



The West and Central Africa Advantage

Fighting fragility for smallholder resilience

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Abbreviations

ANR	assisted natural regeneration
ASAP	Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme
GALS	Gender Action Learning System
SIDs	small island developing states
WCA	West and Central Africa

Foreword

The West and Central Africa (WCA) region, for many, conjures up images of extremely fragile environments and societies, yet this image needs to be enriched by the enormous potential of this region with the right support. This report presents challenges and achievements of projects in WCA that are supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The second regional report in the “Advantage” series, it reflects IFAD’s commitment to bringing investments closer to countries and reaching the most vulnerable, with a focus on women, youth and indigenous people. The challenges faced by the region suggest that achieving Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals is a massive but critical undertaking. IFAD believes that inclusive and sustainable rural transformation cannot happen without women, men, young people and indigenous peoples being involved as change agents as well as beneficiaries. Indeed, IFAD is going further than mainstreaming individual issues and aiming for much greater “transformative” synergy. The integration of initiatives that fight climate change, improve nutrition, and foster women’s and youth empowerment for holistic programming will leverage their synergies and minimize trade-offs and risks. One without the other is a recipe for short-term benefits only, but by investing across all mainstreaming areas we are truly laying the groundwork for long-term sustainable returns.

In this report, the introduction summarizes key issues faced by smallholders in WCA, with a focus on the mainstreaming themes, and gives an overview of IFAD-supported actions and achievements in the region. Five case studies from the ongoing portfolio (Cabo Verde, Chad, The Gambia, Mauritania and Niger) give concrete examples of how IFAD is adopting an increasingly integrated approach to support smallholders, and the final section looks ahead towards achieving targets in IFAD’s eleventh replenishment period and beyond.

IFAD has been investing in this region over the past three decades and is running more than 40 programmes here, with investments totalling US\$2.88 billion, of which US\$1.51 billion is provided by IFAD. IFAD has stepped up financial commitments in the region in response to the challenges it faces, including through grant-funded innovations supported by climate and environmental finance. IFAD is revitalizing existing partnerships and seeking new ones. The introduction of new products like Results-based Lending and Regional Operations will help the institution become a more trusted development partner in the region, with positive spillovers in terms of cofinancing.

By 2021, the WCA region is aiming at 100 per cent of projects mainstreaming climate and environment, 50 per cent mainstreaming youth and youth employment, and at least 25 per cent being climate-focused, 25 per cent gender-transformative and 50 per cent nutrition-sensitive. These ambitious targets are framed by Agenda 2030, and IFAD is reaching out to partners – including smallholders themselves, who have phenomenal potential – in an urgent bid to break silos and entrenched fragilities so as to achieve the full potential of this region.



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Introduction

A wealth of potential alongside critical challenges

The West and Central Africa (WCA) region covers a vast area of more than 11.5 million square kilometres (WECARD, 2011) and has a population of around 500 million people (UNDESA, 2017), of whom some 478 million live in rural areas (UNDESA, 2014) and an estimated 70 per cent depend on agriculture, primarily smallholder agriculture, for their livelihoods. The population is predominantly young, with more than 64 per cent under the age of 24 and representing a potentially tremendous resource for the region if supported by the right investments (UNFPA, 2018).

WCA has a range of ecosystems and agricultural zones, such as the savannah, the semi-arid Sahel regions, sub-humid Guinea, the Congo basin and extensive coastal zones. Various tradable commodities are grown in the region, such as maize, soybean, dairy and livestock across the Guinea Savannah, rice in West Africa, cassava in humid and sub-humid zones, tree crops, horticulture and fish farming in other regions, including in the Congo basin. The region is also the main centre of origin for several food crops including millet, cowpea, yam, African rice, bambara groundnut and oil palm and a centre of diversity for sorghum and robusta coffee. In addition, several cultivated crops, such as pineapple, groundnut, cotton, cocoa, maize and banana, have developed genetic traits that are well adapted to environmental conditions in the region. This means that there is a wealth of opportunities for smallholders to diversify production. The humid forest zone hosts the second largest forest area in the world and is a reservoir for biodiverse animal and plant species, including highly

valuable timber trees.¹ The forests of the Congo basin represent the world's second largest contiguous area of rainforest, after the Amazon, and store approximately 25-30 million tons of carbon stock. Their preservation is fundamental in the fight against climate change and the environmental services that they provide are estimated to be in the billions.

The region is also endowed with great potential for renewable energy sources, which can be used to power the agricultural sector and accelerate its transformation. The 365 days a year of sunshine in many parts of the region can generate significant amounts of solar power. This, together with the region's potential in wind power, can help to close the energy gap in smallholder farming. Investments in providing smallholder households and small businesses and microenterprises in the food chain with access to renewable energy technologies will enable them to engage in value-added activities, increase productivity and improve food security.

The WCA region has been making important gains, for example, in reducing extreme poverty. Between 2000 and 2017, a number of the region's countries made impressive strides in their Human Development Index (HDI): in Mali, the index improved from 0.308 in 2000 to 0.427 in 2017; in Niger from 0.252 to 0.354 and in Sierra Leone from 0.284 to 0.419 (Human Development Indices and Indicators, 2018).

However, the region also faces significant challenges. Climate change is a major threat, disrupting farming and weather patterns. The economies of WCA countries are largely dependent on agriculture, which in turn is heavily dependent on rainfall and therefore highly vulnerable to its increasing variability. Scenarios of climate change for West Africa indicate that the current climate variability faced by the region is likely to heighten and intensify. Climate variability impacts vegetation and water resources in the region, and therefore their potential as productive agricultural domains. Drought and floods, especially in the Sahel, are also contributing significantly to famine, malnutrition, disease and loss of life. Millions of people spread across the Sahel in nine countries (Burkina, Cameroon, Chad, The Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal) live mainly in dryland areas and are extremely vulnerable to recurrent droughts and other shocks. Compounded by rapid degradation of the natural resource base, life is increasingly challenging for farmers, pastoralists and fishers, which is driving outmigration as people search for a better life (WECARD, 2011).

The human story reflects these challenges. Nearly 40 per cent of children under age 5 are affected by stunting in WCA, 12 per cent suffer from acute malnutrition and 75 per cent are affected by anaemia. The situation is even worse in the Sahelian area – for example, 19 million children under 5 are stunted in the Sahel compared with 9.9 million in the other countries of the region (UNICEF, WHO and World Bank, 2018; UNICEF, 2017). As the population of the region is expected to double by 2045 (UNDESA, 2017), the demand for more food and more nutritious food will continue to rise. Aggregate annual food import to Africa is estimated at US\$35 billion, projected to rise to US\$110 billion by 2025 – this makes agriculture's role in achieving food security more urgent than ever.

1 Source: www.biodiversityinternational.org/about-us/where-we-work/west-and-central-africa/

Women constitute over 60 per cent of the farm workforce in WCA but have limited access to land, financial resources, technology and innovation and are extremely vulnerable to climate change. Closing the gender gap can significantly boost agricultural productivity and ensure food security and better nutrition in the region. When it comes to young people, much needs to be done to unlock their potential – today, high youth unemployment is at an average of 11.79 per cent and rising,² and increasingly challenging agriculture is driving young people’s migration in search of better opportunities.³ In the Sahel region, for example, few young people currently see a future for themselves in agriculture or rural areas. Attracted by modernity and opportunities elsewhere, young people are migrating from rural areas to cities and abroad. IFAD must help to change their perception of farming so that they see it as an attractive option for a modern career. This calls for innovation and more investments in youth and modern, sustainable and profitable agriculture.

According to the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development, further challenges include lack of competitiveness in the agriculture and livestock sectors, weak agricultural policies, a poorly developed private sector and inadequate mechanization. Weak governance, lack of institutional capacity, the aftermath of the Ebola epidemic and conflict are ongoing challenges (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2019). To summarize, key drivers of fragility include:

- unsustainable fiscal deficits for most countries
- limited capacity of the public administration and extension services to transform the agricultural sector
- high rates of population growth
- outmigration because of the lack of opportunities for young people and regional instability, with terrorist groups that capture many young people who have no opportunities
- a gender gap in agriculture, where women have limited access to resources despite their key role
- climate change and environmental degradation: the decline of rainfall, changes in seasonal production, and recurrent pest and diseases are increasingly hampering productivity.

