

Document:	<u>EB 2020/131(R)/R.17/Add.1</u>
Agenda:	<u>5(c)(ii)b</u>
Date:	<u>4 December 2020</u>
Distribution:	<u>Public</u>
Original:	<u>English</u>

E



Republic of Mali
Country Strategic Opportunities Programme
2020-2024
Addendum

**Management's response to Member States'
comments**

Executive Board — 131st Session
Rome, 7-9 December 2020

For: **Information**

Comments from Switzerland	Management response
<p>Country Presence: The COSOP's objectives are pertinent to the country's context, and IFAD's operations could further benefit from ties to bilateral cooperation partners on the ground. We do however note that in and of itself, IFAD's country presence would not permit the maintenance of close ties. We thus propose that IFAD consider how this might be pursued in terms of the structures it does maintain in Mali.</p>	<p>IFAD's current presence in Mali fosters close ties with a number of development partners. For example, the IFAD country programme has an efficient partnership with Denmark and Canada, who cofinance the Inclusive Finance in Agriculture Value Chains Project (INCLUSIF); and a new partnership is foreseen with Spain to support the Multi-energy Programme for Resilience and Integrated Territorial Management (MERIT). IFAD's operations will benefit from close relations with bilateral cooperation partners on the ground. Moreover, resources for consultancy missions to support donor coordination and economic and sector work to support country dialogue can be provided. The decentralization programme currently underway will also help address the issue of constraints on country presence.</p>
<p>Women & Youth: In terms of target groups, we support the focus on women and youth, as this constitutes a credible, pragmatic, and realistic way to address some underlying structural difficulties and is in line with IFAD's declared goals. However, it is difficult to say whether these two categories will in fact represent a majority of those in the overlying target category of small rural farmers and SMEs, and we would thus welcome more information on how targeting will be carried out in practice. Given the fact that women and youth tend to quickly be displaced if the branches they work in become particularly profitable. On this basis, mainstreaming will not suffice. Substantial effort must be taken to ensure good communication that makes clear the kind of support these groups can expect and quite generally to raise awareness.</p>	<p>To ensure adequate targeting of women and youth, successful models and good practices for their inclusion and economic empowerment – currently promoted in the Rural Youth Vocational Training, Employment and Entrepreneurship Support (FIER) and INCLUSIF projects – will be used. The INCLUSIF project's positive discrimination approach helps ensure that at least 50 per cent of beneficiaries are women. The following areas are prioritized: (i) women and young people's access to financial facilities; (ii) capacity-building for women and youth in areas such as leadership, entrepreneurship, business management, negotiation and social and economic empowerment; and (iii) support to producer organizations predominantly representing women and young people in developing and implementing commercial partnerships and income-generating activities (IGAs) with the private sector. With respect to FIER, as of 30 April 2020 it had funded 9,691 projects for rural youth, including 9,038 IGAs and 653 rural microenterprises. Also, the performance of each operation in the new strategy will be monitored to ensure that the minimum target for participation by women and youth (generally 70 per cent as indicated in the project results measurement framework) has been reached. The country programme will take the opportunity to build upon the strategies and tools developed in these initiatives.</p>
<p>Programme steering: Sufficient resources must be made available to develop a full logical framework and establish base values of the various indicators. Similarly, IFAD must also plot a path which will permit permanent tracking of these indicators and maintain the programmatic instruments to steer the programme accordingly. Sufficient preparation and training of partners to help them carry out or manage the associated tasks will be crucial.</p>	<p>Resources granted under the performance-based allocation system's 2019-2021 and 2022-2024 cycles for non-lending activities will be used to support the development of a full logical framework and the establishment of baseline data for programme indicators. More resources will be made available using a programmatic approach, which allows pooling of some project management functions and resources, including monitoring and evaluation. A committee including representatives of key programme stakeholders from IFAD, government institutions and the projects will be formed and supported through orientation and training for permanent tracking of the programme performance indicators. Also, a global framework for monitoring and evaluating IFAD interventions in Mali is under development to help steer the country programme. Moreover, IFAD's AVANTI initiative will be implemented in Mali; it will help strengthen monitoring and evaluation, particularly with respect to plans for development and implementation of monitoring systems, reporting, peer reviews, evaluations, impact assessments and cataloging of experiences. It will be used to capture real-time experiences through social/multimedia reporting (participatory and collaborative reporting).</p>

