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**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE PRESIDENT**

TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD ON A PROPOSED

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT**

TO THE

**UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR PROJECT SERVICES (UNOPS)**

FOR THE

**WESTERN AND CENTRAL AFRICAN HUB FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND  
FOOD SECURITY – A TOOL FOR RURAL POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CSO	Civil-Society Organization
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IGO	International Government Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRM	Natural Resource Management
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services





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AND FOOD SECURITY – A TOOL FOR RURAL POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

I submit the following Report and Recommendation on a proposed technical assistance grant to the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) to support the Western and Central African Hub for Rural Development and Food Security – A Tool for Rural Poverty Alleviation, in the amount of USD 1 200 000 for a three-year period.

**I. BACKGROUND**

1. The Western and Central African countries are facing serious problems of slow agricultural and rural development and increasing rural poverty and food insecurity. These problems must be dealt with while undertaking far-reaching reforms relating to economic policy, government administration and the public sector. Closer partnerships among governments and civil-society organizations (CSOs) in the design and implementation of strategies for rural development and rural poverty reduction have, in the recent past, become an important new feature of policy design.

2. Pressed by day-to-day problems, often caused by new emergencies, Western and Central African governments tend to take on-the-spot decisions and to secure resources from donors on a case-by-case basis. Development programmes are still donor-driven to some extent, and donors' approaches often differ even when they aim at similar objectives and are in line with the same overall policies. Despite the emerging trend whereby the same policies tend to be adopted in different countries to deal with problems of a similar nature, much needs to be done to consolidate and improve on progress made both within and among countries of the region. Cross-fertilization of different experiences is still very limited. Inadequate information on successes and failures in dealing with major project issues or on the impact of different project policies and methods, coupled with a lack of coordination among donors, has led to poor allocation of donor resources and reduced benefits accruing to countries from resources invested by both governments and donors.

3. In this connection, IFAD has been involved in discussions with the European Union (EU), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UNOPS and the World Bank and with the French Cooperation with regard to establishing a mechanism for dialogue and coordination in the Western and Central African region. This proposal has been discussed with 12 countries of the region and with several inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) and CSOs working at the regional level. The present programme proposal is the result of those discussions.

**II. RATIONALE/RELEVANCE TO IFAD**

4. While the capacity of Western and Central African governments to formulate policies and prepare programmes and projects has greatly improved over the last decade, there is still a need to: improve the services that governments require for policy and programme formulation; harmonize the approach of governments and donors in such formulation; and avoid unjustified duplication of interventions. A professional structure in Western and Central Africa, based on the experience of the



Regional Unit for Technical Assistance in Central America, and the recently established Multi-Donor Food Security and Rural Development Hub for the Southern African Development Community would constitute an important process facilitator.

5. **Objectives and strategy.** The long-term objective of the proposed Western and Central African Hub for Rural Development (the Hub) is to set up a strategic instrument in the region to deal with issues relating to poverty alleviation, food security and rural development and facilitate sustained policy dialogue among Western and Central African countries, regional development institutions and external development partners. National governments, regional IGOs and farmers' organizations and other CSOs will take part in this initiative. The Hub will respond to requests for advice from governments, donors, IGOs and CSOs to help increase their knowledge on a number of topics of critical importance for rural development, poverty alleviation and food security. It will also provide a permanent forum for regular exchanges of information, experiences and debates with a view to harmonizing country and donor approaches. Information on the objectives, outputs and activities of the Hub is provided in the Appendix.

6. **Relevance to IFAD.** The specific themes to be covered by the Hub (e.g. promotion and empowerment of grass-roots organizations, local development/decentralization, rural finance, rural infrastructure, gender, natural resource management (NRM) and sustainable agricultural development) are all of particular relevance to IFAD's operations in the region. Moreover, the Hub will contribute substantially to achieving IFAD's corporate objectives in the region in terms of (i) policy dialogue and analysis in areas of relevance (such as decentralization, local governance, farmers' rights, gender sensitivity, improved access to productive assets and effective linkage of small-scale producers to markets); (ii) knowledge management through a more structured approach to documentation and evaluation of field-based innovations so as to facilitate their adoption by other partners; and (iii) building strategic partnerships that have potential for replication, and scale up best practices in poverty alleviation.

