IFAD
Investing in rural people

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Investing in rural people's resilience in fragile contexts: Main institutional developments since IFAD12 and looking to IFAD14

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For more information on IFAD's work on fragility please visit https://www.ifad.org/en/w/publications/updated-approach-to-ifad-engagement-in-fragile-situations.

I. Introduction and rationale for this discussion paper

1. **Since the previous discussion on fragility at the 138th Executive Board session, fragility has remained a pervasive phenomenon globally,** while the funding environment for development, humanitarian action and peacebuilding has changed profoundly. In the United Nations system and among multilateral development banks (MDBs), this has fuelled serious reflection on how to achieve greater impact in fragile contexts, including through a greater focus on crisis prevention, resilience and the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus, linking humanitarian, development and peacebuilding action.

2. Over these years, IFAD **has strengthened its capacity to promote resilience**[1] **in fragile and crisis contexts**. It has launched an updated operational approach, established a Fragility Unit, strengthened its understanding of fragility, worked with partners, including the other Rome-based agencies (RBAs), anchored crisis response in long-term investments and leveraged decentralization to support effective engagement. As fragility remains a key theme for the Fourteenth replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD14), this is a timely moment to reflect on progress and how to further strengthen capacity. Accordingly, this paper updates Executive Board representatives on the work undertaken since the 138th Executive Board session and key lessons learned.

II. IFAD's footprint in fragile contexts

3. IFAD **works with a definition of fragility designed** to be relevant **to its mandate**. As set out in the 2016 IFAD strategy for engagement in countries with fragile situations,[2] "Fragility is a condition of high vulnerability to natural and man-made shocks, often associated with an elevated risk of violence and conflict. Weak governance structures along with low-capacity institutions are a common driver and consequence of fragile situations. Fragile situations typically provide a weaker enabling environment for inclusive and sustainable rural transformation and are characterized by protracted and/or periodic crises, often with implications for smallholder agriculture and food security." In this context, fragility has five dimensions: economic, social, environmental and climate-related, political/institutional and security-related. For each dimension, different drivers, or causes of risk and vulnerability, can be identified.

4. This definition is not an instrument of country classification. To track the allocation of core resources to countries with fragile situations and for corporate reporting purposes, IFAD relies on the World Bank's annual lists of countries with situations of fragility, conflict and violence or with institutional fragility.[3]

5. **The use of IFAD's definition shows that fragility is widespread in its sovereign portfolio.** Over the past two years, IFAD has invested in an artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled portfolio analysis to gain a granular understanding of what fragility looks like in specific contexts.[4] This showed that, **as of March 2026, fragility as defined by IFAD was present across 170 projects in 85 countries during the 2025–2026 period**. The analysis showed that projects are concentrated in areas where drivers of fragility are within the Fund's comparative advantage to address and where their impact on food security and agriculture is

[1] IFAD works with the United Nations definition of resilience. For further information on how IFAD operationalizes this concept in its operations, see https://www.ifad.org/documents/d/new-ifad.org/htdn-rdmt-pdf.
[2] EB 2016/119/R.4.
[3] Allocation of core resources to countries on the World Bank list is an IFAD13 monitorable action, with a target of at least 30 per cent of core resources. As of July 2026, the World Bank uses a new methodology to identify countries with situations of fragility, conflict and violence, and countries with institutional fragility.
[4] For the first retrospective analysis, the cut-off date was 31 March 2026. It covered 170 projects with project design reports available on the IFAD website, excluding type C. The oldest Executive Board approval date was 15 December 2010 and the most recent was 29 December 2025.

high. This is illustrated in a snapshot of the dashboard in the appendix, showing the prevalence of different dimensions of fragility in project contexts.

6. **The most important use of IFAD's definition is to guide assessments of risks and vulnerabilities** in country programmes and to **identify pathways to resilience**. It serves to inform targeting, investments, non-lending activities and partnerships for effective delivery. The definition is accompanied by **four entry points** for IFAD to address key drivers of fragility and promote resilience: promoting food security and nutrition, strengthening local institutions, promoting sustainable natural resource management and supporting women's roles in community resilience.

III. Key institutional developments in the past three years

7. Since the previous Executive Board discussion on the topic in 2023, IFAD has invested significantly in **building tools and capabilities** to work in this domain. Operationally, the direction has been towards a well-informed, risk-based approach to investment design and delivery, supporting both more effective delivery and greater resilience. From a broader institutional perspective, IFAD has strengthened its risk management framework and included fragility considerations among the factors informing decentralization, the resourcing of country offices, corporate financial oversight, financial product development and partnerships.

8. One key institutional development has been the **establishment of a Fragility Unit** in the Department for Country Operations, working in collaboration with teams across the institution and tasked with implementing the **2024 updated approach to IFAD engagement in fragile situations (hereinafter "the updated approach")**, including four principles of engagement and action points across four domains.