Together, these mutually reinforcing drivers of fragility negatively affect food security and nutrition, job creation for youth, and gender equality and undermine the resilience of rural farmers to shocks. Building the resilience of smallholder farmers is key to rural transformation, and IFAD does this by addressing the key drivers of fragility throughout its portfolio.

² This average masks regional variations, with three countries having rates of over 20 per cent. Rates are also generally higher for female youth unemployment. Source: ILO Modelled Estimates July, 2017; Accessed 17 May 2018 from ILOSTAT in UNFPA (2018), Adolescents and Youth Report: West and Central Africa.

³ Source: www.coraf.org/why-we-do-it/

IFAD in WCA

IFAD has been working for almost four decades to empower poor rural people and increase agricultural production in the region. The current portfolio responds to the key drivers of fragility highlighted above and includes a focus on boosting resilience to climate change in the most vulnerable countries (e.g. the small island developing state (SID) of Cabo Verde), supporting countries after crises (e.g. The Gambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo), and empowering young people and women (e.g. Niger). The 2019 regional stocktake identified that IFAD was running 44 investment programmes and 7 grants in partnership with 23 governments in the region, with investments totalling US\$2.97 billion.

In line with IFAD's overarching development goal to invest in rural people, enabling them to overcome poverty and achieve food security through remunerative, sustainable and resilient livelihoods (IFAD, 2015), key priorities in the region are to strengthen the value chains that link producers and their organizations to markets and consumers, and to create a virtuous upward spiral by helping farmers to sell more and earn more. In response to the enormous challenges facing young women and men living in rural areas in the region, IFAD is supporting numerous initiatives to provide training, encourage entrepreneurship and boost the creation of decent jobs both on and off the farm. IFAD also supports efforts towards greater financial inclusion and making cashless credit more readily available to smallholders. In addition, IFAD invests in projects that enable smallholder farmers to adapt to climate change, including through its Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP).

In this report, the introduction summarizes key issues faced by family farmers in WCA, with a focus on the mainstreaming themes. It gives an overview of IFAD-supported actions in the region, touching on the mainstreaming themes of climate change and environment, nutrition, gender, youth, and indigenous peoples. In addition, this section presents selected impacts of IFAD-supported investments, including through some "witness statements". Next, five case studies give concrete examples of how IFAD is adopting an increasingly integrated approach to support smallholders in Cabo Verde, Chad, The Gambia, Mauritania and Niger, and the final section looks ahead towards achieving targets in IFAD's eleventh replenishment period (IFAD11) and beyond.

Innovating climate action

In 2018, 16 active projects included environment and climate financing. These issues are also integrated into many projects in the portfolio and contribute to IFAD's commitment of 100 per cent climate-sensitive projects by 2021. For example, a project in Benin will help 17,000 smallholder rice and maize producers handle climate-related risks through agricultural insurance.⁴ In Senegal, supported by the Green Climate Fund, IFAD will promote climate-resilient agriculture and rural entrepreneurship through a new phase of the Agricultural Development and Rural Entrepreneurship Programme. This programme aims to reduce poverty among households in Kédougou, Kolda, Matam and Tambacounda regions that are particularly vulnerable to climate change by integrating them into profitable and diversified value chains. The project aims for at least 50 per cent of participants to be women and 50 per cent young people. Among a comprehensive range of interventions, it will improve hydro-agricultural systems and develop innovative agricultural risk insurance products to help smallholders better manage the risks of unpredictable weather. In Mali, the Multiple Energies for Resilience and Integrated Land Management (MERIT) project under design is an example of a climate-focused project;⁵ an IFAD loan is helping to scale up renewable energy solutions that worked well in a previous project that drew on climate financing through ASAP.

WCA's portfolio, with its emphasis on soil and water management and renewable energies, is also expected to make important contributions to climate change mitigation. For example, in Niger, a preliminary assessment indicates that the Programme to Strengthen Resilience of Rural Communities to Food and Nutrition Insecurity (currently being designed) could avoid or sequester 28 tons of carbon dioxide equivalents per hectare.⁶

The second phase of IFAD's ASAP (ASAP2) is also supporting innovative approaches to help smallholders boost resilience to climate change (see Box 1).

4 Agricultural Development and Market Access Support Project (PADAAM).

5 IFAD defines "climate-focused" projects as those in which climate finance predominates, as identified using the Multilateral Development Bank methodology.

6 Using the FAO Ex-Ante Carbon-balance Tool (EX-ACT).

Box 1: ASAP-supported climate innovation in West and Central Africa

CACHET – Climate and Commodity Hedging to Enable Transformation.

This initiative helps smallholder farmers to deal with price and climate volatility, which negatively affects their revenues, by giving them access to the protection benefits of risk management products available on financial markets. To provide cost-efficient climate and price protection, CACHET gives them access to financial derivatives traded on international markets and minimizes the costs of implementing hedging operations on behalf of smallholder farmers by working with existing value-chain intermediaries: traders, exporters, cooperatives or rural finance institutions. Building on the relationship of trust established between intermediaries and smallholders facilitates the extension of price and climate protection down to small-scale farmers.*

The Lab. The Global Innovation Lab for Climate Finance (the Lab) and IFAD have developed a new partnership to help increase the resilience of smallholders in WCA by developing and scaling up innovative financial instruments. IFAD's ASAP2 has sponsored the development of two instruments within a new thematic stream for smallholder agriculture financing in the Lab's 2018-2019 cycle, starting in October 2018. Following an international call for proposals, Lab members selected the top two ideas, which now go on to receive rigorous analytical support. The first idea comes from a Germany-based start-up and the proposal – “Blockchain Climate Risk Crop Insurance”*** – is an automated weather-indexed crop insurance infrastructure that guarantees automatic payouts whenever an extreme weather event occurs through the use of smart contracts implemented on a blockchain. The platform gives farmers, cooperatives, donors, buyers or even end-consumers the tools to create, at a far lower cost, their own customized insurance product – far easier than dealing with a remote, traditional insurance company. The second winning idea, the “West African Initiative for Climate-Smart Agriculture”,*** focuses on climate-friendly food security in West Africa. Proposed by the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), it aims to promote climate-smart agriculture and resilient supply chains across 15 countries, through technical assistance grants and subsidized loans or guarantees for farmer organizations and the agricultural private sector.

Africa–Brazil technical training. In 2018, young beneficiaries of IFAD-supported projects in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria participated in a learning exchange programme in Brazil focused on climate-resilient post-harvest management of cassava. The exchange programme was held in partnership with the Brazil Africa Institute and the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation. The participants came from countries where climate change has significantly impacted agricultural production and the livelihoods of rural families, prompting many young people to leave the countryside in search of a better life in urban areas. IFAD's approach to empower young people from rural areas with knowledge and skills to make agriculture more sustainable and a more attractive market for new generations aims at reversing this trend.

* For more information, see: www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/publication/asset/40861509

** For more information, see: www.climatefinancelab.org/project/climate-risk-crop-insurance/

*** Proposal details available at: www.climatefinancelab.org/project/africa-climate-smart-agriculture/

Nutrition

With support from the Government of Canada, IFAD renewed its commitment to nutrition, as distinct from food security, through its first dedicated action plan 2016-2018, and WCA has been at the forefront of mainstreaming this urgent issue. Since 2011, WCA has been one of the regions with a relatively higher proportion of nutrition-sensitive projects compared to the corporate average. In 2018, 60 per cent of approved WCA projects and 100 per cent of country strategies were nutrition-sensitive at design. A total of 18 projects approved between 2010 and 2018⁷ integrated nutrition into their design or retrofitted it after design.⁸ An analysis of IFAD's tenth replenishment cycle (IFAD10) revealed that nutrition-sensitive aspects were found in projects related to agricultural and rural development, marketing/storage/processing, credit and financial services, and irrigation, and that various strategies were adopted (see Figure 1).

By far the greatest emphasis is on behavioural change communication and nutrition education, which are often critical ingredients in translating livelihoods and crop/livestock diversification into more diversified and better quality diets for the whole family. Interestingly, only 50 per cent of nutrition-sensitive investments focus on gender equality and women's empowerment for nutrition, and the region is taking action to strengthen this key area. An example of a nutrition-sensitive project design is Mauritania's Inclusive Value Chain Development Project (PRODEFI),⁹ in which nutrition is comprehensively reflected across project activities such as policy dialogue and coordination, production of nutrient-rich varieties, post-harvest initiatives to preserve nutritional value, nutritional education, diversification of food consumption, and capacity-building of nutrition community facilitators.

