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Investing in rural people

## Comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the Country Strategic Opportunities Programme for the Republic of Angola

### Note to Executive Board representatives

#### Focal points:

#### Technical questions:

Oscar A. Garcia  
Director  
Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD  
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2274  
e-mail: o.garcia@ifad.org

Fabrizio Felloni  
Deputy Director  
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2361  
e-mail: f.felloni@ifad.org

#### Dispatch of documentation:

Deirdre McGrenra  
Chief  
Governing Bodies  
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2374  
e-mail: gb@ifad.org

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For: Review

# Comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the Country Strategic Opportunities Programme for the Republic of Angola

## I. General comments

1. In 2017, the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) undertook a country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) in Angola covering the period from 2005 to 2017. The CSPE provided recommendations for the second country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP). In line with established practice, the agreement at completion point for the CSPE signed on 21 May 2018 is attached as an appendix to the new COSOP for 2019-2024.
2. The second COSOP for Angola integrates lessons learned from earlier country programme implementation. It also aligns IFAD's support with the priorities of Angola's National Development Plan 2018-2022, the objectives of the IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025, the commitments made for the Eleventh Replenishment of IFAD's Resources and the Partnership Framework between the Government of Angola and the United Nations system 2015-2019. The three strategic objectives of the COSOP are to:
  - (i) Sustainably increase production and commercialization through access to productive resources and climate-smart farming practices;
  - (ii) Promote agricultural value chains and agribusiness through investments that stimulate rural economic activity and the creation of employment for rural poor people; and
  - (iii) Strengthen local institutional, community and human capacities, and empower rural poor people to participate meaningfully in the transformation of the rural sector.
3. This COSOP builds on the CSPE's findings and its five recommendations. These called upon the Fund to: (i) remain a champion for sustainable and pro-poor agricultural and rural development, and address critical challenges related to land tenure and agroecology through policy dialogue; (ii) reinforce its capacity for implementation support and policy engagement in the country; (iii) make capacity development a pillar of its work and a cross-cutting principle across its portfolio; (iv) include a stronger focus on women empowerment and youth inclusion; and (v) refocus the Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture Project.
4. The section below details how these CSPE recommendations have been taken into account in formulating the new COSOP.

## II. Specific comments

5. Targeting and pro-poor development. The CSPE concluded that IFAD had an adequate focus on improving food security and nutrition, and reducing poverty in rural areas of Angola, and that this should remain the Fund's main focus in the country. At the same time, the CSPE noted that although women constituted the majority of participants because agriculture in Angola is largely a women's activity, IFAD-supported projects had not systematically empowered women economically or socially.
6. The new COSOP fully embraces the first recommendation of the CSPE and proposes an articulate targeting strategy that identifies five categories of participants: (i) food-insecure smallholder subsistence farmers; (ii) small producers with some level of organization and marketing potential; (iii) artisanal fishers; (iv) women and youth (especially women-headed households); and (v) other vulnerable groups including disabled people, ex-combatants and those affected by climate variability.

In addition, the COSOP foresees the adoption of the Gender Action Learning System to strengthen gender awareness, and the Women Empowerment in Agriculture Index to assess results achieved on gender and social inclusion.

7. Agroecology and land tenure. The CSPE assessed IFAD's performance in these thematic areas as weak, with few activities dedicated to improving the management and sustainable use of land and aquatic resources, and no efforts to secure access and control of land for poor and small-scale rural producers. These gaps risked jeopardizing the projects' positive achievements and sustainability with respect to food security and production. The new COSOP seeks to support Angola's intended nationally determined contributions towards climate change mitigation through investments in: a range of environmentally friendly agricultural practices; water harvesting; drought tolerant crops and varieties; and access to reliable meteorological data and climate information to support vulnerable communities in dealing with climate shocks. These can be considered as first steps in the right direction, which will need to be substantiated in future projects and policy dialogue. It is positive that natural resource management and climate change adaptation have been integrated into the concept note for the proposed Smallholder Resilience Enhancement Programme, which is presented in an appendix to the COSOP document.
8. Capacity development. The CSPE identified capacity development at all levels as an area of particular importance for IFAD's support to Angola. It is therefore welcome that the focus of the COSOP's third strategic objective is on strengthening institutional, community and human capacities, and that there is a plan to continue using – and scaling up – the farmer field school approach to facilitate small-scale producers' adoption of improved farming techniques. According to the CSPE, this extension approach has contributed to increases in agricultural production and productivity. It is also appreciated that the farmer field school approach will be part of IFAD's strategy to enhance nutrition education activities.
9. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and knowledge management. The CSPE raised concerns about the lack of coordination across projects regarding the use of common indicators in their M&E frameworks to allow measurement of progress on issues of common interest. IOE appreciates that the COSOP foresees all projects reporting on the Results Framework indicators and that the planned knowledge management system will include: (i) supporting and using the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development's M&E system; (ii) a focus on promoting learning and knowledge management at the programme level, including the involvement of stakeholders and beneficiaries in M&E; (iii) support to learning and knowledge-sharing events; and (iv) efforts to capitalize on local and regional experience and knowledge for country-level policy dialogue and improved management of national development initiatives.
10. In order to improve M&E quality, the COSOP involves plans to train project staff through IFAD's Programme in Rural M&E (PRIME) grant initiative. However, the COSOP would have been further strengthened if it had detailed the level of resources and source of financing required (for example, IFAD regular grants or supplementary contributions) to support the enhanced agenda on knowledge management and policy engagement.
11. Implementation support. IFAD has no country office in Angola and a country presence is not planned in the coming years. According to the CSPE, the recruitment of an IFAD project facilitator – a respected national expert in Angola – between 2003 and 2013 yielded good results in terms of implementation support and partnerships. Unfortunately, this arrangement was discontinued in 2014. The CSPE recommended that IFAD strengthen its capacity to support the country programme in Angola. This will be particularly important considering the Fund's sizable portfolio in 2018 and plans to expand it further in 2019. The COSOP does

not make explicit reference to this issue and the agreement at completion point postpones any decision regarding in-country presence until the end of 2019. It is acknowledged that IFAD will have a stronger presence in the sub-region through its South Africa hub. However, past experience highlights the importance of continuous interaction with national partners, international organizations and project management teams. The reinstatement of a national facilitator could prove to be a cost-effective solution.

### III. Final remarks

12. IOE concludes that the new Angola COSOP made efforts to follow-up on the recommendations of the 2018 CSPE in line with the agreement at completion point. IOE remains available for support as required.