### III. THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME

7. The professional services of the Hub will be structured along a number of specific issues that are critical for improving governance, rural development, poverty alleviation and food security and are common to all countries of the region. The initial phase will be limited in terms of duration (three years), geographical coverage (eight-to-ten countries) and the number of subjects covered (about six). The initial partnership (donors, governments and CSOs) will be also limited. Depending on the success of the initial phase, the formula will be gradually extended to cover additional subject matters and the entire region, depending on demand, use of services by the different partners, the quality of the partnership established, the Hub's impact on professional activities and the availability of resources.

8. The Hub's broad fields of concern will involve the formulation of rural development strategy and policy, institutional reform and capacity building, promoting the exchange of experience, harmonization of the partners' approach and assistance in programme formulation and implementation. In particular, the Hub will focus on the following short-term objectives:

- (a) establishing a regional centre, of recognized professional excellence, to deal with selected subject matters directly or indirectly connected with food security and poverty alleviation;
- (b) providing advice to countries (governments and CSOs) and donors on selected subjects;
- (c) collecting and disseminating information on relevant experiences within the region, and regular public debates on the subjects involved;
- (d) assisting partner governments in formulating relevant strategies and policies;
- (e) participating in the preparation of investment programmes by acting as external advisors rather than as members of the formal programme preparation teams; and



- (f) providing technical advice and support for implementation without, however, becoming involved in supervising programme implementation.

9. In order to achieve the depth of knowledge required by such a centre of excellence during the initial phase, the Hub's activities will focus on approximately six major well-defined fields of concern. Six high-level professional staff will be recruited, each to be responsible for one of the main fields of concern, and a seventh staff member will be charged with Hub coordination. Their main tasks will include: (i) providing advice to governments on policy formulation in the six subject matters of concern to the Hub; (ii) organizing workshops on experience with policy implementation and on strengthening cross-fertilization and synergies among partner agencies' programmes; and (iii) preparing papers on regional experience, issues, problems, constraints and opportunities, and on ways of dealing with them. These papers, which will emphasize operational concerns, will be prepared in the form of issue papers, advocacy notes and policy papers on the specific themes under consideration.

#### IV. EXPECTED BENEFITS

10. IFAD activities in the Western and Central African countries will benefit, both directly and indirectly, from better allocations of resources and harmonized approaches to investment strategies for the rural sector. Through this strategic partnership, IFAD is expected to become a main actor in permanent fora dealing with rural development, poverty alleviation and agricultural development policies in the region; acquire more insight into the experience of other donors and private agencies; and contribute to the integration of CSOs (non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and farmers' associations) in planning and implementing policies and projects. This will strengthen the basis for successful project implementation in the region. IFAD's field operations will benefit directly from staff time allocated to advising donors on project preparation and implementation, the staff of the Hub having acquired a wealth of experience and a position of respect and influence with the participant governments, regional institutions, and CSOs. Finally, thanks to the Hub's work with all donor partner agencies, there will be more opportunities for cofinancing programmes.

#### V. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

11. **Executing agency.** Phase I will be implemented over a period of three years. UNOPS will act as executing agency on behalf of all donor agency partners and make available office space and necessary administrative and support services. Since UNOPS is also IFAD's foremost cooperating institution in the region, the Hub will add value to the Fund's field operations thanks to better integration of policy concerns through day-to-day working relationships between Hub experts and UNOPS portfolio managers.

12. The **management committee** will have ultimate responsibility for steering Hub activities, including approval of the work programme and budget. The committee will be composed of 10-15 members, made up of representatives of (i) donors; (ii) main regional IGOs (e.g. Council of Ministers of Agriculture of Western and Central African States, the Economic Community of West African States, Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel and West African Monetary Union; and (iii) CSOs (NGOs, women's and farmers' organizations, private agribusiness) working at the regional level. The Hub's operations will be carried out through a technical unit. Staff will be seconded from their institutions or recruited directly through UNOPS. Administration, financial and other support services will be outsourced and independent annual audit services contracted. Provision will be made for annual reviews of the Hub's activities on behalf of the partners and participating governments. In addition, an evaluation of the initial phase will be organized during the third year to assess the impact of Hub activities and make recommendations for subsequent phases.



## VI. INDICATIVE PROGRAMME COSTS AND FINANCING

13. The total indicative cost of operating the Hub for the initial three-year period is estimated at USD 8.0 million, plus the cost of leasing UNOPS office space, as shown in the following table. These estimated costs are based on the assumptions made for the Harare Hub.