A comprehensive situation analysis is important in integrating nutrition into projects and, with this in mind, IFAD provided a grant to the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)¹⁰ to support mainstreaming nutrition in IFAD's investments and increase the impact on nutrition, primarily through agriculture and food-based approaches that improve the quality and quantity of diets of rural families. The analysis supported by the grant in Burkina Faso, Niger and Nigeria will help to improve nutrition outcomes in these countries, including through technical support from CIAT in the implementation of nutrition-sensitive value chains especially in Nigeria and the documentation of case studies in Niger.

With regard to the Sahel as a whole, a forthcoming report commissioned by IFAD will identify opportunities for investing in nutrition in the Sahel region in IFAD's new financing cycle up to 2021. The study will carry out a nutrition situation analysis for the Sahel and examine the causes of malnutrition, as well as assess opportunities for IFAD to invest, engage and partner with other actors. Looking ahead, the WCA region is well placed to deliver on the new IFAD Nutrition Action Plan (2019-2025) and diverse, safe and nutritious diets.

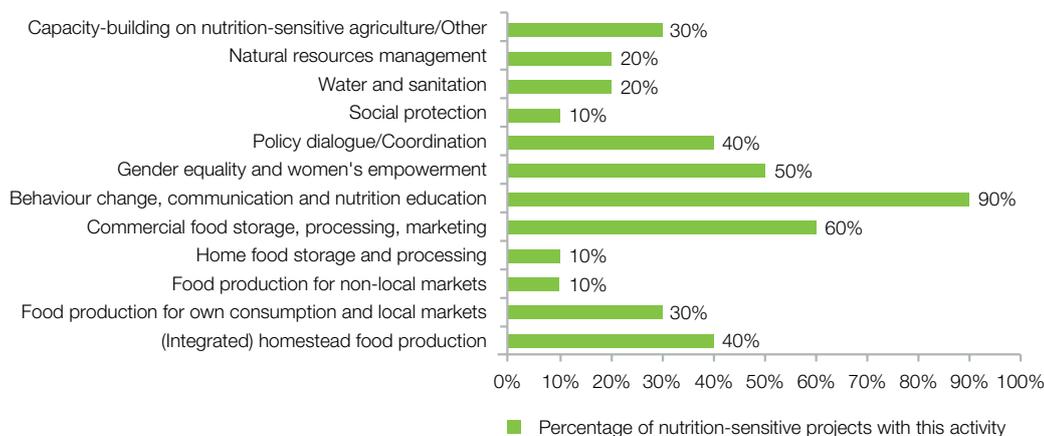
7 The categorization of IFAD-supported projects was applied to projects approved from 2010 to date.

8 The projects are in Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

9 PRODEFI: *Projet de Développement de Filières Inclusives*.

10 Strategic support on mainstreaming nutrition in IFAD's investments.

Figure 1: Nutrition actions in IFAD10 projects in West and Central Africa



Gender equality and women's empowerment

IFAD has appointed a dedicated gender focal point and developed gender strategy to support investments in the region. The strategy is based on the three strategic objectives of IFAD's Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: economic empowerment, equal voice in decision-making and equitable workloads.

There are many examples of how IFAD is working to mainstream gender and empower women in WCA. The region's efforts in "gender-transformative" investments are noteworthy. IFAD sees gender-transformative projects as those that create opportunities for individuals to actively challenge structural and social norms that perpetuate inequalities between women and men, promote positions of social and political influence for women in communities and address power inequities between women and men. One innovative approach is to go beyond community levels and to address gender norms within the "black box" of the household. IFAD is a pioneer of "household methodologies" because it believes they are effective in tackling gender norms in a way that works for all members of the household. IFAD believes that women's empowerment cannot be achieved without a change at the household level, involving all members whether old or young, male or female. These approaches can help to ensure that economic empowerment for women also translates into more voice in key household and even community investments. The second phase of the Rural Finance and Community Improvement Project in Sierra Leone, for example, adopted the Gender Action Learning System (GALS), a specific household methodology, in order to address gender-based power inequities in decision-making. GALS has empowered 3,500 mainly young men and women to improve their lives. Men and women started sharing household resources and more fairly redistributing domestic and productive workloads. And with better and more diversified incomes, women and young people had more say in decision-making and household investments. Nigeria's Rural Finance Institution-Building Programme (RUFIN) also applied the GALS approach, which led to significant changes in men's behaviour, for example by sharing in household chores and making decisions with other household members. On a practical level, the approach also facilitated joint financial planning and increased household savings.

Doris Kallon benefited from the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) in Sierra Leone, and is now realizing her dream of going to college.

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Youth

As may be expected given the high policy priority of many countries, most projects in the WCA region integrate youth dimensions and there are also projects specifically focused on youth. A stocktaking exercise covering more than 80 projects approved by IFAD during 2013-2015 revealed that WCA was by far the division with the highest proportion of its funding supporting rural youth (approximately 16.5 per cent). Some examples of IFAD-supported projects that actively foster youth inclusion are in Ghana,¹¹ where youth are being supported to set up and develop their own business, in The Gambia, Senegal and Sierra Leone¹² (support for access to land), Sierra Leone and Nigeria (financial inclusion), and Guinea, where youth receive preferential access to agricultural technology to modernize agriculture and make it more attractive. Projects that target exclusively youth include skills training and financing entrepreneurship to halt the exodus of youth from rural areas (Mali)¹³ and support for youth agripreneurs in profitable and sustainable business along value chains (Cameroon).¹⁴ Many projects focus on supporting job creation and entrepreneurship in some form, including through financial inclusion and access to other productive assets backed up by capacity development, as well as increasingly integrating youth with other relevant issues, such as climate change,¹⁵ gender¹⁶ and nutrition.¹⁷

IFAD is also investing in grants to identify what innovative actions support young people (see Box 2).

11 Rural Enterprises Programme.

12 Agricultural Value Chains Support Project and Extension phase, Rural Finance and Community Improvement Programme Phase II and National Agricultural Land and Water Management Development Project, respectively.

13 Rural Youth Vocational Training, Employment and Entrepreneurship Support Project.

14 Programme for the Promotion of Youth Agro-Pastoral Entrepreneurship.

15 For example, the Climate Change Adaptation and Agribusiness Support Programme in the Savannah Belt (CASP).

16 Including the Integrated Agricultural Rehabilitation Programme in Maniema Province, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

17 Such as the Agricultural Value Chain Development Programme in Côte d'Ivoire.

Box 2: Babyloan: mobilizing remittances to generate youth jobs and innovation

This small grant links Malian migrants in France, from whom 50 per cent of Mali's remittances originate, with youth supported by the IFAD-supported Rural Youth Vocational Training, Employment and Entrepreneurship Support Project (FIER). Youth projects are presented to Malian migrants and other interested parties on a web-based crowdfunding platform, and given the opportunity to fund the project.

Indigenous peoples

IFAD is supporting indigenous peoples in several countries, although engagement is limited in WCA. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, an IFAD grant to the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs supported policy dialogues for the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2016. IFAD also finances projects in support of indigenous peoples' rights. For example, a project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo contributed to the improvement of socio-economic standards of Batwa households in the territory of Kalehe (South Kivu), specifically targeting those who had been displaced from their ancestral lands.¹⁸ Traditional beehives were installed, allowing families to produce approximately 2 litres of honey per month. Part of the product was sold at the local market and part was shared among beneficiaries, resulting in an increase in their income from US\$0.50 a day to US\$1.33.¹⁹ In Cameroon, Bedzang women were supported during the 2016 crop year. The Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF) supported activities such as soil preparation, training in agricultural techniques and the distribution of maize seeds. Activities resulted in the production of 36,325 tons of maize, compared with 12,500 tons in 2014. The resulting increase in incomes generated helped people to pay for healthcare and schooling for children, and to improve their food security (IFAD, 2019a). More than US\$500,000 has been made available to indigenous peoples under the recent youth-focused IPAF, in Cameroon, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ghana.

