

IOE



Investing in rural people

Independent Office of Evaluation



129th
Evaluation
Committee

10 June 2025

Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation (CSPE) in the Lao People's Democratic Republic

Presentation of the evaluation report

➤ Objectives

- assess the performance and results of the IFAD strategy and operations in Lao PDR
- generate findings and recommendations for IFAD's upcoming country strategy and its partnership with the Government of Lao PDR
- identify lessons that could be shared on IFAD's presence and interventions in other countries with a smaller IFAD portfolio and a large development aid landscape

➤ Scope

- IFAD-supported projects and activities in Lao PDR for the period 2011-2023
- Focus on the current and previous Country Strategic Opportunities Programmes (COSOPs) – the 2011 and 2018 COSOPs

➤ Portfolio

- First country-level evaluation in Lao PDR
- Portfolio under evaluation (up to end of 2023) consists of 9 projects: 7 completed, 2 ongoing
- Evaluated portfolio of US\$ 341.8 million, of which IFAD financing is US\$ 118.1 million
- Multiple co-financiers – ADB, BMZ/GIZ, WFP, SDC, LuxDev, GAFSP

➤ Methods

- Theory-based; mixed methods, desk reviews, e-surveys and scoring cards; GIS mapping and asset verification
- Field visits in 15 project villagers, 6 districts, 4 northern provinces; 54 online interviews, 94 survey and score-card respondents

Strengths:

- Adequate alignment with key national priorities (NSEDG; NGPES) and sector plans, bolstered through IFAD strategies and mainstreaming themes (especially nutrition)
- Continuous engagement with national partners (MAF) reflected changing priorities in government
- Project designs reduced menu of options, improving coverage and focus
- Partnership streamlining with ADB and WFP synergized different partner strengths in projects
- Knowledge exchange between projects across sub-region through IFAD's Multi-Country Office in Hanoi
- Early engagement in Sector Working Group on Agriculture and Rural Development (SWG-ARD) allowed knowledge sharing with partners and GoL
- Various policy processes improved through grants, projects supported policy processes on nutrition



Areas of improvement:

- Aspects of country programme did not adjust to evolving country context (e.g. support for extension or grant provision to groups)
- IFAD leadership in country-level processes limited by absence of stable country representation
- Developing two programmatic approaches (PICSA / AFN I and II) reduced potential for policy engagement
- Little integration of knowledge from grant-financed projects into loan portfolio
- Reduced IFAD presence also reduced its visibility and effectiveness in SWG-ARD
- Despite prior experience, no action on policies regarding land or rural finance



Strengths

- Effective outreach: 90 districts in 14 provinces, and nearly 160,000 households
- Positive contributions to strategic objectives on a) smallholder resilience to natural shocks, and b) food security and nutrition security
- Positive synergies between development pathways attributable to village development plans
- Community-driven nutrition activities increased production and beneficiary knowledge
- Within a context of overall poverty decline
 - Impact attributable to IFAD seen in improved household assets and food
 - Improved incomes attributed to increased animal asset ownership



Areas of improvement:

- Climate resilience of infrastructure suffers from lack of effective O&M
- Lack of evidence across the pathways limits assessment of IFAD's contribution to outcomes
- Implementation delays increased operational expenses and rushed implementation
- Project management costs high, due to operational structures and delivery through local government
- Minimizing unit costs for infrastructure jeopardized quality and sustainability in geographically challenging areas
- Challenging to ascertain impact because of crowded development field, overall economic growth, and limited impact assessments



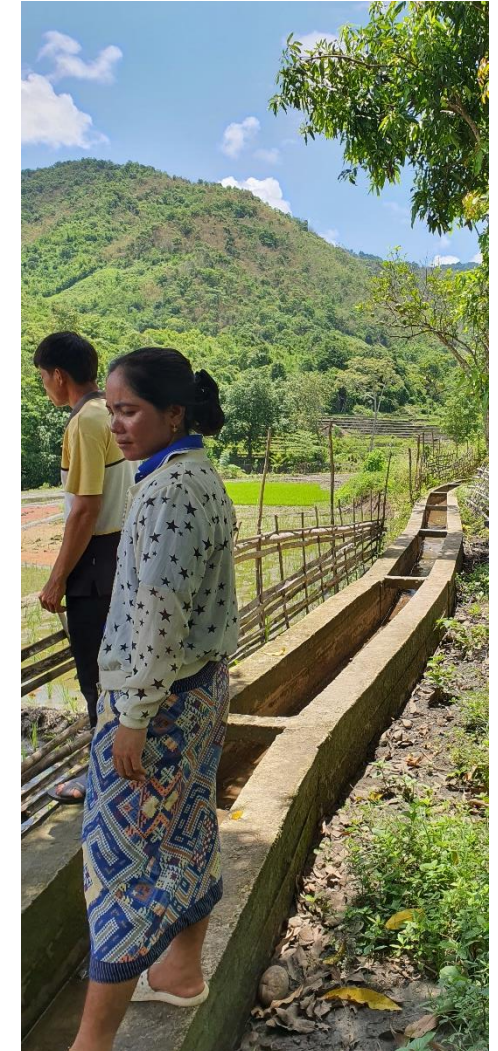
Strengths:

- Strong attention for GEWE at COSOP level, and synergized with improved nutrition at strategic level
- Gender transformative approaches emerging through gender-nutrition nexus
- Labor-saving interventions for women came with water infrastructure development
- Rural finance to women was a successful intervention alongside the Laos Women's Union
- Other donors replicate community-based nutrition actions targeting women and children
- IFAD-funded village banks scaled up in northern provinces
- Farmer-to-farmer services improved sustainability of animal assets



Areas of improvement:

- Though Environment, NRM and climate change a strategic focus in both COSOPs, COSOP results framework shifted, making it difficult to measure
- Loss of previous expertise on land planning management
- While country programmes aimed to reduce pressure on surrounding land through intensification of existing land and water resources, pressure continues (food price increases)
- SECAP seen as disconnected from recent projects, requiring more expertise
- Unsustainability of infrastructure constantly flagged
- Producer group sustainability could improve if linked to financial services



- IFAD contributed to rural poverty reduction, focusing on proven interventions in remote upland areas
- IFAD followed partner approaches, adding its own value in smallholder agriculture development
- Comprehensive, sustainable approaches to small-scale infrastructure and climate resilience still to improve
- Limited country presence curtailed IFAD's earlier partnerships and policy engagement
- New approaches must also consider IFAD's role in the ODA landscape and in supporting government capacity



Recommendation 1

IFAD should adopt a sustainable approach to ensure continued in-country presence and engagement

Recommendation 2

IFAD should take a strategic decision regarding co-financing partnership considering both coherence and potential trade-offs

Recommendation 3

IFAD should redefine its approach to enhance the sustainability of farmer groups and make them more inclusive

Recommendation 4

The upcoming COSOP should specify the approach to climate resilience, natural resource management and the needs of those with limited land access

Recommendation 5

IFAD should set up a transparent system for reporting operational costs with clear financial ceilings

- **National Round-Table Workshop**

- hybrid event held both in Vientiane and on-line on 6 May 2025. Over 75 participants including high-ranking Government officials (MoF, MAF), project directors, technical members of PMUs, APR and IOE staff.

- **Agreement-at-Completion-Point (ACP)** signed by Lao PRD government and IFAD on 26 and 28 May 2025 respectively
- Report to be **published** in 2025 (second semester)

Thank you for your attention!



Laos CSPE National Roundtable Workshop – 6th May 2025