14. IFAD will provide a cash contribution of USD 1.2 million (15% of total costs). The World Bank, EU, FAO, UNIFEM, UNOPS and the French Cooperation have already confirmed their contributions in principle, and a detailed financing plan will be drawn up once the main sponsoring agencies confirm their involvement. The donor agencies' contributions will be made in cash and/or in a combination of cash and out-posted professional staff. Since IFAD's financing is in cash, it will be used to complement the other donors' contribution. All participating regional institutions, governments and CSOs will be requested to contribute staff time and office facilities to support the Hub activities they request.

### Indicative Costs (USD '000)

Activity	Total Costs	Tentative IFAD Financing (*)
Management committee	60	60
Professional staff	4 200	600
Consultants' services	900	200
Training, workshops and publications	420	100
Travel	450	100
Country spokes	840	-
Vehicles and equipment	300	-
Administrative support	750	100
Audit	40	20
Performance evaluation	40	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 000</b>	<b>1 200</b>

(\*) Tentative schedule, subject to modification following discussions with the other Hub sponsors.

15. Disbursement of IFAD funds will be conditional on reaching a critical mass in terms of donor involvement: in addition to UNOPS, a minimum of four donor partners will be needed.



## VII. RECOMMENDATION

16. I recommend that the Executive Board approve the proposed technical assistance grant in terms of the following resolution:

RESOLVED: that the Fund, in order to finance, in part, the Western and Central African Hub for Rural Development and Food Security – A Tool for Rural Poverty Alleviation, for three years, shall make a grant not exceeding one million two hundred thousand United States dollars (USD 1 200 000) to the United Nations Office for Project Services upon such terms and conditions as shall be substantially in accordance with the terms and conditions presented to the Executive Board in this Report and Recommendation of the President.

Lennart Båge  
President





## LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Log Order	Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
<p><b>Long-term objectives of the programme:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an instrument that responds to government, donor and CSO requests for policy and investment advice in selected fields of critical importance for improving governance, food security and human economic and social development in rural areas;</li> <li>• provide a regular forum for exchanges of information, experience and debate, with a view to harmonizing partners' approaches and intervention in selected fields of concern; and</li> <li>• generate strong demand for professional services provided by the Hub from donor agencies, regional institutions, governments and CSOs in all countries of the region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder satisfaction with the services provided during the first phase leads to demand for a permanent Hub.</li> <li>• Partner demand during the first phase and from other donors, governments and CSOs in the region is formalized in the requests for a new phase, with an extended partnership and larger scope.</li> </ul>	<p>First-phase (three years) programme completion evaluation report</p> <p>(by the first half of PY3).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sufficient resources.</li> <li>• Willingness of partner donor agencies, regional institutions, national governments and CSOs to learn from one another's experiences and to cooperate among themselves.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Specific objectives of the first phase</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An initial group of high-level professional specialists in six major fields of concern will be set up, with headquarters in Abidjan;</li> <li>• the group establishes a reputation for excellence in the region;</li> <li>• governments, donors, regional institutions and CSOs operating at the regional level refer to the group, both to keep abreast of developments and for advice on policy and investment programme formulation in the group's six fields of concern;</li> <li>• governments, donors, regional institutions and CSOs operating at the regional level take a pro-active attitude towards sharing information and experience among themselves, using the facility offered by the group;</li> <li>• improved flow of information on experiences, success and failures of programmes in different countries leads to converging approaches of donor partner agencies, participating governments and CSOs; and</li> <li>• donor partner agencies make use of the group to improve programme design, and to facilitate implementation and technical backstopping.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seven high-level professional specialists seconded/recruited.</li> <li>• Quality of the relationships established with the partners; lively flow of requests for advice.</li> <li>• Mechanisms for discussing common issues and problems established and tested.</li> <li>• An effective inter-agency flow of information is established; the data bank is operational and kept up-to-date.</li> <li>• Evidence of learning from positive experience of other countries and agencies dealing with similar circumstances.</li> <li>• Improved programme design, contribution to solving implementation problems reported by donors and governments.</li> </ul>	<p><b>See following section</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governments share the agencies' interest in a common pool of high-level advisors, and cooperate.</li> <li>• Partner agencies' operations managers at the central and local levels have sufficient incentives to cooperate and are willing to share information.</li> <li>• Political determination of governments and adequate motivation of politicians to learn from other countries' experience.</li> <li>• Political commitments by partner governments to effectively associate CSOs to the development process.</li> <li>• Local managers of rural development programmes appreciate the potential advantages of the advisory services offered by the Hub.</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX

Log Order	Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
<p><b>Expected results of the first phase</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved formulation of government and regional institutions' strategies and policies for rural development.</li> <li>• Improved design of investment programmes.</li> <li>• Emergence of better and more structured relationships between donors, regional institutions, governments and CSOs (NGOs and farmers' associations).</li> <li>• Better trained government officers through dialogue and exchange of experience.</li> <li>• Donor partner agencies, regional institutions, governments and CSOs share information on a regular basis, and participate pro-actively in regional workshops to discuss common issues and problems.</li> <li>• A data bank on information collected by the group is established and kept up-to-date.</li> <li>• Gaps in information are discussed and steps taken to fill gaps identified.</li> <li>• National governments begin to take a common approach to dealing with similar problems and issues; show readiness to test the positive experiences of others.</li> <li>• Participation of Hub staff in partner agency missions reduces costs for the agencies and/or improves the quality of their products.</li> <li>• Advice from Hub staff contributes to improving the design of donors' programmes and field performance.</li> <li>• Increased number of cofinanced programmes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and quality of partner governments' requests for the services of the Hub; operations started in each country; selected fields of concern covered.</li> <li>• Evidence of the impact of the Hub's interventions on policy and programme formulation.</li> <li>• Evidence that regional partner NGOs and farmers' associations play a role in the activities of the Hub, and provide effective linkages with CSOs at the national level.</li> <li>• Evidence of enhanced relationships among CSOs, regional institutions, governments and donor agencies as a result of Hub activities.</li> <li>• Number and quality of thematic workshops organized by the Hub.</li> <li>• Quality of the data bank established; regularity of reports from partners; information kept up-to-date.</li> <li>• Number and quality of information gap-filling studies organized by the Hub and relevance to fields of concern.</li> <li>• Record of Hub staff advice and backstopping in the design of partners' programmes and in their implementation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual progress reports by the head of the Hub's technical unit.</li> <li>• Proceedings of management committee meetings.</li> <li>• Annual supervision reports by missions jointly appointed by all donor partner agencies.</li> <li>• Communication of partner governments to Hub management committee chairman on services rendered by Hub staff.</li> <li>• Annual reports by professional staff of the technical unit.</li> <li>• Proceedings of Hub thematic workshops.</li> <li>• Report of completion evaluation of first – phase programme.</li> <li>• Evaluation by donor partner agencies of Hub staff's role and performance in programme formulation or in support of programme implementation.</li> </ul>	<p>Same as for previous section.</p>

APPENDIX

Log Order	Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
<p><b>Activities</b></p> <p>Activities will depend on demand from partners. However, the technical unit with the agreement of the management committee will initiate some activities.</p> <p>Hub's activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisory services to governments in respect of policy formulation.</li> <li>• Implementing issue-oriented institutional assessments, participatory socio-economic surveys, agricultural production and NRM research and development programme assessments, and other information gap-filling studies.</li> <li>• Organization of workshops on country experience with policy implementation in relevant fields of concern.</li> <li>• Organization of workshops to strengthen cross-fertilization and synergies among the programmes of partner agencies in relevant fields of concern.</li> <li>• Participation as advisors in programme formulation and support to programme implementation activities of partner agencies in fields closely related to Hub fields of concern.</li> <li>• Assistance to CSOs engaged in activities directly related to Hub's fields of concern at the regional level.</li> <li>• Maintaining an up-to-date library of appraisal and evaluation reports on programmes of all partner agencies; and reporting annually on progress and identified issues, success and problems of these programmes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every year, all governments request Hub advice on at least one subject of concern to it.</li> <li>• At least four regional workshops organized on specific policy themes.</li> <li>• At least two regional workshops organized on specific technical themes.</li> <li>• Hub's advice related to their specific areas of competence requested for most partner agency programmes.</li> <li>• At least two workshops organized to discuss experiences and issues of programme cross-fertilization.</li> <li>• Library/data bank extant; relevant report collection complete and kept up-to-date; annual reports produced regularly.</li> </ul>	<p>Same as above</p>	<p>Same as above</p>
<p><b>Inputs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seven professional staff: one generalist and six specialists in six different subject matters.</li> <li>• Funds for consultancy services.</li> <li>• UNOPS provided office accommodation and administrative, financial and other support services.</li> <li>• Funds for travel, other operating expenses, audit and programme completion evaluation.</li> </ul>			