Fighting fragility

Because of the enormity of the challenges faced, 10 countries in the WCA region have been identified as fragile, where fragility is defined as "...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" (IFAD,

18 For an overview of the situation of the Batwa people, see IFAD's Country Technical Notes for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

19 Empowerment of Kalonge and Bunyakiri indigenous households with bee-keeping in South Kivu province. Grant approved in 2015.

2016). IFAD recognizes that special efforts are needed for such countries, and has recently updated its approach through a specific programme (IFAD, 2019b), which makes specific suggestions on how IFAD will identify, monitor and respond to situations of fragility. The Special Programme identifies four main entry points to maximize impact in addressing fragility and building resilience: (i) gender equality; (ii) institution-building; (iii) food security; and (iv) natural resources management.

One partnership-based innovation in the region to highlight is the Rome-based Agencies Resilience Initiative (see Box 3).

Box 3: Rome-based Agencies Resilience Initiative (2017-2021)

The Government of Canada is contributing US\$38 million (CAD\$50 million) to the United Nations Rome-based agencies (RBAs) to implement an innovative, five-year programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Niger and Somalia (in IFAD's Near East and North Africa region). This joint programme aims to meet immediate food needs while sustainably increasing food security and strengthening the resilience of food-insecure households in regions affected by protracted and recurrent crises, with a specific focus on vulnerable women and children. The programme represents an unprecedented effort to support and invest in the same vulnerable communities over a five-year period through integrated, context-specific, gender- and nutrition-sensitive assistance packages. These are identified by communities through participatory planning and aligned with national priorities. They aim at protecting and promoting people's food and livelihood sources by restoring, rehabilitating and supporting their productive assets (such as land, natural resources, inputs, tools, access to water and livestock), improving market linkages, and strengthening technical and marketing capacities. This contributes to addressing the root causes of food insecurity and vulnerability, and ultimately reduces dependency on humanitarian assistance. While these agencies collaborate closely in many countries, this is the first time that they have received joint multi-year funding for resilience work.*

Niger. Niger is affected by recurrent food and nutritional crises, triggered by widespread vulnerabilities and increased frequency of climate shocks. In the two "*communes de convergence*" of the Maradi and Zinder regions where the project is implemented, gender-sensitive participatory community planning exercises are being organized to identify specific community needs, discuss assets and land tenure issues and to increase community awareness of the project. This aligns closely with the national Nigeriens Nourish Nigeriens (3N) initiative and with the ongoing IFAD-supported Family Farming Development Programme (ProDAF).

Targeted households are supported with cash or in-kind transfers through food assistance for assets programmes. Technical assistance is provided through farmer and agropastoralist field schools, promoting water management and climate-smart practices, provision of inputs, access to markets and provision of diverse, quality inputs for both crop and animal production, in order to

further strengthen and diversify the economic potential of smallholder farmers. In addition, support is provided to improve farmers' access to markets through local purchases, alongside training in water management, land-use planning, climate-resilient and nutrition-sensitive production, post-harvest management and marketing. A financial component contributes to sustaining the impact of the project by providing beneficiaries with the means to continue implementing innovative production techniques over time. Dimitra "listening clubs" are being set up to mobilize the community, improve social cohesion and gender equality, and increase women's leadership in the selected villages. Nutritional supplements are provided to children aged 6-23 months in targeted households in the lean season, and to malnourished children throughout the year. Capacity-building on community management, and screening of moderately acute malnutrition in children and malnourished pregnant women, will be undertaken. School meals are also provided and school gardens are being created.

Democratic Republic of the Congo. The territory of Rutshuru, where the project is being implemented, has been heavily affected by recurrent violent conflicts in the last few years. A deadly Ebola-virus outbreak has further undermined livelihoods in North Kivu province. The communities benefit from an innovative combination of food assistance for assets, smallholder value-chain development and financial inclusion. Since the beginning of the Rome-based agencies' intervention, crops produced by beneficiary farmers are being used to prepare daily school meals provided to children, which has the twofold effect of encouraging children's school attendance and increasing their health and food and nutrition security. The project also provides technical assistance and quality inputs, and implements the Purchase for Progress (P4P) approach. It strengthens the capacities of smallholder farmers (with a focus on those with less than one hectare of land) and their organizations in sustainable and nutrition-sensitive agriculture production; quality and post-harvest management; and storage and marketing.

The project is also improving their access to markets with a focus on the key value chains identified by the design of the IFAD-financed North Kivu Agriculture Sector Support Project (PASA-NK): maize, Arabica coffee, potato and rice. Market infrastructure is being constructed and rehabilitated and the project also supports the financial inclusion of smallholder farmers, both women and men, by setting up savings and loan groups and connecting them gradually with formal financial institutions. This facilitates farmers' access to credit and financial assets. Finally, women's groups, including girls, pregnant women and breast-feeding mothers, benefit from nutrition education, training in nutritional good practices, functional literacy programmes and culinary demonstrations.

* Source: www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40813951/rba_resilience_e.pdf/3a1ec451-9eff-40bb-b115-b990e6d9357c

Results and impact in WCA

Ultimately, what matters most is the impact that IFAD-supported investments can achieve, and IFAD closely scrutinizes its performance in terms of impact. The divisional portfolio stocktake in 2019 highlighted that in 2018, 4 million farmers had been trained in crop production and 250,000 farmers had been trained in income-generating activities. Some 75,000 rural enterprises were accessing services and 6,000 jobs were created; 50,000 hectares of land had been brought under climate-resilient practices, and 40,000 hectares of farmland had been brought under water-related infrastructure constructed/rehabilitated; 140,000 households adopted new or improved inputs, technologies or practices; and 150,000 households adopted environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient technologies.²⁰

IFAD's Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) also plays a key role in evaluating performance and impact at the project, country and thematic levels and its insights are critical to further strengthening the performance of future investments. Recent examples of individual project evaluations by IOE include Ghana's Root and Tuber Improvement and Marketing Programme (IFAD [IOE], 2018a), and the Pastoral Water and Resource Management Project in Sahelian Areas in Chad (IFAD [IOE], 2018b). Burkina Faso is an example of a country strategy evaluation (IFAD, 2019c). Covering the period from January 2007 to mid-2018, in Burkina Faso, the evaluation shows that IFAD-supported projects enhanced agricultural productivity and food security by improving agricultural practices for food crops (maize, millet and sorghum) and for cash commodities (sesame, honey, dairy and shea). Soil conservation techniques promoted by a Community Investment Programme for Agricultural Fertility contributed to a 300 per cent increase in sorghum yields and a 200 per cent increase in rice and millet crops. IFAD interventions also helped to diversify and increase rural incomes by promoting microenterprises and income-generating activities.

WCA is also contributing to an innovative IFAD initiative to assess impact at the corporate level. IFAD's Impact Assessment Initiative uses a critical mass of project-level impact assessments that rigorously attribute results to actions in order to determine IFAD's impact at the corporate level. Impact assessment is an approach to evaluate whether observed changes in outcomes among project target groups can be attributed to development projects. It goes beyond simply comparing areas with and without projects or comparing indicators before and after projects, which often fails to account for factors that may contribute to observed changes such as economic factors, natural disasters or conflict. Impact assessments in WCA have so far been carried out for Chad, Sao Tome and Principe, and Senegal.

20 IFAD Portfolio Review of 2018.

The impact assessment of the cereal bank element of a project in **Chad** highlights that it “significantly reduced food insecurity, increased dietary diversity and increased the production and yields of major grains and oilseeds ... among project beneficiaries in Guéra. As a result of IFAD cereal banks, food insecurity decreased by at least 37 per cent while dietary diversity increased by 23 per cent among beneficiary households”. The project also helped households increase their asset holdings by about 14 per cent overall; productive assets and livestock assets increased by 17 per cent, while durable assets increased by about 9 per cent for those households that benefited from PADER-G cereal banks. Importantly, the project was found to have increased resilience, defined as the capacity to recover from civil unrest, by 33 per cent. The impact assessment also identified areas that did not work as planned, such as in women’s empowerment, along with other impacts (IFAD, 2018a).