H

Comments from France	Management response
<p>France welcomes the Country Strategic Opportunities Programme 2020-2024 for the Republic of Mali.</p> <p>We would appreciate further precision on the recent political evolution's impact on national governance structures and on future IFAD's operations in the country. Considering that Mali is one of the most fragile country in the world, according to the Fund for Peace's 2020 Fragile States Index, and facing political instability, how will IFAD ensure sustainability of impact and national authorities' ownership of projects?</p>	<p>Impact of political crisis on government structures and projects. The recent political crisis led to the establishment of a transition Government, which will lead the country for 18 months. It will undertake required political and institutional reforms and organize presidential and legislative general elections. The transition Government has received general acceptance from the international community, which lifted sanctions and restored cooperation suspended following the 18 August coup. In addition, IFAD has received an official letter from the Ministry of Finance reaffirming the Government's interest in partnering with IFAD and its commitment to honour all consequent financial obligations. It should be noted that IFAD's assistance model mitigates risks and impacts related to poor governance. The model involves: (i) delegating project management responsibility to autonomous teams formed by staff with performance-based contracts; (ii) ring-fencing project resources; (iii) delegating project implementation tasks to public, community-based and private sector institutions on the basis of performance-linked collaborative agreements and contracts; and (iv) directing project assistance to poor rural households.</p> <p>How to ensure sustainability and ownerships. In order to counter the effects of fragility and build more sustainable operations, IFAD will, over the COSOP period: (i) develop and strengthen partnerships with other development agencies with complementary mandates on humanitarian interventions; prove experiences in building the resilience of rural communities in post-conflict situations; and restore social cohesion and mediating and preventing conflicts. Collaboration between the Rome-based agencies in the Joint Programme for the Sahel in Response to the Challenges of COVID-19, Conflict and Climate Change (SD3C) is in line with this orientation as the programme will leverage the comparative advantages of the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and their experiences of interventions in conflict-affected areas; (ii) design and implement operations that focus on building resilience among the most vulnerable groups such as women and youth, while promoting climate-smart and resistant economic activities: such operations should be responsive to structural (climate change, conflicts, poverty) and extraordinary shocks (like the COVID-19 pandemic) through flexible approaches offering both short-term emergency support and long-term measures to mitigate negative impact on beneficiaries' livelihoods); (iii) build and strengthen operational partnerships and collaboration on the ground with farmers' organizations, local and international NGOs and other stakeholders (e.g. civil society organizations) to improve the quality of project implementation and enhance national and local ownership and accountability; and (iv) provide institutional support to relevant public, private and community-based institutions in order to strengthen their capacity to effectively implement, coordinate, monitor and evaluate IFAD-funded projects/programmes.</p>

Comments from France	Management response
<p>France would also welcome more information on the COVID-19 socioeconomic impact analysis, in particular on the agricultural sector, taking into account the relatively low number of death and absence of quarantine measures to date.</p>	<p>COVID-19 impacts analysis. IFAD is currently collaborating with FAO on a comprehensive and evidence-based study on the impact of COVID-19 on the agricultural sector. The results of this study will inform the mitigation measures to be integrated into ongoing and planned projects to counter the effects of the pandemic on IFAD priority groups. According to secondary sources, the outbreak has had significant disruptive effects on economic activities, including closure of schools, factories, markets and small businesses. The International Monetary Fund projects a 2 per cent decline in economic output in 2020. The agriculture sector, which is the source of income, employment, and improved livelihoods for poor rural households, is one of the most vulnerable to the pandemic. Farmers have experienced limited access to farm credit, inputs and markets due to government restrictions imposed to control the outbreak. Together with political instability, these measures have slowed project activities and disbursements. Most activities requiring gatherings of some sort, such as training and workshops, have been suspended. Since the beginning of the pandemic, IFAD projects teams, in partnership with relevant units at the ministries of agriculture and health, have developed tools to sensitize beneficiary communities. Some pandemic safeguards will be maintained to ensure continued production. Also, with support from the IFAD Rural Poor Stimulus Facility, greater attention will be given to the impact of COVID-19 on rural communities and their activities.</p>
<p>Furthermore, the emphasis on strengthening farmers' organizations seems relevant provided that IFAD's operations target organizations with economic actions, such as joint purchase of inputs or mutualization of resources, instead of organizations whose sole purpose is to represent farmers' interests.</p>	<p>The main objective of IFAD's support to farmers' organization is to enhance their members' access to technical and financial services, including training, savings and credit, as well as to inputs and product markets. Accordingly, IFAD's operations target farmers' organizations that contribute to the economic empowerment of their members. Ongoing support to the National Confederation of Farmers' Organizations through the Global Agricultural and Food Security Program is an illustration of IFAD's support to an organization contributing to the economic development of its members. Also, through the INCLUSIF project, loans are provided to farmer umbrella organizations to support their members. The new COSOP will pursue financial inclusion through its second strategic objective.</p>
<p>Finally, regarding the activities which will be conducted in the north of the country, we call on IFAD to elaborate on potential access and security issues, as well as on envisaged mitigation measures.</p>	<p>Security is a significant challenge in the north of the country. For the successful implementation of activities planned there, primarily through the project entitled Joint Programme for the Sahel in Response to the Challenges of COVID-19, Conflict and Climate Change (SD3C), IFAD will partner with the other Rome-based agencies (FAO and WFP). These two partners, in addition to having ongoing operations in the region, have had positive experiences with interventions in conflict-affected areas.</p>

Comments from the Netherlands	Management response
<p>The Netherlands thanks IFAD for the extensive Mali COSOP. We would like to raise the following question:</p> <p>The geographical choice of the south and the north: in terms of development, the center constitutes the link between the regions, and we think it would be helpful to ensure in the COSOP this geographical positioning of the center in terms of agricultural value chains that create jobs for young people and women. Could IFAD elaborate on the geographical choice of the south and the north?</p>	<p>Northern Mali has been included in the programme in response to the Government's strong interest in IFAD contributing to building resilience for the northern populations. The ongoing INCLUSIF project, which will continue under the new strategy, covers the centre, which is also included in the regional operation, SD3C, planned under that strategy. It should be noted that the development of agricultural value chains in the centre is addressed through various donor programmes coordinated by the Government.</p>