President’s report

Proposed grant to the Republic of the Congo for the

Rural Development Project in the Likouala, Pool and Sangha Departments
Note to Executive Board Directors

This document is submitted for approval by the Executive Board.

To make the best use of time available at Executive Board sessions, Directors are invited to contact the following focal point with any technical questions about this document before the session:

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Abbreviations and acronyms

OFID OPEC Fund for International Development
PDARP Agricultural Development and Rural Roads Rehabilitation Project
(Projet de développement agricole et de réhabilitation des pistes)
Recommendation for approval

The Executive Board is invited to approve the recommendation for the proposed grant to the Republic of the Congo for the Rural Development Project in the Likouala, Pool and Sangha Departments, as contained in paragraph 36.
Map of the project area

Republic of the Congo
Rural Development Project in the Likouala, Pool and Sangha Departments (PRODER 3)
Republic of the Congo

Rural Development Project in the Likouala, Pool and Sangha Departments

Grant summary

Initiating institution: IFAD
Recipient: Republic of the Congo
Executing agency: Ministry of Agriculture
Total project cost: US$18.7 million
Amount of IFAD grant: SDR 5.25 million (equivalent to approximately US$8.6 million)
Cofinancier(s): OPEC Fund for International Development
Amount of cofinancing: US$7.0 million
Terms of cofinancing: Parallel
Contribution of recipient: US$2.1 million
Road Maintenance Funds: US$0.8 million
Contribution of beneficiaries: US$214,000
Appraising institution: IFAD
Cooperating institution: Directly supervised by IFAD
Proposed grant to the Republic of the Congo for the Rural Development Project in the Likouala, Pool and Sangha Departments

I. The project

A. Main development opportunity addressed by the project

1. The new Mid-Term Action Plan of the Ministry of Agriculture aims to (i) promote the production and multiplication of improved plant materials and seeds and small animal restocking; and (ii) support the marketing of agricultural products. This plan is ushering in a new era by enabling farmers’ interest groups to produce, multiply and disseminate improved disease-free cassava planting materials and seeds. The project will provide training and agricultural extension services to ensure that smallholders have full access to improved seeds, planting materials and the know-how for improved cultivation practices. It will also finance the rehabilitation of rural roads with the aim of increasing access to production basins.

B. Proposed financing

Terms and conditions

2. It is proposed that IFAD provide a grant to the Republic of the Congo in the amount of SDR 5.25 million (equivalent to approximately US$8.6 million), under the Debt Sustainability Framework, to help finance the Rural Development Project in the Likouala, Pool and Sangha Departments.

3. Relationship to the IFAD performance-based allocation system (PBAS) The allocation defined for Congo under the PBAS is US$8.6 million over the 2007-2009 allocation cycle.

Country debt burden and absorptive capacity of the State

4. In 2005, the stock of external debt amounted to about US$5.9 billion excluding commercial debt and US$9.2 billion including commercial debt. In 2006, Congo reached the decision point under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative. Total debt relief was projected to be about US$1.7 billion in net present value terms in 2004. However, progress in implementing the measures agreed with the International Monetary Fund has been slow. Thus, the country is not expected to reach completion point, which would have allowed it to benefit from debt write-offs at least until late 2008 or 2009.

Flow of funds

5. IFAD will establish a project grant account in the name of the recipient. A special account will be opened in Brazzaville at a commercial bank acceptable to IFAD. The special account will be managed by the project coordinator and the financial administrative officer.

Supervision arrangements

6. The grant will be administered and supervised by IFAD.

Exceptions to IFAD General Conditions for Agricultural Development Financing and operational policies

7. No exceptions are foreseen.

Governance

8. Open competition for implementation contracts among the public-, private- and non-profit sectors will enhance project governance.
C. Target group and participation

Target group
9. The project will cover 250 villages and reach about 20,000 households, which represents about one third of the total rural population of the three departments covered by the project.

Targeting approach
10. In accordance with the IFAD Policy on Targeting, project design has been a highly participatory process, involving local governments, beneficiary communities and individual citizens. The targeting strategy comprises three steps: (i) identification and selection of production basins; (ii) selection of villages; and (iii) selection of farmers’ groups within the target villages.