9. The **four principles of engagement** are:

- Treating **resilience** as a key objective, for example, by looking at how gains in income, productivity or food security help households bounce back from shocks;
- Contributing to **prevention** by addressing drivers of fragility, for example, by supporting participatory management and dispute resolution over water sources, livestock routes or rangelands;
- **Doing no harm** by embedding conflict-sensitive approaches, for example, by considering power and conflict dynamics in targeting and designing provisions for social inclusion and empowerment, including in post-conflict settings; and
- **Remaining engaged** during crises or when IFAD cannot operate through its standard business model, for example, through the use of supplementary funds, climate and environment funds or third-party implementation.

10. The focus on **resilience connects these principles to the four entry points**. For instance, in the 2024 South Sudan Sustainable Agricultural Development Project, community-driven development is used to deliver income, food security and environmental benefits (i.e. livelihood resilience) while enabling prevention and doing no harm by supporting inclusive local governance, empowering local women and youth and embedding local conflict resolution mechanisms. In the Syrian Arab Republic country strategy note (2025−2027), IFAD plans to leverage remittances and diaspora investments alongside local entrepreneurship to support livelihood resilience, rehabilitate infrastructure to facilitate the economic reintegration of returnees and thus contribute to prevention and doing no harm, and use local project planning to help to restore the social contract between the state and communities, again contributing to prevention.

11. **The updated approach set out action points** under the headings of diagnostics, programming, operational support and partnerships. Progress has been made in all four areas, as summarized below:

- Under **diagnostics**, completed actions include updating **fragility assessment templates and review processes** in 2025, complemented by guidance for country teams to integrate a fragility lens into the assessment of risks and mitigating measures and into country strategic opportunities programme and project theories of change. To contribute to better diagnostics and a better understanding of specific implementation issues, IFAD has developed the above-mentioned **interactive data dashboard powered by AI**. At the corporate level, this has been accompanied by closer monitoring of fragility to inform decisions on financial allocations and oversight.

- Under **programming**, completed actions include **bringing a fragility lens into policies, action plans and tools** related to monitoring and evaluation (M&E), gender, nutrition, youth, community-driven development and climate financing, as well as into integrated project risk matrices, and the application of a fragility lens to IFAD's climate investments. Another key development concerns adaptive programming and management tools, for which guidance has been developed, inter alia, for multiphase adaptive programmes and for **response to emergencies and disasters (RED) project components.** The RED components are aligned with national and United Nations disaster and emergency plans and work with predefined triggers, budget allocations and implementation arrangements to allow projects to adjust to support asset protection, rehabilitation and resilience. Twelve projects approved by the Executive Board between 2023 and 2025 include a RED component. Going forward, building on the experience of IFAD's Crisis Response Initiative, IFAD proposes to make this a feature of most projects.

- Concerning **operational support**, completed actions include investigating challenges, lessons and best practices in procurement and financial management in fragile contexts, and **supporting the use of simplified procurement guidelines through a risk-based approach to foster investment resilience.** As of May 2026, simplified procurement guidelines were used in 17 projects in 14 countries, of which 13 are on the World Bank list. Beyond addressing specific bottlenecks, **this is part of an institutional shift towards risk-informed operational agility,** in which adaptive fiduciary systems, grounded in decentralization, contribute to portfolio resilience by enabling continuity of implementation and rapid response. Further progress is expected in 2026 through updated corporate guidance on financial management and procurement.

- Also related to operational support is **staff capacity development.** In this domain, IFAD launched an online operations academy course on fragility in March 2025, complemented by operational clinics and support to country teams on the use of fragility assessments, the integration of fragility into resilience planning, the use of RED components, and processes to follow in the event of shocks.

- Under **partnerships,** a key development has been the **strengthening of collaboration based on complementarities among the RBAs**. Under the 2024–2027 IFAD and World Food Programme (WFP) action plan on joint work in fragile situations, the two institutions have worked to leverage their respective strengths in Ethiopia, Haiti, Mozambique, the Pacific Islands, Pakistan, the Sahel, Sudan, South Sudan, Yemen and Zambia. Collaboration has included shared fragility assessments, integration of smallholders into food assistance programmes, climate resilience investments and logistics. Examples include shared fragility assessments informing each agency's resilience programming in Mozambique and South Sudan, linking smallholders supported by IFAD-funded programmes to school feeding programmes supported by WFP in Haiti and Mozambique, joint support for nutrition policies and programmes in Pakistan, and shared logistics in Haiti. In several of these cases, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is also an important partner, providing technical support to farmers and to governments to enhance agricultural productivity. This approach of building on complementary strengths is the foundation of the **RBA blueprint** for collaboration in fragile situations, launched in 2026.

