

Document: EB 2021/133/R.21/Add.1
Agenda: 13(b)(i)(a)
Date: 23 August 2021
Distribution: Public
Original: English

E



Investing in rural people

Country Strategic Opportunities Programme for the Republic of Madagascar

Comments by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

Note to Executive Board representatives

Focal points:

Technical questions:

Indran A. Naidoo
Director
Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2274
e-mail: i.naidoo@ifad.org

Kouessi Maximin Kodjo
Lead Evaluation Officer
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2249
e-mail: k.kodjo@ifad.org

Dispatch of documentation:

Deirdre Mc Grenra
Chief
Institutional Governance and
Member Relations
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2374
e-mail: gb@ifad.org

Executive Board — 133rd Session
Rome, 13-16 September 2021

For: Review

Country Strategic Opportunities Programme for the Republic of Madagascar

Comments by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

I. General comments

1. The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) conducted the second country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) for Madagascar, covering the period 2013 to mid-2019. The first evaluation was finalized in 2012.
2. The strategy and the portfolio of projects evaluated in 2019 were implemented in the wake of a period of political crisis, which was characterized by low investment in agriculture. The CSPE concluded that the objectives of the country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) and of the projects carried out during the period were fully relevant. The projects were responsive to the needs of the target populations and the portfolio contributed to the reduction of poverty by improving agricultural production, productivity and incomes. However, the CSPE found issues relating to project design – particularly a failure to consider difficulties in reaching several remote areas – and to the sustainability of results. It also concluded that support for the most vulnerable groups needed to be reinforced.
3. Partnership-building was satisfactory, but cofinancing partnerships were limited in terms of amounts. Policy dialogue and consultations were intense but had little impact. Knowledge management suffered from insufficient capitalization, and grants were not well aligned with the loan portfolio.
4. The CSPE made five recommendations: (i) maintain the strategic orientation of the COSOP while refining approaches and implementing them more synergistically; (ii) strengthen the inclusion of very poor and highly vulnerable rural populations in the country programme and improve the consolidation of results by narrowing the geographical focus of interventions; (iii) continue and strengthen capacity-building for providers of support services to producers and bolster producers' skills to improve the sustainability of results; (iv) strengthen natural resource management and climate change adaptation and mitigation measures for small-scale producers; (v) enhance the effectiveness of non-lending activities and improve the monitoring of results and impact.
5. The new COSOP 2022–2026 addresses the CSPE recommendations, which were endorsed in the agreement at completion point. The strategic objectives of the new COSOP reflect the CSPE recommendations 2, 3 and 4. Interventions currently being designed focus on value chain development, capacity-building for producers and producer organizations and financial inclusion, while taking into account climate-related constraints faced by small-scale producers. The four thematic areas of environment and climate, gender, nutrition and youth are mainstreamed in the new country programme, the overall goal of which is to “contribute to the transformation of rural areas and food systems and to nutrition security”.

II. Specific comments

6. **Targeting.** Specific areas have been selected among the poorest regions of Madagascar in order to target the most vulnerable farmers. IOE welcomes the reduced geographical scope of IFAD's portfolio in Madagascar. Efforts to reduce poverty and improve household income in the challenging environment of these areas are generally hampered by weak access to markets and also, in part, weak access to public services. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the fragility of these areas. However, the new COSOP fails to specify that the value chain targeting strategy will also be based on developing local and regional production potential in

order to accelerate the emergence of production hubs. In this context, IOE emphasizes the importance of defining selection criteria so as to target intervention areas with the potential for promoting local commodities in order to develop these production hubs.

7. The COSOP identifies several target subgroups: women, youth, persons with disabilities and migrants. Interventions should be tailored to these groups following needs identification. IOE also recommends the use of disaggregated indicators to monitor progress across these groups.
8. **Partnerships and sustainability.** The new COSOP calls for work with a broad range of regional and national, public, private and civil society partners. This is in line with previous IFAD commitments in Madagascar in the agricultural development area.
9. The CSPE concluded that local agricultural services proved to be relevant, but that limited coverage weakened results. The emphasis put on partnerships with and provision of support to institutions providing agricultural services, business development and basic services to the rural poor is welcome. These institutions could, however, be further supported in seeking out long-term sources of financing in order to increase the sustainability of their activities.
10. The CSPE also noted the underuse of several small-scale marketing infrastructure facilities and lack of support for users. This finding reflects a lack of value chain gap assessment. IOE recommends highlighting the importance of undertaking deeper analysis of needs during project design in order to enhance effectiveness.
11. Sustainability of benefits after project completion remains a critical issue. This issue is addressed in the COSOP; however, it will be important for individual projects to lay out exit strategies in a clear and comprehensive manner.
12. **Knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation.** IOE commends the initiative to partner with the Procasur Corporation to support the IFAD programme support unit, which is responsible for centralizing the knowledge generated by projects. In order to refine the approaches adopted by projects, the knowledge management strategy should not focus solely on success stories, but should seek to capitalize on both positive and negative experiences of projects.
13. Lastly, considering the large number of themes covered by the new COSOP and the diversity of target groups, the initiative to adopt a unified database for monitoring and evaluation is welcome.

III. Final remarks

14. IOE appreciates that the new COSOP for the Republic of Madagascar builds on the findings of the CSPE and addresses the main recommendations of the CSPE on value chains, access to finance, environment and climate, and agricultural services development. Some aspects will require deeper analysis during future project design, however, such as how, in practical terms, to ensure the inclusion of vulnerable groups in producers' organizations and value chains and how to craft exit strategies that will ensure sustainability. Availability of sufficient resources will be crucial for responding to the development challenges in the targeted poor regions, and the IFAD Country Office will need to proactively coordinate with the regional hub and headquarters to secure cofinancing.