The impact assessment of the Agricultural Value Chains Support Project in **Senegal** (PAFA²¹) focused on one component related to market access, although the project as a whole also included actions related to climate change, food security and nutrition, as well as women’s and youth empowerment. The project included access to innovative agricultural technologies, such as new crop varieties with shortened maturity cycles, to increase climate change resilience of the producers, new planting techniques and soil enrichment practices. The impact of PAFA was found to be more pronounced, including for producer organizations with a large youth membership. Women accounted for 62 per cent of beneficiaries and women’s producer organizations experienced greater gains in production quantities, value of crops sold, yields and income indicators, suggesting that PAFA’s targeting was successful. PAFA-supported producer organizations also enjoyed greater market access than control ones. Incomes increased by 11 per cent, income from crops by a significant 48 per cent and total assets by 9 per cent. The analysis reveals that the project increased beneficiaries’ food security, especially compared with their counterparts in the control regions. However, the dietary diversity score indicates that higher incomes and production diversity did not translate into a diverse diet – IFAD currently is working to step up this aspect in WCA through behavioural change communications (IFAD, 2018b).

In **Sao Tome and Principe**, the impact assessment included two complementary projects: the Participatory Smallholder Agriculture and Artisanal Fisheries Development Programme (PAPAFPA) and the Smallholder Commercial Agriculture Project (PAPAC). The study showed positive impacts on agricultural production and productivity, household income and assets, food security and commercialization. Results include a 45 per cent increase in incomes, 5 per cent improvement in dietary diversity and 13 per cent increase in resilience. Women accounted for 30 per cent of beneficiaries. An aggregated corporate analysis drawing on all the IFAD10 projects selected for assessment is also forthcoming.

21 PAFA: *Projet d'appui aux filière agricoles.*

Impact for individuals

IFAD is deeply aware that there are people behind the statistics. IFAD's systematic implementation support and emphasis on knowledge management is geared towards keeping a pulse on the impact that IFAD-supported projects and programmes are having on individual women and men. Below is a small selection of how IFAD is changing the lives of individuals in WCA.



National Agricultural Land and Water Management Development Project (NEMA), The Gambia.

©IFAD/Barbara Gravelli

Jalima Cham, 29 years old, is a young yet very experienced farmer involved in the production of vegetables in The Gambia. She has attended a series of trainings in smallholder agriculture and is now sharing her expertise with 252 women farmers in the community garden of Pakalinding. Jalima is a facilitator of the local farmer field school, which is supported by IFAD. She teaches techniques such as crop watering, organic compost preparation and solar-powered system management. "My role here is to help these women prepare to develop this garden and move things forward by themselves", says Jalima.



Support to Agricultural Development and Rural Entrepreneurship Programme (PADAER), Senegal.

©IFAD/Barbara Gravelli

Osman Baldé is 19 years old and has taken care of his eight younger siblings from a young age. His family has always been involved with small-scale crop production in the Saré Demba Sy, a rural community in Senegal's Kolda region. Limited access to land and water and insufficient cultivation and marketing skills are just some of the

challenges they face. Until a few years ago, production was so low that they barely had any surplus to sell. In 2015, an IFAD-supported initiative started to invest in a pre-existing community vegetable garden, enabling the construction of two wells and an electric generator, improving their access to water. Osman took part in training in farming techniques, water-related equipment, financial management and trading, and joined a group of 34 women farmers. Today, he grows his own crop of onions to contribute to his family's livelihood. "The project provided us with a foundation to work here", he says.



*National Programme to Support
Agricultural Value Chain Actors – Lower
Guinea and Faranah Expansion
(PNAFAA-LGF).*

©IFAD/Barbara Gravelli

Sayon Condé is a young female leader in her town. This 28-year-old has been instrumental in coordinating a rice processors' association composed of 67 members, of whom 62 are women, in Faranah in central Guinea. A post-graduate in agricultural studies, Sayon trains and manages the group with professorial confidence and an assertive voice, speaking proudly about their recent successes: "We have grown so much as our production has become much faster than a few years ago." Since 2017, her association has been supported by IFAD, which donated four industrial rice parboilers and funded the construction of a 125-square-metre storehouse. They also received training in rice processing and group organization, in addition to literacy courses – "the women are now literate and able to use cellphones, which helps communication", says Sayon. Before this intervention, the group used to take two weeks to steam 150 kg of rice, but now it takes only three days for the same amount thanks to the equipment and capacity received. Their revenues have increased thanks to the establishment of several contracts with new clients facilitated by the IFAD-supported programme. Sayon herself, who used to make around US\$5 a week, has more than tripled her earnings. This is a major improvement to the lives of Sayon, her husband and their four children, with all three school-age children attending school.



Aquaculture Entrepreneurship Promotion Project (PPEA), Cameroon.
©IFAD/David Paqui

Born into a poor family in Cameroon, **Michel Ntomo** abandoned his studies due to the lack of financial means. He began to provide services to fish farmers, in particular the development of ponds. In 2017, he was selected for support by an IFAD-supported project. He received a start-up kit, training and ongoing technical support, including weekly field visits to follow up on progress, after which he set up his own small farm with two ponds initially. With the income from his first harvests, he extended his farm to 10 ponds. After just two years, he became the owner of a small-scale aquaculture enterprise, which today employs two permanent staff and several temporary workers. The farm produces almost 300 kilograms of fish ready for sale per month. Michel also grows soya, corn and seeds as fish feed, as advised by the project, so that he can reduce costs. The project has helped to resolve conflicts over the use of precious water, as well as put in place a system to allow multiple uses and avoid waste. The income generated by his business, around 500,000 Cameroonian Francs a month, means that Michel is now independent. The women who buy his fish to sell in local markets also benefit from a steady supply and good prices. Now Michel can raise a family and send money home to his mother, who needs this for hospital fees when she is sick. He and his family can now eat fresh fish regularly instead of having to rely on frozen fish from time to time, and he can also afford to buy meat, eggs and other nutritious foods more often. But Michel does not want to stop there and plans to expand, offering more local employment to others.



Project to Improve the Resilience of Agricultural Systems (PARSAT), Chad.
©IFAD/Alice Brie

Agaba Zakaria has been a farmer as long as she can remember. She grows red and white sorghum on her 1.5 hectares of land. Aged around 35, she has a family of 10 and also manages to find time to act as treasurer of a rain-gauge management

committee in the Khalouf district of Chad. She is worried about how hard it is getting to be a farmer these days. “Before, there were three bad years and three good years – now it is more like four bad years and one good”. Soil degradation, deforestation and unpredictable rains add to her worries. When she could not produce enough, she would often go away to work for other families, causing great difficulties for those left behind. Today, Agaba and other women like her have received training in how to improve soil fertility and conserve water, based on traditional techniques tried and tested elsewhere in the Sahel. One of these techniques is building *zai*, a traditional African planting technique that involves digging shallow pits filled with a small amount of organic material such as dung. Termites are attracted to the organic material; they dig channels in the soil, which improves aeration, and digest the organic matter, making nutrients more easily available for crops. Sorghum seeds are planted in these pits when the rains start. Standing in her plot of *zai*, she is hopeful that the technique will mean that she can stay and work her family’s own land.

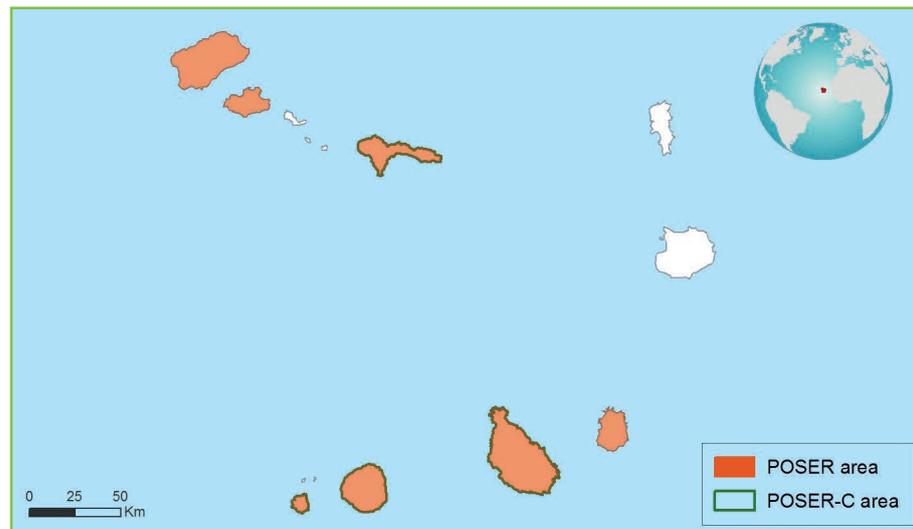
Case studies

The five case studies that follow briefly present examples of IFAD’s work from the current and recently completed portfolio. Each case study is about an IFAD-supported intervention that tackles all mainstreaming themes: women’s and youth empowerment, climate change/natural resources management and nutrition. The case studies are from Cabo Verde (a small island developing state), The Gambia, on the West African coast, and Chad, Mauritania and Niger, which are landlocked Sahelian countries. These countries are at various stages of development, specifically in terms of structural and rural transformation. For example, Cabo Verde is a country that has experienced both high structural and high rural transformation,²² whereas Mauritania has experienced both low structural and low rural transformation.²³ Each case study summarizes the development challenges addressed by IFAD interventions, then outlines the project response and presents key results and expected impacts. The case studies focus on one or more aspects, with an emphasis on mainstreaming themes, rather than attempting to portray the totality of actions or results.