- **Partnerships have also been pursued to enhance the financial package** that IFAD can offer to governments in situations of fragility or to enable continuous engagement during portfolio suspension, complementing measures related to lending terms and portfolio management. For instance, IFAD has partnered **with the climate and environment funds** in post-conflict situations or during the clearance of arrears (e.g. in Lebanon or Somalia). There are currently approximately US$480 million out of a total of US$1.25 billion of climate and environment funds[5] in IFAD's portfolio in fragile contexts, corresponding to 36 projects across 25 countries, excluding those with global and regional scope. Another important partner in diversifying IFAD's financial offering in these settings has been the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), with resources mobilized in more than 10 countries on the World Bank list since 2023.
- Additionally, **IFAD has pursued partnerships with other MDBs, notably as cofinanciers**, to reach the scale of investment needed and leverage their expertise in infrastructure and the private sector to support resilient markets and food systems in fragile contexts. For instance, in Nigeria, the Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones Programme combines the African Development Bank's expertise in infrastructure and productive investments with IFAD's expertise in connecting smallholders to markets. Under the AgriConnect initiative, IFAD works with the World Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank on the Papua New Guinea Agriculture Commercialization and Diversification Project Phase 2, supporting local infrastructure and services to enable smallholders to benefit from partner investments in infrastructure, productive technology and markets. In such collaborations, **IFAD brings unique added value by ensuring that partners' investments have resilience outcomes at the first mile.** This can occur even when the partnership is not about cofinancing. For instance, in its new country programme in Ukraine, IFAD will support rural livelihoods, value chains, social inclusion and local institutional capacity through activities planned after extensive consultations with other financiers to add value to their work.
- **Finally, partnerships with local institutions**, including farmers' organizations, community institutions and NGOs, **have proven key in fragile contexts**. This is also noted in the corporate-level evaluation of the institutional and operational performance under IFAD11 and IFAD12, which finds that empowering local institutions has contributed to the resilience of

[5] This includes Global Environment Fund, Adaptation Fund and Green Climate Fund.

the portfolio. Such partnerships have been critical during times of political instability or when local third-party delivery is needed. They have also been instrumental to the Crisis Response Initiative, particularly for targeting and first-mile delivery, as well as in contributing to social and institutional resilience after major shocks.

12. For the remainder of IFAD13, IFAD will continue implementing the work planned under the updated approach, including:

- Deepening the use of digital tools to make design, implementation support and reporting more agile and efficient in fragile and crisis situations;
- Continuing to support staff and project management unit capacity;
- Integrating a fragility lens into new corporate guidance on targeting;
- Conducting a detailed costing exercise for operations in fragile contexts;
- Continuing to leverage the role of the Fragility Unit as a facilitator of learning about effective practice and linking this to IFAD’s overall impact evidence agenda.

13. Additionally, IFAD will continue to monitor the creditworthiness of the sovereign portfolio, assess key risks linked to fragility that may affect debt repayments and continue to include fragile contexts in implementing its Non-Sovereign Operations (NSO) Investment Strategy.

IV. Main lessons learned for IFAD14

14. IFAD’s recent experience yields the following lessons:

15. **First, operating in fragile contexts requires realistic expectations**. As of June 2026, the draft 2026 Annual Report on the Independent Evaluation of IFAD notes lower performance for sustainability and efficiency in projects in fragile settings in the past decade, as also confirmed by the 2025 Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness. The evaluation also notes a spike in effectiveness ratings in the 2022–2024 period, coinciding with the roll-out of new tools for fragile contexts. Going forward, IFAD can expect to see the benefits of these tools unfolding as they are more widely used and decentralization consolidates. For instance, over the past years, the Fragility Unit has found greater integration of fragility assessments and analyses of resilience drivers in project and country strategy preparation. However, as noted in the IFAD13 midterm review, the results of fragility diagnostics could be used more effectively to inform decisions across the project cycle. Regional teams recognize the need to continue developing staff and partners’ capacity in diagnostics, adaptive programming and management, financial management and procurement, and to improve data quality and M&E capacity.

16. **Second, engaging in fragile situations requires effective ways to manage higher delivery costs.** This finding was illustrated in the updated approach with data from analyses conducted a few years ago, and the issue was also raised in a 2025 internal advisory audit on IFAD’s capacity to supervise projects in fragile contexts, which acknowledged that these projects, especially when security factors are at play, require specific budgeting provisions. The corporate-level evaluation also refers to hidden costs in these settings. These include costs associated with all aspects of operational delivery, including implementation support and fiduciary activities. Approaches to address such costs include the use of technology for high-quality data capture and monitoring, including remote supervision, geospatial tools, digital data collection and analysis, and AI.

17. **Third, absorption capacity and market conditions** in fragile contexts **require specific risk management provisions**, both for the sovereign and the

non-sovereign portfolio. While IFAD has achieved a limited NSO exposure in fragile contexts to date (4 NSOs in the current active portfolio of 16, excluding the Agribusiness Capital Fund, are in countries on the World Bank list), these contexts often present limited investable opportunities or unconducive regulatory environments. They thus require specific provisions for origination and de-risking (as already envisioned in IFAD13), both financially and through other means, including strong complementarity with the sovereign portfolio. On the sovereign front, experience shows the importance of balancing resource allocation commitments with absorption capacity, loan-servicing capacity and continuity. Specifically, countries in fragile situations can experience challenges in servicing loan repayment commitments, which might result in the suspension and cancellation (and possibly reallocation) of unused resources. Corporate guidance, oversight and implementation support are key to managing such risks.