11. The project will prioritize most poor villages within the production basins that respond to the following criteria: (i) isolated villages; (ii) villages that have agricultural potential and are well endowed with natural resources; and (iii) villages with a high-density population and established and dynamic farmers’ groups. The planning process will ensure that the most vulnerable groups are well targeted and receive project benefits.

Participation
12. The project design process was undertaken in collaboration with several partners. These included farmers’ groups, associations and organizations; private-sector and non-profit organizations; local and national ministry services; and bilateral and multilateral donors.

D. Development objectives

Key project objectives
13. The overall objective is to improve the food security of rural poor people in the Likouala, Pool and Sangha Departments. The specific objectives are to (i) increase sustainably the production, productivity and income of rural groups engaged in improving the main crops belonging to the cassava-based farming system; and (ii) provide sustainable physical access to production basins.

Policy and institutional objectives
14. In partnership with the World Bank-financed Agricultural Development and Rural Roads Rehabilitation Project (PDARP), the proposed project will strengthen the technical capacity of the departmental directorates of the Ministry of Agriculture, in the area of agricultural advice.

IFAD policy and strategy alignment
15. The project objective is in line with the IFAD Strategic Framework 2007-2010, specifically the strategic objective of improving agricultural technologies and production services, in order to enhance farm productivity. In alignment with the Fund’s strategic objectives, the project will support the Government’s efforts to improve the production of staple food products.

E. Harmonization and alignment

Alignment with national priorities
16. The project is consistent with the Government’s development priorities and will contribute to the advancement of the Government’s agenda for rural poverty reduction. It is also in line with the country strategic opportunities paper, and the pillars of the national poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP). Specifically, the project supports the first pillar of fostering peace, especially in Pool Department, by inserting ex-combatants into agricultural and food production systems. It also supports the second PRSP pillar, which relates to promotion of sustainable and equitable growth for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, by improving transport infrastructure; strengthening farmers’ capacity to multiply seeds
and improved disease-free cassava cuttings; and promoting poultry and small animal production using the métayage system.

**Harmonization with development partners**

17. Few donors have operations in the rural areas of Congo. The project will work closely with the PDARP on the rehabilitation of rural roads, community capacity-building and provision of technical services. The project will build on the achievements on the successful Food Security Project of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

**F. Components and expenditure categories**

**Main components**

18. The project has four components: (i) support to agricultural production; (ii) capacity strengthening; (iii) infrastructure to provide access to production basins; and (iv) coordination, communication and management.

**Expenditure categories**

19. There are six expenditure categories: (i) civil works (37.2 per cent); (ii) goods and services (8.4 per cent); (iii) technical assistance (6.9 per cent); (iv) training and studies (12.4 per cent); (v) contracts (22.5 per cent); and (vi) operating costs (12.6 per cent).

**G. Management, implementation responsibilities and partnerships**

**Key implementing partners**

20. The project will be implemented by (i) the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Public Works; (ii) the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID); (iii) the Ministry of Women’s Promotion and Integration in Development; and (iv) regional directorates of the Ministry of Agriculture, and farmers’ groups.

**Implementation responsibilities**

21. Overall project oversight and strategic direction will be the responsibility of a project steering committee. The project coordination unit will be responsible for overall project management. At the departmental level, the Ministry of Agriculture’s field staff will provide extension support.

**Role of technical assistance**

22. The proposed project will provide technical assistance and training to Ministry of Agriculture field staff, farmers’ interest groups and organizations in the area that is focused on but not limited to the production, multiplication and dissemination of improved disease-free cassava planting materials and seeds. Resources will also be earmarked for technical assistance in contracting local expertise to plan and build infrastructure.

**Status of key implementation agreements**

23. In addition to the grant agreement, the project coordination unit will work with implementing partners through binding memorandums of understanding with public-sector partners, and through contracts with participating NGOs and private-sector parties.