As well as these case studies, the 2018 IFAD Annual Report released in 2019, the 2019 Rural Development Report, with its focus on youth, and other reports in the IFAD Advantage series also contain further experiences from the region.

22 Table 3.4. IFAD. 2016. Rural Development Report. Fostering inclusive rural transformation. The report defines rural transformation as “involv(ing) rising agricultural productivity, increasing commercialization and marketable surpluses, and diversification of production patterns and livelihoods. It also involves expanded decent off-farm employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, better rural coverage and access to services and infrastructure, and greater access to, and capacity to influence, relevant policy processes.” All of this leads to broad-based rural (and wider) growth, and to better managed, more sustainable rural landscapes. Structural transformation is defined as “both a cause and an effect of economic growth. It involves rising productivities in agriculture and the urban economy, a change in the composition of the economy from a preponderance of agriculture to industry and services, rising involvement in international trade, growing rural-urban migration and urbanization, and the realization of a demographic transition from high to low birth rates. It leads to profound political, cultural, social and environmental stresses, which must be managed for long-term sustainability”.

23 Figure M. IFAD. 2019. Rural Development Report. Creating Opportunities for Rural Youth. The report identifies Ghana as experiencing high structural/high rural transformation, and the following as experiencing high structural/low rural transformation: Cameroon, Congo and The Gambia. Low structural/high rural transformation are found in Chad and Côte d’Ivoire, low structural/low rural transformation is found in Burkina Faso, Benin, the Central African Republic, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Sierra Leone and Togo.



Cabo Verde: increasing resilience through access to water

Key facts

Project name	Rural Socio-economic Opportunities Programme (POSER) including climate component (POSER-C)
Dates	2013-2022
Financing	Total US\$36.9 million: US\$15.5 million IFAD loan, US\$4 million grant financing from IFAD's ASAP, US\$5 million from the Government of Cabo Verde, US\$9.5 million from the Spanish Food Security Cofinancing Facility Trust Fund (Spanish Trust Fund) and US\$1.1 million from beneficiaries
Target groups	Direct target groups are 10,957 smallholder family farming households on the islands of Brava, Fogo, Santiago and São Nicolau. Targeting focus is on the most vulnerable households, particularly those of young people and women

Development challenges

The small island developing state (SID) of Cabo Verde, covering an area of around 4,000 km², is an archipelago of 10 volcanic islands, nine of which are inhabited, situated along the western coast of Africa. In 2013, the resident population was estimated at 512,000 inhabitants²⁴ with around one third living in rural areas. In 2015, 35 per cent of the population lived in poverty (Government of Cabo Verde, 2018), which is especially acute in rural areas and among youth and women.

24 Source: <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/cape-verde-population/>

As a consequence of its volcanic formation, the topography of this Atlantic archipelago offers very scarce arable land, combined with high erosion due to steep slopes and low vegetation cover. Key challenges for smallholders include limited natural resources, arid climatic conditions with unreliable rainfall and lack of access to irrigation water. The government has invested in tapping groundwater and reservoirs to store surface water, and has promoted more efficient irrigation techniques, including micro-irrigation. Despite these initiatives, household access to water and water supply, particularly in rural areas, remains inadequate. Groundwater aquifers that can be tapped in a sustainable and economically efficient way have mostly reached their limits and do not allow for any significant expansion of cultivated areas. Most rainwater is not captured and drains directly into the ocean, carrying away soil and fertilizers.

Despite the country's small size, isolation, lack of natural resources and aridity, GDP per capita in 2014 stood at US\$3,533²⁵ thanks to a combination of good governance, impressive services-driven growth led by the tourism sector, and remittances from emigrants, which represented over 10 per cent of GDP.²⁶

IFAD-supported action

In 2013, the Rural Socio-economic Opportunities Programme (POSER) set out to raise incomes by creating sustainable and inclusive economic opportunities in rural areas in the context of climate change. It was to do this through support for individual micro-projects and ensuring that agricultural economic activities also contributed to food security, specifically by reducing dependence on imported food products and working with target communities to ensure that income is used to improve living conditions, including nutrition and access to essential goods and services. Beneficiaries were selected on the basis of poverty criteria identified by communities themselves, such as lack of access to land. In 2016, a US\$4 million grant from IFAD's ASAP was approved to further boost climate change resilience. Key actions included integrating climate change adaptation into regional poverty reduction programmes, investing in water infrastructure and associated capacity development, and protecting watersheds against erosion, together with improving water infiltration and improving forage productivity. To reduce water consumption, hydroponic agriculture was also promoted.

In 2018, additional financing of approximately US\$6.3 million was approved to consolidate and scale up results achieved so far and approaches that have been successfully tested both in the ASAP component of the programme and by the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment. These include mobilizing water through renewable energy, desalinating water, wastewater recovery and recycling, and more efficient irrigation. In the last three years, the programme has been fostering investments in promising inclusive and pro-poor agricultural value chains, and the availability of water for smallholder agricultural development all year round is expected to accelerate the transformation of Cabo Verdean agriculture and mitigate the extreme pressure climate change is placing on rural livelihoods. The additional financing, aligned with the government's Sustainable Development Strategic Plan 2017-2021, will also provide continuity until the next phase of POSER is ready to start.