18. **Fourth, partnerships require active planning and management to support delivery.** For instance, in recent years IFAD has worked with partners to address, inter alia, how to better align different reporting mechanisms among the RBAs and different financing and fiduciary modalities among the MDBs. On the RBA front, the new blueprint provides an important opportunity to continue working on practical enablers of collaboration, while new guidance on type C operations can facilitate more agile MDB collaborations. Importantly, IFAD needs to continue to invest in learning from other institutions about effective partnership approaches in fragile settings. In this regard, IFAD has been active in the MDB community of practice on fragility, sharing its experience on diagnostics, climate finance, financial management and procurement, and promoting harmonization of approaches where relevant. Another valuable initiative has been engaging in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee–United Nations dialogue on the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus to strengthen learning on collaboration with humanitarian and peacebuilding partners.

19. **Fifth, experience shows the importance of a coherent corporate approach**. For instance, recent efforts to embed fragility into operational support and programming go hand in hand with the integration of fragility into **corporate budget planning and management and the decentralization process**. Under the Decentralization 2.0 process, fragility has been considered a key factor contributing to location complexity in the metrics-based identification of human resource needs in country offices. Accordingly, all other things being equal, countries on the World Bank list have been more likely to have more staff or higher-grade staff than others with comparable metrics. Fragility has also informed considerations about the opening and location of country offices, with a focus on balancing proximity and the need to engage with security and duty-of-care considerations. Fragility is one of the factors enabling teams operating in specific country contexts to access comparatively greater resources, for example, for design activities, start-up and supervision, based on narrative justification. Going forward, coherent progress in these areas will remain important to support delivery, as will continued risk management capacity for both sovereign and non-sovereign financing.

20. **Sixth,** IFAD’s recent experience **shows the importance of bringing a crisis preparedness and response mindset** into the portfolio. The Crisis Response Initiative has generated a wealth of results and lessons learned that are now increasingly informing investments in other settings, including through the RED component. For instance, the initiative pointed to specific areas of operational focus that have been found to be important to rural communities across a range of crisis types (access to inputs, infrastructure, finance and markets). It also showed the effective use of alternative delivery channels when presence through the sovereign portfolio was constrained, for example, in Afghanistan, Niger, Somalia and Yemen,

and facilitated more flexible and adaptive programming in response to different shocks. Going forward, IFAD can build on this experience to strengthen the resilience of its portfolio under IFAD14.[6]

V. Questions for discussion

21. The above shows how IFAD has been adapting as fragility has become an important feature of its operating environment. With that in mind, Executive Board representatives are invited to reflect on the following:

- Given the areas of institutional development described in the paper, which areas are most strategic for strengthening IFAD's capacity to deliver in fragile contexts and in crisis situations?
- What additional areas of institutional development should IFAD consider exploring beyond IFAD14 to further enhance its contribution to resilience in a crisis-prone global context?
- As IFAD seeks to enhance its NSO footprint in fragile settings, what are some of the key lessons from Executive Board representatives' experience in supporting private sector investment in these settings?

[6] While the achievements of the Crisis Response Initiative are covered in a dedicated report (see annex VI), highlights include reaching around 3.5 million people and, based on rapid assessments of a sample of projects, 59 per cent of targeted households maintaining or improving income, 54 per cent maintaining or improving production, 59 per cent maintaining or improving food security, and 61 per cent maintaining or improving market sales.

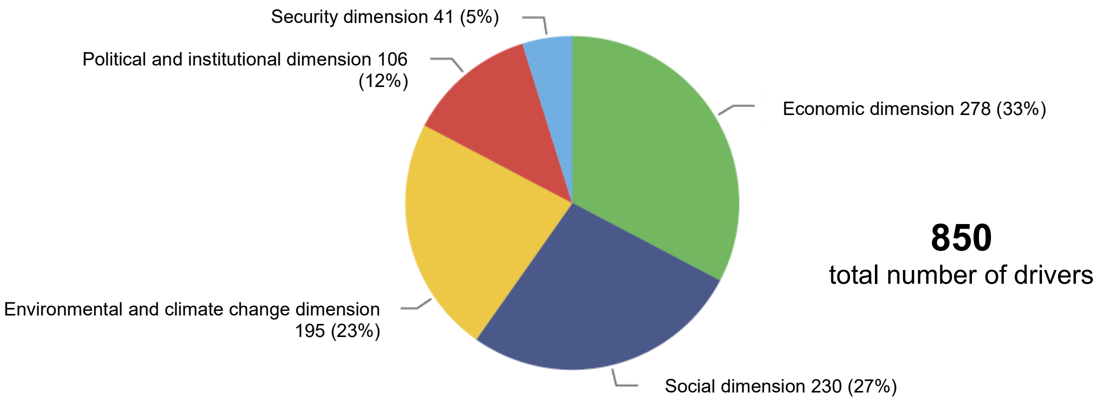
Retrospective analysis of fragile situations in IFAD's portfolio: methodology and additional insights