**Key financing partners and amounts committed**

24. The total project cost is US$18.7 million over six years. The sources of financing are IFAD (45.9 per cent); OFID (37.2 per cent); Government counterpart funds (11.1 per cent); Road Maintenance Funds (4.3 per cent); and beneficiaries (1.1 per cent).

**H. Benefits and economic and financial justification**

**Main categories of benefits generated**

25. The benefits generated by the project include (i) increased production and productivity of cassava-based crop systems through enhanced access of smallholders
to improved planting materials and seeds; (ii) greater productivity of small animals through restocking; (iii) reduced transaction costs as a result of improved rural roads; (iv) strengthened capacity of farmers’ groups and their organizations; (v) improved food security of smallholders in the project zones; and (vi) greater economic power for women (single women in particular) and young people through their participation in project activities.

**Economic and financial viability**

26. The expected increase in crop yields is well founded, as current yields are very low as a result of the effects of mosaic disease on cassava and poor quality seed. An economic internal rate of return (EIRR) of 16.0 per cent has been estimated based on conservative hypotheses for yield increases. A sensitivity analysis was conducted, which found the EIRR to be robust.

I. Knowledge management, innovation and scaling up

Knowledge management arrangements

27. The project will adopt a holistic approach to knowledge sharing. A knowledge management specialist will coordinate all related activities. The management and diffusion of knowledge will be a shared process involving IFAD and local, national and regional stakeholders. This will entail strengthening the linkages with the other IFAD operations under way in the country (the Rural Development Project in the Niari, Bouenza and Lékoumou Departments and Rural Development Project in the Plateaux, Cuvette and Western Cuvette Departments) and with regional initiatives (FIDAfrique, the Regional Cassava Processing and Marketing Initiative and the regional initiative for knowledge identification and sharing in Western and Central Africa). Annual project implementation workshops and donor round-table meetings will serve as platforms for knowledge sharing and will provide a showcase for the success stories and creative approaches of service providers and other partners. Project results and impact, success stories, and good practices will be widely disseminated through the use of local and national media (radio, television and the press).

Development innovations that the project will promote

28. The project will introduce a number of innovations. These include (i) the setting up of mechanisms for the identification, promotion and diffusion of new farming practices; (ii) the use of mobile phones (short messaging service [SMS] and Internet) by smallholders for relaying information on markets and prices; (iii) the direct use of Ministry of Agriculture field staff to provide extension services; and (iv) the use of village economic interest groups for the production, multiplication and diffusion of improved mosaic-free cassava planting materials and seeds. The project will provide a knowledge-sharing focal point for all rural and agricultural development activities being undertaken in area.

Scaling-up approach

29. The project will work in partnership with the two IFAD ongoing projects and PDARP to scale up the production, multiplication and dissemination of improved cassava planting material and seeds.

J. Main risks

Main risks and mitigation measures

30. The project faces four main risks: (i) delay in the project start-up; (ii) weak capacity of implementing agencies; (iii) delays in the setting up of a monitoring and evaluation system (M&E) and the undertaking of the baseline study; and (iv) the post-conflict situation in the Pool Department. A number of mitigation measures are being taken to reduce these risks. These are: (i) the draft annual workplan and budget, 18-month procurement plan and the implementation manual have been prepared with the aim of expediting project start-up; (ii) the use of Ministry of Agriculture departmental technical services for extension services will minimize the
risk associated with lack of private implementing agencies. The capacity of these technical staff will be strengthened. Project staff at the departmental level will also assist local Ministry of Agriculture staff in the planning, M&E and implementation of project activities; (iii) provisions have been made to set up an M&E system and undertake a baseline study immediately after recruitment of project coordination unit staff; and (iv) the project will work in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme’s implementation and support centre for programmes and projects to insert ex-combatants into farming and other economic activities.

Environmental classification
31. Pursuant to IFAD’s environmental assessment procedures, the project has been classified as a Category B operation in that it is not likely to have any significant negative environment impact.

