
Efficiency	4	4	0
Sustainability of benefits	4	4	0
Project performance^b	4.5	4.25	-0.25
Other performance criteria			
Gender equality and women's empowerment	5	4	-1
Innovation	4	4	0
Scaling up	4	4	0
Environment and natural resources management	4	4	0
Adaptation to climate change	n/a	n/a	-
Overall project achievement^c	4	4	0
Performance of partners^d			
IFAD	4	4	0
Government	4	4	0
Average net disconnect			-0.18

^a Rating scale: 1 = highly unsatisfactory; 2 = unsatisfactory; 3 = moderately unsatisfactory; 4 = moderately satisfactory; 5 = satisfactory; 6 = highly satisfactory; n.p. = not provided; n.a. = not applicable.

^b Arithmetic average of ratings for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of benefits.

^c This is not an average of ratings of individual evaluation criteria but an overarching assessment of the project, drawing upon the rating for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability of benefits, rural poverty impact, gender, innovation and scaling up, environment and natural resources management, and adaptation to climate change.

^d The rating for partners' performance is not a component of the overall project achievement rating.

Ratings of the project completion report quality

	<i>PMD rating</i>	<i>IOE PCRVR rating</i>	<i>Net disconnect</i>
Candour		5	
Lessons		5	
Quality (methods, data, participatory process)		4	
Scope		4	
Overall rating of the project completion report		4	

Rating scale: 1 = highly unsatisfactory; 2 = unsatisfactory; 3 = moderately unsatisfactory; 4 = moderately satisfactory; 5 = satisfactory; 6 = highly satisfactory; n.p. = not provided; n.a. = not applicable.

ASRP physical outputs in phase I and II

Physical outputs from phase I (2010 – 2013)

Output	Unit	Planned			Actual			%
		Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	
CBO farmer members trained	People	10 080	5040	5040	10 090	5 048	5042	100%
CBOs established	Number	504	-	-	498	-	-	99%
Community facilitators contracted & trained	People	504	<50%	>50% ⁶⁵	446	>50%	<50% ⁶⁶	88%
Demonstration plots established	Number	504	-	-	453	-	-	90%
Rice seed distributed	MT (25kg / beneficiary)	126	-	-	112	-	-	89%
Cassava cuttings distributed ('000)	Number	5 040	-	-	4 804	-	-	95%
Goats distributed	Goats	11 760	-	-	720	-	-	6%
Poultry distributed	Chickens	38 500	-	-	6 482	-	-	17%
Literacy facilitators	People	Not available	-	-	345	297	48	Not available
Literacy classes	Classes	900	-	-	6255 ⁶⁷	2 355	3 900	Not relevant
Land clearing for FHH	See footnotes	47 200 ⁶⁸	-	-	8096 ⁶⁹	-	-	Not relevant

Physical outputs from phase II (2013 – 2017)

Output	Unit	Planned			Actual			%
		Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	
Farmers trained in crop production	People	5 600	2 800	2 800	5 600	4 702	898	100%
- LFs trained	People	280	140	140	280	180	100	100%
- FFs trained	People	5 320	2 660	2 660	5 320	4 522	798	100%
- FFs remaining	People	-	-	-	1 892	1 198	694	-
CBOs formed/strengthened	Number	280	-	-	280	-	-	100%
Demonstration plots established	Number	280	-	-	280	-	-	100%
LFs trained in pre-cooperative formation	People	Not available	-	-	100	-	-	Not relevant
Marketing groups (pre-qualified cooperatives) operational	Number	Not available	-	-	4	-	-	Not relevant

⁶⁵ PDR “the project will endeavour to ensure that most of the community and technical facilitators that will be employed and trained by the project, to undertake the community mobilisation and extension service provision roles, are women”

⁶⁶ Supervision mission report March 2013

⁶⁷ From PCR. Refers to number of attendees so it is not comparable to the planned number of classes.

⁶⁸ PDR refers to 47,200 person days. Supervision November 2010 refers to 47,200 ha

⁶⁹ From IFAD supervision mission report March 2013. Refers to the number of youth engaged in land clearing for FHHs for 2 to 3 days. On average 3 youths were hired by each FHH.

Assessment of gender equality and women's empowerment

1. The design of ASRP included a succinct analysis of gender issues at national level and in rural communities and integrated a simple gender strategy into the project targeting strategy. In general, the collection of sex disaggregated data improved during implementation, but specific gender-related indicators proposed in design to measure gender performance were not reported.
2. The participation targets for women (50 per cent) and youth (20 per cent) farmers were achieved in phase I thanks to improvements made by IPs during implementation. Women also made up most of the participants in the popular literacy classes (see sex-disaggregated data in Annex III). Sex disaggregated data are not available for the trained CAFs but previous reports suggest that the CAFs were predominantly men.⁷⁰ The reasons for mainly men CAFs as well as literacy facilitators, contrary to design, owed to women's higher levels of illiteracy, the heavy field work required for demonstration plots and difficulty for them to meet time commitments given family responsibilities. To overcome this, the MTR recommended an assessment to understand the scope for adjusting the terms of reference of CAFs to increase the participation of women. But there is no evidence that this took place.
3. In phase II, youth targets were largely met⁷¹ but women were underrepresented among FFs trained and the FFs remaining by completion (see section III Relevance – Targeting). Reasons cited for women's low participation were the gendered division of labour and poorer access to information, land, credit and labour. Importantly, the women and youth that did participate demonstrated a sound understanding of their training.⁷²
4. Besides from FHHs, no data or anecdotal evidence were found from phase I or II on how many beneficiary households included women and youth sub-groups - widows, single mothers, ex-combatants and disabled people - included in the gender and targeting strategy at design. It is well reported that FHHs benefitted from land clearing by youth, but it is not clear how sustainable the activity is.
5. Overall, ASRP has promoted the economic empowerment of men, women and youth farmers by improving access to inputs (seeds, planting material, labour), technologies and extension services, at least in the short to medium term. In turn, this has increased their production and productive capacity leading to higher incomes and better household food security. The literacy classes in phase I contributed to addressing the urgent need to improve women's lower levels of literacy, compared to men and in general. The PCRV finds that the omission of literacy classes in phase II was a missed opportunity to support women's empowerment. By the time the negative effects of women's illiteracy on project performance were reported in later supervisions⁷³ budget constraints prevented the inclusion of additional activities.⁷⁴
6. The ASRP did little to strengthen women's decision-making and representation besides promoting their participation in activities and as community facilitators. The gender sensitization of men and women beneficiaries that was planned during design does not appear to have taken place. Supervision mission recommendations to capitalise on the example set by the JWFMCs's journey of success and female