1. To support increased knowledge and understanding of fragility, a retrospective analysis of IFAD's investment portfolio was carried out starting in 2025 to develop an interactive data dashboard. The dashboard allows users to explore fragility insights from the IFAD project portfolio, including the following:

   - Fragility manifests itself to different degrees and in different forms across operational contexts. Specifically, the retrospective analysis shows that fragility is present to some degree in all 170 projects included in the sample, spanning 85 countries in which IFAD operates.

   - The average fragile situation scores vary across components, with the highest score observed in vulnerability to shocks (80.5) and the lowest in risk of violence and conflict (42.6). However, the average fragile situation scores are relatively similar, with high values for both fragility implication severity for food security (79.93) and fragility implication severity for smallholder agriculture (74.8) (see the appendix).

2. Identifying the top five key drivers of fragility for each project, and classifying each driver into predefined dimensions of fragility adapted from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) States of Fragility methodology, shows that most drivers are more closely associated with the economic and social dimensions. Relatively few drivers are more closely associated with the security dimension.



3. A total of 170 active IFAD investment projects were included in the retrospective analysis, excluding grant projects and type C projects, which are led by partner organizations. The projects were drawn from IFAD's active portfolio as at 31 March 2026, including projects designed as early as 2010 and covering 85 countries where IFAD operates. The 170 project design reports (PDRs) were obtained from publicly available data on ifad.org and preprocessed to extract key content, including: executive summary; context analysis; theory of change; project components; logical framework (logframe); Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP) review note; integrated project risk matrix; and environmental, social and climate management plan. The content of the PDRs varies significantly, reflecting the fact that projects were designed in different years, under different contexts and by different technical design teams. Furthermore, PDRs are co-developed by IFAD, partner organizations and the respective government entities according to a standardized format, with the intention of making project information public, although relevant project information may not always be publicly available or fully disclosed.

4. The key information for each project, based on content extracted from PDRs, was processed with a combination of artificial intelligence (AI) models using a custom set of instructions (i.e. prompts) to assess the prevalence of four key components of IFAD's definition of fragility:

- Vulnerability to shocks
- Risk of violence and conflict
- Weak governance
- Weak enabling environment

5. A scoring system on a scale of 0 to 100 was applied to quantify, in relative terms:

- The degree of exposure to each fragility component; and
- The severity of implications for smallholder agriculture and food security.

6. To ensure a more balanced and reliable assessment, a composite fragile situation score was calculated as the simple average of the scores generated by two different AI models. For transparency and ease of review, justifications for the scores from both models were generated and presented separately, allowing for the review of each assessment with references from the source PDRs. In addition to the AI-generated composite fragile situation scores, AI models were also used to identify critical drivers of fragility.

7. The analysis used two AI large language models to process PDRs, with the models selected from a pool of leading industry models benchmarked as fit for purpose within the IFAD context. For PDRs that were not available in English, specialized AI translation services were used to translate PDR content from French or Spanish to English. To validate the suitability and refine the performance of the AI models and services for the retrospective analysis, specific measures were taken to cross-check data, test for bias, and optimize configurations.

8. The entire process underwent rigorous internal peer review to ensure methodological soundness, alignment with IFAD's updated approach to fragility, and data accuracy.

Fragility assessments as instruments for risk-informed design and management in IFAD operations

1. Fragility assessments are among the tools available to operational teams to design and support implementation of country programmes and investments on a risk-informed basis. Within a fragility assessment, a fragility summary table supports teams in identifying specific drivers across five dimensions by documenting how they affect rural communities and translating them into concrete risks for country programmes or projects. A resilience table is also included to help teams to highlight existing strengths and coping capacities that IFAD can build on, based on evidence from community consultations, project supervision, country review processes, lessons learned from completion reports, M&E and partner experience. Taken together, fragility assessments and other risk management tools associated with country strategies and projects give operational teams a clear pathway for design and implementation support that is informed by context-specific risks and opportunities to build resilience.

Example 1. Syrian Arab Republic country strategy note

2. The Syrian Arab Republic country team used a fragility assessment note to inform its 2025–2027 country strategy note and integrated country risk matrix. The assessment identified key fragility drivers including conflict, weak institutions, economic instability, climate stress and displacement, which posed substantial operational risks. For instance, recognizing the impact of conflict on infrastructure meant that repairing conflict-damaged infrastructure, such as a bridge in Hama, could help to reduce transport costs for farmers. Each fragility driver was linked to specific risks and mitigation strategies, such as relying on local partners to understand security dynamics, simplifying project structures in response to weak institutional capacity, adjusting financial plans to manage economic instability and targeting vulnerable groups to promote social inclusion. The assessment also informed the country strategy note’s strategic objectives, focusing on resilience, community-driven development approaches and climate adaptation, while framing the country context as one of post-conflict recovery.