25 Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=CV>

26 Source: www.theglobaleconomy.com/Cape-Verde/remittances_percent_GDP/

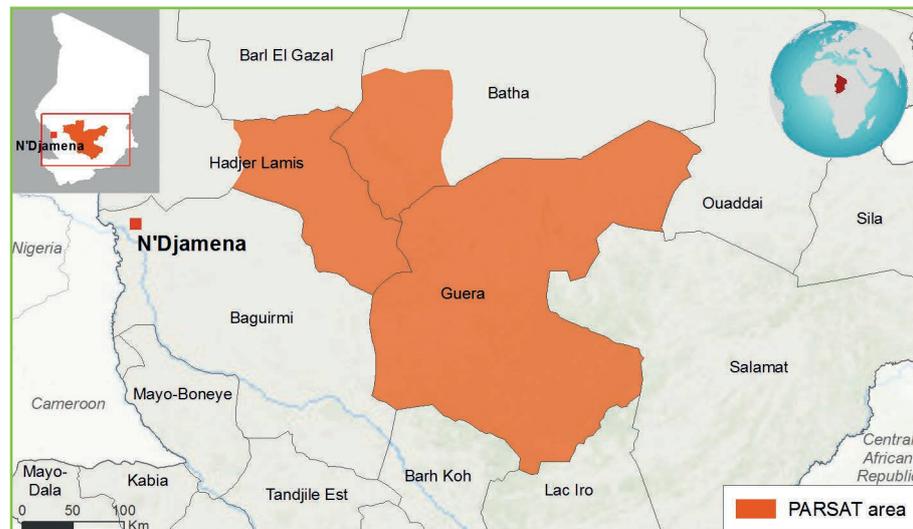
Project results

- As of September 2018, POSER had reached 9,908 direct beneficiaries, or 90.4 per cent of the target of 10,957 direct beneficiaries. Most of them are young people. Approximately 27,000 people have received services from POSER and just over 5,400 people in total have benefited from financing for micro-projects.
- In terms of capacity development, 3,400 farmers have been trained in improved agricultural practices and technologies, and 600 livestock farmers in good animal husbandry practices.
- There were 2,029 profitable employment opportunities generated, greatly benefiting 1,217 young women and men. Youth also constituted around 71 per cent of those receiving professional training so far and around 20 per cent of micro-entrepreneurs supported. This is encouraging as it is difficult to attract young people into farming because it is seen as hard work for relatively poor economic returns. Incomes can be as high as 230,000 Cabo Verde Escudos a year from 400 square metres, allowing families to meet their needs, including medical expenses, paying for school and university education for young people and even generating extra work.
- 45 per cent of young beneficiaries were women and women represented just over 40 per cent of micro-project beneficiaries, mainly in agro-food and bakeries followed by pig-rearing and bee-keeping. Women's relatively modest uptake of agricultural micro-projects can be attributed to their limited access to land. Despite women's central role in water management, it is challenging to ensure their participation in irrigation schemes. The project has tried to promote women's equal benefits from irrigation infrastructure, for example, by launching a scheme to bring drip irrigation to 27 women out of a total 30 beneficiaries, and thereby reduce their workload and boost productivity. Women's equal participation remains challenging, hovering at just under 30 per cent in community organizations – IFAD is aiming for more in the near future.
- Soil conservation on the islands of Santiago, Fogo and Brava included protection of 130 hectares through anti-erosion banks. Critically, approximately 215 hectares of farmland have been irrigated and/or rehabilitated for water-related infrastructure, contributing to greater resilience.
- The construction and rehabilitation of 100 market facilities, 51 processing facilities and 10 water wells is helping smallholders to add value to their products and get them to market. In addition, household assets in terms of better housing and increased numbers of livestock (chickens, goats, sheep, pigs and cattle) have increased significantly, thereby enhancing smallholders' resilience.

- Access to basic services has been improved through the construction of 43 education and health facilities, which have improved school enrolment, especially for girls, and health conditions for the target population. The capacity of community development associations has also been significantly strengthened so that they can now play a key role in the fight against rural poverty.
- The recently approved additional financing will also step up an explicit nutrition focus; by supporting the production of fresh vegetables and fruits in gardens, the project will improve diets and farmer field schools will train women and young people to produce and process fruit and vegetables.
- Key expected results of the additional financing phase include a revised outreach target of 16,000 households or 75,000 people receiving project services and 80 per cent of these reporting increased incomes, plus 3,213 jobs created (25 per cent young men and 50 per cent women, out of which 25 per cent are young women), 2,000 households targeted with support to improve their nutritional status; 1,082 individuals engaged in natural resources management and climate risk management activities; and 850 hectares cultivated under resilient practices.

Box 4: Hydroponics for happy entrepreneurs

Hydroponic systems are often associated with very capital-intensive companies in high-income countries. But in Cabo Verde, a well-trained and organized group of young people have proved the exact opposite. After a training session, one young woman, Albertina Tavares Monteiro, learned how to implement a very low-cost hydroponic system based on widely available porous volcanic rocks and a simple closed system. After a few production cycles and refinements, Albertina brought her husband in and expanded production. To save water, the couple added shading nets, which lowered the temperature in the greenhouse, thus reducing evaporation and water use. From one square metre of artisanal production, the couple now boast 4,000 m² of cucumbers, lettuces and tomatoes. They have also bought a car to transport their produce to retailers and hotels in Praia, the capital city. Thanks to water re-use in the hydroponic system, they need much less water than traditional farming does.



Chad: outreach to boost youth and women’s livelihoods, food security and nutrition

Key facts

Project name	Project to Improve the Resilience of Agricultural Systems in Chad (PARSAT)
Dates	2014-2022
Financing	Total approximately US\$36,200,000 from IFAD, US\$5,000,000 from IFAD’s ASAP, US\$17,200,000 from the Debt Sustainability Framework, ²⁷ US\$7,300,000 from GEF Least Developed Countries Fund, US\$6,100,000 from the Government of Chad and US\$600,000 from smallholders
Target groups	35,000 households or 175,000 direct beneficiaries, of whom 40 per cent are women and 30 per cent young people

Development challenges

Chad is a food-deficit and low-income country, set to suffer greatly from climate change, with average temperatures expected to increase significantly. The Sahelian belt of the country, where the project is located, is one of the areas most affected by food insecurity, and agriculture is the main source of income. Climate change is exacerbating natural resource degradation and reducing the potential of productive

²⁷ The Debt Sustainability Framework for Low-Income Countries is a tool developed jointly by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

lands. In addition, vast areas of fertile lowlands are now no longer prosperous during rainy seasons because of the increase in flooding risks. The population is mainly rural (72 per cent) and young, with 45 per cent of the population under 15 years of age. However, poor prospects in agriculture are driving young men away, leaving an increasing number of women heads of household behind and even more vulnerable than before.

IFAD-supported action

The project targets young people, including newly established young couples and schools. Young families will be priority recipients of support for income-generating activities to help diversify livelihoods as a climate change adaptation strategy as well as a pathway to better nutrition. This focuses on a limited number of areas, such as preserving vegetables and fruit, oil production (e.g. groundnut, sesame, desert date), bee-keeping, and the drying and preservation of fish in the Lake Fitri region. The aim is to provide training, technical and economic support, and productive capital, so that they can develop economic activity that is profitable during the dry season.

These income-generating activities will be set up on the shared-cost principle, whereby community members contribute, and also through better management of natural resources, especially water. With regard to marketing, the project will support (i) awareness-raising and the organization of volunteer producers to help market their produce, (ii) the identification of markets, and (iii) the participation of farmers in regional or national trade fairs.

A cross-cutting line of support is a holistic education strategy. This area of the project builds on the lessons of previous projects in the country, where this kind of complementary educational measure was crucial in enabling beneficiaries to participate in productive activities. PARSAT offers three educational modules, in literacy, nutrition and environmental education. Literacy is particularly important in order to reduce the illiteracy rate among young women, and offer them better prospects and independence within the community. The nutrition module focuses on better use of local crops to improve local diets, especially for children. Finally, environmental education, particularly for young people, is helping educate farmers and students on how to live and farm sustainably, including how to adapt to a rapidly changing climate.

Project results

- The project has reached over 54,300 household members with various services and benefits – significantly over target. Almost 10,000 males and 10,000 females have been supported in climate change adaptation.
- More than 11,000 people have benefited from environmental education, of whom more than 10,300 are youth and around 6,500 are female. Twenty-seven “environment clubs” have been established in schools and are being engaged in creating school gardens and plant nurseries. The project also supports teachers interested in environmental education.
- The project has reached just over 60 per cent of its target of 8,000 people to benefit from access to better agro-climatic information, of whom 1,322 are young and 2,341 (around half) are female.

- The project aims to support over 3,000 people in establishing income-generating activities, and has reached 1,900 already; of these, almost 900 are young and 1,200 are female. Over 250 young leaders of producer organizations have been trained.
- According to farmers, wells in market gardening areas have enabled reliable access to water, and the introduction of high-value-added items such as tomatoes, chillies, eggplants and onions.
- By the end of the project, 6,400 people will be able to read and write, of whom around 3,800 are young and 5,100 female.
- Almost 11,000 people have received training in various nutrition-related topics such as good child-feeding practices, iron and vitamin A supplements, and nutrition issues relating to pregnant and lactating women. Of these, the vast majority are female.
- 6,411 hectares have been brought under climate-resilient agricultural practices, around 64 per cent of the target at project end. Techniques employed in rainfed areas include *zai*,²⁸ stone contour bunds and earthen banks, all of which have been tried and tested elsewhere by IFAD.

28 Improved traditional planting pits, dug on existing farm fields before the onset of the rains, using a hoe to break the surface crust. The pits collect and store water and run-off. Often, organic matter is placed in them to improve soil fertility. Termites are attracted to this organic matter, which they digest, making nutrients more easily available to the plant roots. Termites also dig channels, which increases the soil's water-holding capacity. Various impact assessments have shown that *zai* planting has a positive impact on grain production and household food security since, in years of good rainfall, many farmers produce surplus grains, which provide a buffer in years of low rainfall. Soil fertility parameters under *zai* treatment have shown a systematic improvement after three and five years according to some studies, with organic matter content increasing from 1 to 1.4 per cent and nitrogen increasing from 0.05 to 0.8 per cent. Source: IFAD. 2011. Regreening the Sahel: Developing agriculture in the context of climate change in Burkina Faso.