K. Sustainability
32. Experience has shown that using existing institutions to implement project activities is an important step towards ensuring sustainability. The activities related to the production, multiplication and dissemination of improved planting materials and seeds are built upon experience gained from the other two IFAD-financed projects and the field activities of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture/FAO. Ministry of Agriculture field staff – following capacity-building under the project – will provide extension services, while the capacity of agricultural research centres (the Agricultural Research Centre of Loudima and the Tropical Plants Genetic Improvement Research Centre) will be strengthened by PDARP, allowing them to produce foundation seeds. The sustainability and impact of the road/waterways rehabilitation activities will depend on Government financing of the maintenance. Close consultations between the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Public Works, and the Road Maintenance Fund Directorate will take place yearly to ensure the availability of funds for maintenance.

II. Legal instruments and authority
33. A project grant agreement between the Republic of the Congo and IFAD will constitute the legal instrument for extending the proposed grant to the recipient. Important assurances included in the negotiated project grant agreement are attached as an annex.

34. The Republic of the Congo is empowered under its laws to receive financing from IFAD.

35. I am satisfied that the proposed grant will comply with the Agreement Establishing IFAD.

III. Recommendation
36. I recommend that the Executive Board approve the proposed grant in terms of the following resolution:

RESOLVED: that the Fund shall provide a grant to the Republic of the Congo in various currencies in an amount equivalent to five million two hundred and fifty thousand special drawing rights (SDR 5,250,000) and upon such terms and conditions as shall be substantially in accordance with the terms and conditions presented herein.

Lennart Båge
President
Important assurances included in the negotiated project grant agreement  
(Negotiations concluded on 30 July 2008)

**Pest management practices**

1. The Government of the Republic of the Congo will comply with the International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides and ensure that pesticides procured under the project do not include any pesticides classified as extremely hazardous or hazardous by the World Health Organization.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

2. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system will be based on: (a) ongoing internal monitoring; (b) periodic internal and external evaluations; and (c) supervision missions conducted by IFAD and OFID and the ministry departments concerned.

**Internal monitoring**

3. The role of this function is to monitor the implementation of activities called for under annual workplans and budgets (AWP/Bs), and to ensure that the expected results have been achieved.

**Internal and external evaluation**

4. Evaluation activities will measure: (a) the project’s impact on beneficiaries and the achievement of project objectives; (b) the relevance of implementation approaches and strategies; (c) the actual involvement of beneficiaries, in particular vulnerable groups, at various stages of implementation; and (d) the effectiveness of coordination and monitoring mechanisms.

**Insurance of project personnel**

5. The Government will insure the project personnel against health and accident risks, in accordance with customary practices prevailing in the country.

**Use of project vehicles and other equipment**

6. The Government will ensure that:
   
   (a) All vehicles and other equipment transferred or procured under the project are dedicated solely to project use and implementation;

   (b) The types of vehicles and other equipment transferred or procured under the project are appropriate to the needs of the project.

**Recruitment**

7. Key project officers (coordinator, financial administrative officer, accountant, accounting assistant, programming and M&E specialist, production and marketing support specialist, communication and knowledge management specialist, and road and river infrastructure specialist) will be recruited by national competition published in the national press. Candidates will be reviewed by a committee chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture and recruited on the basis of renewable two-year contracts that may not, under any circumstances, exceed the duration of the project. Decisions on recruitment and any decision to terminate a contract will be made in agreement with IFAD. The key project officers will be subject to annual performance evaluations conducted as stipulated in the administrative, accounting and financial procedures manual. Their contracts may be terminated based on the results of such evaluations. The Government will encourage women to apply for technical positions in connection with the project and will favour the recruitment of women for positions of responsibility. The management of all personnel will be conducted in accordance with currently prevailing government procedures.
Fraud and corruption

8. The Government will promptly bring to the attention of IFAD any allegations or concerns of fraud and/or corruption in relation to the implementation of the project of which it has knowledge or becomes aware.