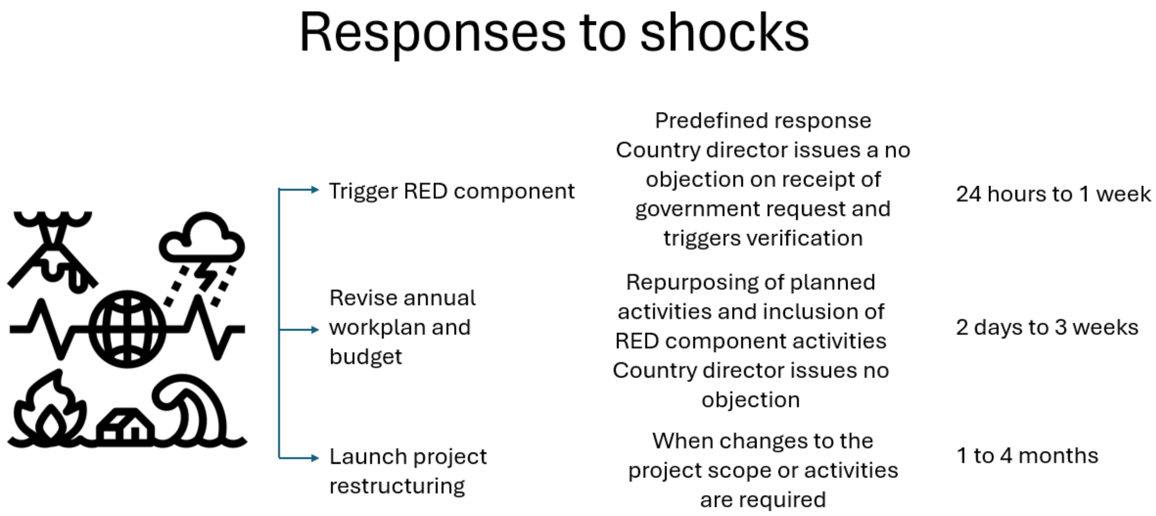
Example 2. South Sudan Sustainable Agricultural Development Project

3. The South Sudan Sustainable Agricultural Development Project, approved in 2024 and due for completion in 2031, illustrates the use of fragility assessments to inform project design. The team identified environmental, social and security vulnerabilities, such as food price increases, climate shocks, displacement, livestock raiding, and weak governance, linking these to negative effects on agriculture and to increased gender inequality. From this, the team grouped risks into political/governance, macroeconomic, security, environmental, and institutional capacity categories, recognizing issues such as supervision limitations, the need for third-party support, corruption and procurement risks. The analysis informed the theory of change and mitigation measures; such as managing weak systems, working with third-party actors and building on existing project arrangements. Operational measures included frequent, smaller supervision missions, specialized procurement tools to ensure quality and control, and a simplified M&E system using third parties when needed.

Enabling operational agility in the face of crisis: the response to emergencies and disasters (RED) project component

1. IFAD has a suite of emergency response tools that enable projects to have the necessary flexibility to respond swiftly to emergencies while safeguarding longer-term development gains in rural areas in the event of crises. Among these tools, the response to emergencies and disasters (RED) component guidance was introduced in 2025 to support projects in providing immediate and targeted support to affected populations, while staying fully within IFAD’s mandate and within the logic and set-up of specific existing projects.

2. Once a RED component is triggered by predefined and pre-agreed events, project annual workplans and budgets should be revised to include RED component activities, if not already included. Should the aftermath of a shock or crisis require significant changes to a project design beyond the scope of the component, the IFAD project restructuring policy is then applied to make the necessary changes within a limited time frame.



Some examples of private sector investments in fragile contexts

Babban Gona, Nigeria

1. Violence, social turmoil, economic stagnation and the effects of climate change have displaced millions of people within Nigeria. This is why, in 2021, IFAD made its first-ever investment in Babban Gona, a private sector company working to address the root causes of violence in the West African country. IFAD's US$5 million loan gave the farmer-focused social enterprise many of the tools it needed to help vulnerable people become more resilient.

2. As of 2025, Babban Gona had reached 384,003 smallholder farmers since the start of the project, including 17,162 farmers linked to IFAD's Climate Change Adaptation and Agribusiness Support Programme in the Savannah Belt (CASP),[7] approved in 2013 and completed in 2021, providing them with access to the resources and services needed to enhance productivity. In addition, 100 per cent of participating smallholder farmers reported increases in both yields and income. On the employment front, Babban Gona had generated 739,000 jobs as of the end of 2025, including 302,673 jobs for women and 548,225 jobs for youth. These results highlight Babban Gona's continued role in promoting inclusive growth and expanding economic opportunities in rural areas.

Futuro Mcb, Mozambique

3. Futuro Mcb is a socially driven microfinance institution in Mozambique that offers financial services and loans to underserved rural populations, particularly women entrepreneurs.