⁷⁰ IFAD 2013a supervision mission report remarks that the 46 CAFs recruited in year 1 were all men, but after consistent efforts to sensitize IPs and project staff, by year 3 the 274 CAFs recruited included 36 women.

⁷¹ a 2016 report by FUN suggests that youths made up 15 per cent of LF's and they were also engaged in land clearing for vulnerable households. (IFAD 2017b)

⁷² From IFAD 2017b and IFAD 2016

⁷³ IFAD 2016 and IFAD 2017a

⁷⁴ Communication by CPM 10 May 2018

leadership were not followed through.⁷⁵ Despite this limited approach, the woman PIU Coordinator was reportedly a strong advocate for youth and gender issues and regularly promoted them in the field.⁷⁶ Indeed, there were ample examples during completion field visits of how the participation of women and youth had positive implications for gender dynamics: women trained their husbands, young women trained older men, and women LFs rented machinery.⁷⁷ The PCR also reports improvements to gender relations but it is not clear how this was brought about by ASRP, besides anecdotal evidence that suggested training on farm-record keeping led to husband and wife sitting down together to discuss and decide on household and farm budgets.

7. The number of hours worked per day increased as a result of the new technologies promoted by ASRP. The PCR notes that without conscious action to promote the fair division of labour – an activity ASRP did not do – this would certainly increase the work burden on women, and negatively impact on their welfare. The extent to which this happened is not clear, although it is documented that this was a reason for the high rate of drop-out of women farmers.
8. Major issues constraining the implementation of the project gender strategy were: (i) the lack of a dedicated or at least trained officer on gender in the PIU; (ii) the absence of a gender specialist in early IFAD supervision missions resulting in no or minimal assessment of the project's gender focus; (iii) the partnership with the Ministry of Gender and Development (MOGD) that was identified in design to facilitate women's participation did not materialize, nor is it raised in early supervision reports; and, (iv) despite recommendations in later supervision reports, there was little or no allocation of resources to gender mainstreaming in the AWPB nor technical gender training for field officers, IPs, the MOA and CDA.⁷⁸
9. In short, the ASRP has made a partial contribution to addressing gender needs and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Efforts to facilitate the participation of women were successful in phase I but less so in phase II. The ASRP directly promoted women's economic empowerment (one of the three IFAD gender policy objectives),⁷⁹ and according to the PCR, it improved women's and young people's status in the household and community, to a certain extent. Opportunities were missed, however, to improve gender sensitization among farming households, reduce women's workload burden and increase their levels of literacy and participation as FFs and CAFs. Reasons for this include weak supervision of the project's gender focus in early missions and inadequate operational measures to implement the gender strategy and recommendations from later supervision missions.

⁷⁵ IFAD 2017a

⁷⁶ Communication by CPM 10 May 2018

⁷⁷ IFAD 2016 and communication by CPM 10 May 2018

⁷⁸ The last issue was raised in IFAD 2016 and IFAD 2017a

⁷⁹ Strategic objective 1: Promote economic empowerment to enable rural women and men to have equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, profitable economic activities. Strategic objective 2: Enable women and men to have equal voice and influence in rural institutions. Strategic objective 3: Achieve a more equitable balance in workloads and in the sharing of economic and social benefits between women and men.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AfDB	African Development Bank
ASRP	Agriculture Sector Rehabilitation Project
AWPB	Annual Work Plan and Budget
CAF	Community agriculture facilitator
CARI	Central Agricultural Research Institute
CBO	Community-based organization
CDA	Cooperative Development Agency
CFSN	Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition
CPM	Country programme manager
DSF	Debt Sustainability Framework
EVD	Ebola virus disease
FAPS	Food and Agricultural Policy and Strategy
FBO	Farmer-based organization
FF	Follower farmer
FHH	Female headed household
FUN	Farmers' Union Network
GOL	Government of Liberia
IP	Implementing partner
IRR	Internal rate of return
JWFMCS	Johnsonville Women Farmers Multipurpose Cooperative Society
LF	Lead farmer
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MHH	Male headed household
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOGD	Ministry of Gender and Development
MTR	Mid-term review
MT	Metric tonnes
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSC	National steering committee
PCR	Project completion report
PCRV	Project completion report validation
PDR	Project design report
PIU	Project implementation unit
PMU	Project management unit
PRS	Poverty reduction strategy
RB-COSOP	IFAD Results-based Country Strategic Opportunities Programme
ToT	Trainers of trainers
USAID	US Agency for International Development

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