Suspension by IFAD

9. IFAD may suspend, in whole or in part, the right of the Government to request withdrawals from the grant account if:

(a) The grant agreement has not become effective by the stipulated date or such other date as may be set for such purpose;
(b) The counterpart funds are not available;
(c) The manuals, or any provision thereof, or the AWP/Bs or the respective procurement plan have been suspended, rescinded in whole or in part, waived or otherwise modified without the prior consent of IFAD, and IFAD has determined that such event has had, or is likely to have, a material adverse effect on the project;
(d) The Government is not collaborating on the implementation of IFAD’s Policy on Preventing Fraud and Corruption in its Activities and Operations;
(e) Procurement has not been or is not being carried out in accordance with IFAD’s grant agreement.

Suspension in the event of non-compliance of audit requirement by the Government

10. IFAD will suspend the right of the Government to request withdrawals from the grant account if it has not received the audit reports within the six months following the six-month period set forth in the grant agreement.

Conditions precedent to withdrawal

11. No withdrawal will be made until such time as:

(a) The manuals prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture (the lead project agency) have been adopted;
(b) The first AWP/B, including a procurement plan for the first 18 months, has been adopted;
(c) The local currency equivalent of US$435,000, corresponding to the Government’s counterpart contribution, has been deposited in the project account.

Conditions precedent to effectiveness

12. The grant agreement will become effective upon the fulfilment of the following conditions precedent:

(a) The grant agreement has been signed by a duly empowered representative of each of the parties;
(b) The Government has delivered to IFAD a favourable legal opinion, acceptable in form and substance, issued by the authority having competence within the territory of the Government;
(c) The project coordinating unit (PCU) has been created by ministerial decree;
(d) The key PCU personnel, i.e. the project coordinator, financial administrative officer, programming and M&E specialist, production and marketing support specialist, communication and knowledge management specialist, and road and river infrastructure specialist, have been selected;
(e) The special account for the grant and the project account have been opened.
**Key reference documents**

**Country reference documents**

1. Comité national de lutte contre la pauvreté, Document de stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté (DSRP), version finale, janvier 2007
2. Comité national de lutte contre la pauvreté, Rapport national des consultations participatives sur la pauvreté, décembre 2006
3. Comité national de lutte contre la pauvreté, Plan national pour l’atteinte des OMD au Congo (draft 3), mars 2007
5. Ministère de la promotion de la femme et de l’intégration de la femme au développement, Politique nationale de la promotion de la femme, juillet 2007
6. Présidence de la République, Haut commissariat à la réinsertion des ex-combattants, Programme national, de désarmement, de démobilisation et de reinsertion (PNDDR), décembre 2004
7. Ministère de l’agriculture, de l’élevage, de la pêche et de la promotion de la femme, Domaines prioritaires de développement du secteur agricole, décembre 2004
8. Ministère de l’agriculture, de l’élevage, de la pêche et de la promotion de la femme, Schéma directeur du développement rural (SDDR) actualisé (en 3 volumes), septembre 2001
10. Ministère de la santé et de la population, Programme national de développement sanitaire (PNDS) 2006-2010
11. NEPAD/FAO/République du Congo/NEPAD, Appui à la mise en œuvre du PDDAA, Programme national d’investissement à moyen terme (PNIMT) et les 3 documents de profils de projets d’investissement bancables (PPIB), février 2007
13. République du Congo, Plan national de transport (PNT), en 6 volumes, février 2004
15. République du Congo, Statuts du Fonds national de soutien à l’agriculture
16. Projet d’appui à la commercialisation et aux initiatives locales (PACIL)
17. Projet de développement agricole et de réhabilitation des pistes (PDARP)
18. Projet de développement rural dans les départements des Plateaux, de la Cuvette et Cuvette Ouest (PRODER)
19. Projet de développement rural dans les départements de la Niari, Bouenza et de la Lékoumou (PRODER-SUD)
20. Résumé sur la République du Congo, Banque mondiale

**IFAD reference documents**

IFAD Strategic Framework 2007-2010
IFAD Policy on Conflict Prevention and Recovery
Congo COSOP, May 2002
Project Design Document (PPD) and Key files
IFAD Learning Notes (targeting, gender, community development funds, etc.)
Prerequisites for gender sensitive design
Administrative Procedures on Environmental Assessment
Procurement Manual
Other miscellaneous reference documents