4. In 2021, through the Private Sector Trust Fund, IFAD provided a US$2 million loan to support Futuro in stabilizing access to finance for smallholders and rural micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, while also expanding Futuro's rural microfinance portfolio, through both individual and group lending. The IFAD loan entails the provision of countercyclical funding during times of crisis to foster the expansion of Futuro's microfinance lending portfolio in support of economic activities of smallholder farmers and microenterprises in Nampula's rural areas, thereby contributing to reduced poverty and strengthened resilience.

5. In 2025, Futuro's disbursements to agriculture reached US$1.03 million, supporting 1,577 clients, with a balanced gender distribution, with women accounting for 54 per cent of clients and youth for 36 per cent.

[7] EB 2013/110/R.18.

Examples of RBA collaboration in fragile contexts

1. Through its partnership with the other Rome-based agencies (RBAs), over the past few years IFAD has worked to maximize synergies and deliver results efficiently in several fragile and volatile environments, often in contexts where official development assistance has been declining for both humanitarian action and for development investments.

2. One example, framed under the **IFAD-World Food Programme (WFP) action plan for fragile situations, is the South Sudan Livelihoods Resilience Project,** approved in 2021 and due for completion in 2028, which illustrates how WFP and IFAD work together at the nexus of humanitarian assistance and long-term development. In Western Equatoria, a joint value chain assessment has enabled WFP to procure 650 tons of maize from smallholder farmers and has linked 2,250 farmers from the South Sudan Livelihoods Resilience Programme – half of them women – to food assistance programmes in Yambio and Nzara. By combining local procurement with strengthened value chains, this partnership builds resilience and creates more efficient, market-based opportunities for rural communities in one of the world's most fragile settings.

3. In Haiti, the **Enhancing Food Security through Sustainable Agriculture, Local Economy Development and Healthy Diets (EFOSE),** approved in 2024 and due for completion in 2032, in the south-east region is set to be the primary programmatic platform, with key outputs including the establishment of market linkages between IFAD-supported farmer organizations and WFP's Home-Grown School Feeding Programme. EFOSE is also expected to deliver a climate-resilience financing window through the proposal under the ninth replenishment cycle of the Global Environment Facility, with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) providing technical inputs on agroecology, sustainable land and water management and food systems transformation. EFOSE therefore has the potential to become a strong example of RBA collaboration around an IFAD-financed anchor project.

4. In parallel, the **Inclusive Blue Economy Project**, approved in 2021 and due for completion in 2028 in the north-east focuses on policy-level outcomes, notably the development of Haiti's National Blue Economy Policy with FAO technical support, subject to approval.

5. Complementing these programmatic and policy efforts, the shared logistics agreement with WFP will deliver operational continuity by enabling direct IFAD access to WFP air transport services.