1. World Bank, Country Assistance Strategy
10. FAO/DFID, Etude sur la participation des communautés de pêche au système de suivi, contrôle et surveillance des pêches au Congo, avril 2005
11. FAO, Compte rendu final du projet TCP/PRC/0166 (Production et Protection intégrée du manioc dans la Région des Plateaux), juillet 2003
12. FAO, Rapport d’évaluation des activités de la phase pilote du Programme spécial pour la sécurité alimentaire (PSSA), décembre 2005
13. Union européenne (UE), Contribution au Programme national de désarmement démobilisation et réinsertion dans le Pool, fiche d’identification de projet, mai 2007
14. UE, Projet de consolidation de la réconciliation (PCR) par l’appui aux populations touchées par les conflits, proposition de financement, mai 2007
15. UE/Banque mondiale, Évaluation intégrée de la gestion des finances publiques et de la passation des marchés, juin 2006
16. UE, Rapport annuel conjoint 2006 sur la coopération entre la République du Congo et l’Union européenne
## Cadre logique

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### COMPOSANTE 1 : APPUI À LA RELANCE DE LA PRODUCTION AGRICOLE

**Objectifs spécifiques** : Accroître la production et la productivité; améliorer les revenus

**Réalisation 1.1** : Production et diffusion des semences améliorées et boutures saines assurées

- Production (15 000 tonnes supplémentaires) et revenu (au moins + 20%) des bénéficiaires (20000 ménages)

**Produit 1.1.1** : Pépinières/parc à bois sont installés

- 20000 Paysans impliqués; semences améliorées et boutures saines produits et distribuées

**Produit 1.1.2** : Semences de qualité sont multipliées et disponibles

- 250 groupements impliqués, 3 pépinières (année 1), 29 parc à bois au niveau département, 250 au niveau village

**Réalisation 1.2** : Reconstitution des petits animaux

- Taux de remboursement (au moins 90%) dans les délais convenus.

**Produit 1.2.1** : Système de métayage en place

- Animaux attribués (3800 caprins, 1200 ovins), au moins 2500 bénéficiaires

### COMPOSANTE 2 : RENFORCEMENT DES CAPACITÉS

**Réalisation 2.1** : Les OP assurent l’évacuation et l’accès aux intrants et à la technologie

- 250 organisations paysannes renforcées. Niveau de structuration, d’organisation et de viabilité des OP

**Produit 2.1.1** : Formation des membres OP

- 5 000 membres formés dans 250 OP

**Produit 2.1.2** : Relais paysans sont formés

- 160 animateurs paysans/genre;

**Réalisation 2.2** : Capacités des DDA/DDE ont été renforcées

- 3 directions départementales (Likouala/Pool & Sangha) réhabilitées et équipées

**Produit 2.2.1** : Formation/recyclage des DDA/ DDE

- 20 cadres formés en année 1

### COMPOSANTE 3 : ACCES AUX BASSEINS DE PRODUCTION

**Objectif spécifique 3** : Améliorer l’accès physique aux basins de production

- 150 villages et population desservis ; taux de réduction des coûts de transport (au moins de 20%)}

**Réalisation 3.1** : Pistes rurales sont réhabilitées; système d’entretien opérationnel

- 100 km des pistes/linéaire des points critiques réhabilités, 60 ouvrages de franchissement réalisés

**Produit 3.1.1** : Formation des chefs d'équipe à la mise à l’approche HIMO assurée

- 110 équipes d’intervention identifiées et/ou créées. 110 chefs d’équipe formés

**Produits 3.1.2** : Populations riveraines sont organisées pour l’entretien des voies/pistes réhabilitées

- 20 postes de barrière de pluies créés et fonctionnels ; 30 comités d’entretien des pistes formés et opérationnels

**Réalisation 3.2** : La fluidité de navigation sur le réseau secondaire pour l’accès des basins de production est améliorée

- 35 comités d’entretien des voies fluviales et rivières fonctionnels ; voies navigables entretenues

**Produit 3.2.1** : Diagnostic est réalisé et travaux d’entretien réalisés

- Rapport du diagnostique, de S/E, de METP