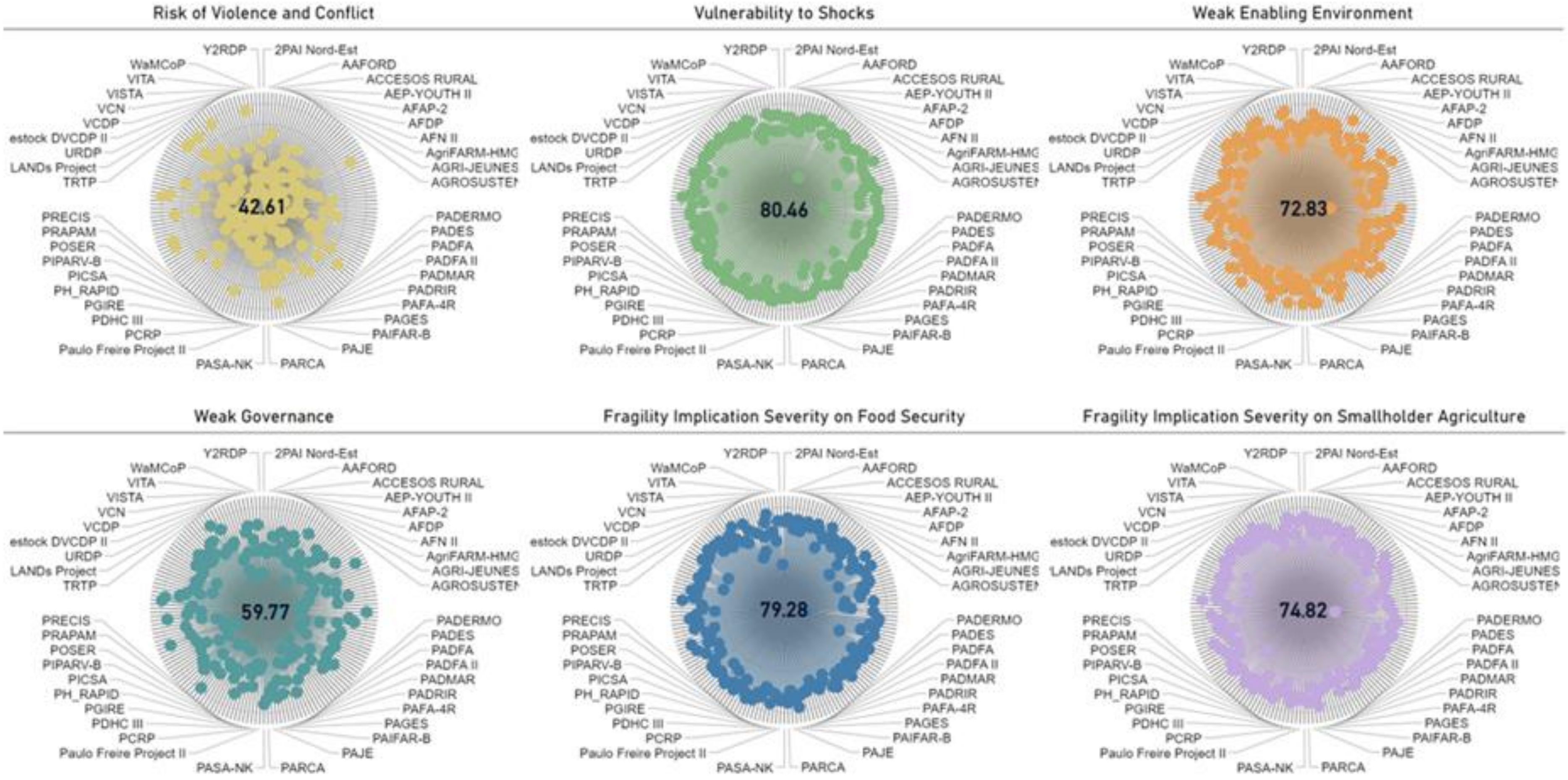
6. The **Crisis Response Initiative in Niger** provides another example of how IFAD has leveraged the operational capacity and presence of other actors – in this case FAO – in a context of fragility combined with the impact of a global crisis. Following the 2023 coup d'état, which meant that continued delivery through an IFAD loan mechanism was no longer possible, the Crisis Response Initiative anchor project was redesigned for third-party implementation. FAO was selected as a key partner given its strong operational presence, expertise in agricultural emergency response, established partnerships with national institutions and decentralized delivery model, all of which made rapid continuity of operations possible despite political instability. With a US$3 million grant, the initiative reached 16,500 households across high-risk, climate-vulnerable areas, exceeding targets, with women and youth accounting for more than half of the project participants. The partnership made it possible to safeguard livelihoods and strengthen resilience, bridging immediate crisis response with longer-term recovery.

7. The **North Kivu Agriculture Sector Support Project,** approved in 2015 and due for completion in 2026, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a value chain development programme supporting around 33,000 smallholder farmers through farmers' organizations. It operates in a highly challenging environment characterized by conflict, epidemics, natural disasters and limited state presence. The project experienced low rates of implementation, with 4 out of 55 of planned infrastructure investments completed as of 2025. Key challenges included highly centralized procurement causing delays, a deteriorating security situation limiting access, and operational disruptions. In 2025, the North Kivu Agriculture Sector Support Project introduced a decentralized approach, shifting from centralized procurement to local execution led by farmers' organizations. To support this, IFAD introduced adapted fiduciary processes, including simplified procurement procedures tailored to local actors and the adoption of flexible processes for fragile contexts. This was supported through investment in the capacity of procurement committees within farmers' organizations and improved transparency through the Online Project Procurement End-To-End System (OPEN). Farmers' organizations played a central operational role, including selecting contractors, monitoring works, coordinating stakeholders and maintaining communication. Their proximity to communities enabled continued operations despite insecurity. The shift produced rapid and significant improvements, with 36 infrastructure investments completed as of May 2026 and 15 under way. Supporting adaptive approaches to procurement and empowering local actors in fragile contexts can dramatically improve project delivery, while strengthening resilience, ownership and sustainability.

Reference documents

- Updated approach to IFAD engagement in fragile situations
- Addressing fragility through a focus on rural livelihoods: A reflection on IFAD’s role (2023 paper)
- Crisis Response Initiative: From crisis to recovery: results, implementation and lessons learned (2022–2025). An overview of the published Executive Board reports
- Protecting Rural Livelihoods and Resilience – IFAD’s Response to the Impacts of the War in Ukraine: A Crisis Response Initiative (CRI) (EB 2022/135/R.39)
- Update on IFAD’s Crisis Response Initiative (EB 2023/OR/3)
- Second update on IFAD’s Crisis Response Initiative (EB 2024/OR/12)
- Third update on IFAD’s Crisis Response Initiative (EB 2025/OR/29)

Fragility situations scores: by fragility components and fragility implications



Note: Acronyms refer to individual projects, but not all 170 analysed projects appear in this graphic. Individual project data can only be seen in the dashboard developed for internal IFAD staff use.