Box 5: Chad stories



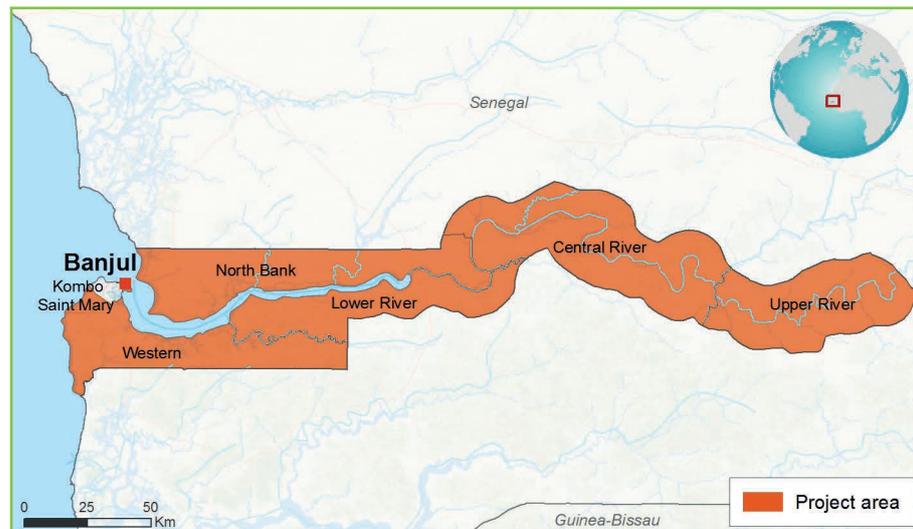
Extracting oil from sesame seeds in the village of Mangalmé, Chad. The extraction equipment was acquired with the support of IFAD. The PARSAT project supports the development of sustainable micro-business such as oil extraction.

©IFAD/Barbara Gravelli



Halimé Djimet is leading a collective of women to produce and market their sesame seed oil successfully. Every day they farm and produce food in some of the world's most challenging conditions. They are business starters and community leaders, innovators and change makers. They have dreams for themselves, their families and

their communities. But they face enormous challenges, including a changing climate, food and water insecurity, isolation from roads and markets, conflicts and violence. They have fewer rights than men to the land they work and less access to the financing and inputs they need to farm more successfully and diversify their livelihoods. And women are too often overlooked or silenced in the decisions that affect their lives. When rural women are economically empowered, they can grow more, earn more and are more likely to send their children to school and feed their families more nutritious foods. Watch/listen to Halimé Djimet at www.ifad.org/en/web/latest/video/asset/41036650.



The Gambia: evidence-based policy and private-sector support for agripreneurs

Key facts

Project name	National Agricultural Land and Water Management Development Project (NEMA) including Strengthening Climate Resilience of the National Agricultural Land and Water Management Development Project (CHOSSO)
Dates	NEMA, 7 years (2013-2019); and CHOSSO, 4 years (2015-2019)
Financing	Total US\$76,587,134: US\$7,065,766 from an IFAD loan, US\$5,000,000 from IFAD's ASAP, US\$27,345,765 from the Debt Sustainability Framework, US\$17,700,000 from the African Development Fund, US\$14,999,996 from the Islamic Development Bank, US\$2,837,249 from the Government of The Gambia, US\$954,293 from domestic financing institutions and US\$684,065 from smallholders
Target groups	Women and youth smallholders

Development challenges

The Gambia is one of Africa's smallest and poorest nations, ranked 175 in the 2015 Human Development Index. About three quarters of the rural population is classified as poor²⁹ and about one tenth of its population is food-insecure, with almost one

²⁹ Source: <https://tradingeconomics.com/gambia/poverty-headcount-ratio-at-rural-poverty-line-percent-of-rural-population-wb-data.html>

in three Gambians vulnerable to food insecurity.³⁰ Agriculture is the main source of income for about 72 per cent of extremely poor rural households (Republic of the Gambia, 2015), but it is increasingly affected by climate change, with extreme weather events and rising sea levels driving down already unpredictable output.³¹ Production is largely dependent on rainfed subsistence farming, which is inhibited by numerous climate factors, including increased temperatures and sea level rise (Republic of the Gambia, 2015). Women and youth continue to be most vulnerable to climate change impacts given their limited livelihood diversification options. The main agricultural activities on both sides of the River Gambia are rainfed field crops (rice, other cereals, groundnuts) supplemented by very little irrigation, semi-intensive vegetable production and some livestock. Most households also depend on fruit trees, forests and non-forest products, and fishing for their livelihoods. Poorly developed domestic markets and lack of access to capital and business skills are also holding back smallholder investments to increase productivity.

IFAD-supported action

Nema means “prosperity” in the Mandinka language, and the overall goal of the NEMA project is indeed to reduce poverty among women and youth, and specifically to increase incomes from improved productivity based on sustainable land and water management. The project is designed for women, who are the core rice and vegetable producers in the country, and poor young men and women have also been targeted for market-oriented vegetable production and agricultural businesses.

The project has also been engaging with value-addition actors, service providers and operators in the rice and vegetable markets, including producers’ organizations and small and medium-sized enterprises through a component on agricultural commercialization. This component has been working to promote a sustained uplift in the level of agricultural business activity in profitable primary production and supporting services such as mechanical land preparation, rice milling and transport by both youth-led enterprises and producer organizations. The project has been strengthening the technical and management capacity of producer groups in economic activities in which they have a comparative advantage, and has provided training to women *kafos* (self-help groups) and youth groups, including basic marketing, negotiating skills and business counselling but also seeds. Youth groups have also been targeted to make them aware of employment opportunities in agriculture and share experiences. An innovative agribusiness development facility, the Capital Investment Stimulation Fund with private-sector participation, has been piloted to stimulate medium-term financial services adapted to group and individual small enterprises.

30 Source: www1.wfp.org/countries/gambia

31 Source: www1.wfp.org/countries/gambia

Looking to the future, NEMA has also been assisting the government in setting up a functional monitoring and evaluation framework for the agricultural sector. In order to create baseline land-use information for the project, local professionals are being trained to use earth observation technologies to monitor rice crops. This effort is part of an ongoing pilot partnership between IFAD, the European Space Agency and Sarmap, a private Swiss company that provides remote sensing products and services.

Project results

- As of end February 2018, the project had reached 10,175 households out of 12,700 targeted, where 80 per cent of the beneficiaries are female.
- Water-related infrastructure has been constructed and/or rehabilitated in over 20,000 hectares of farmland in upland, tidal areas and especially lowland areas. Around 500 hectares of land has been developed using climate-resilient practices, and the manuals of a farmers' literacy programme and farmer field schools have been updated to integrate climate change adaptation and resilience.
- Since 2013, more than 36 kilometres of inter-village and farm-to-market access roads in the six agricultural regions of the country have been built and/or rehabilitated, supporting an increase in profitable trade in rice and vegetables produced by small-scale farmers in terms of volume, quality and value addition. The access roads have stimulated the productive use of 3,000 hectares of farmland opened up for rice production alone, connected rural communities to markets and value chain actors, and improved access to social services such as hospitals, clinics and schools.

The project has supported the consolidation of six cluster producer organizations (cooperatives) in the rice production belts of the North Bank (Salikeni and Jurunku), Lower River (Pakalinding), Central River/South (Kudang and Boiram) and Central River/North (Barajally Suba) regions of the country. The six cooperatives, spanning 25 villages, now have a total membership of more than 12,000 members, including elected executive committees and legal instruments needed to operate. Each cooperative now has a savings mechanism to support operations and ensure sustainability: in 2018 alone, their total savings were in excess of 5 million Gambian dalasi.

- Through the project, IFAD has worked with the government to draw up a national rice development strategy, in collaboration with key partners such as the Coalition for African Rice Development, which recognizes the key role of women and potential for youth employment.³² At the grass-roots level, women's and youth access to land accrues through male relatives or spouses, so the National Women Farmers' Association, with support from the Women's Bureau, conducted a successful campaign to help women's *kafos* secure access rights to their vegetable gardens. This resulted in community authorities signing contracts to guarantee land rights for *kafos* members; although such contracts have no legal value, they are recognized at the local level and can be considered a policy innovation.

32 Available at: https://riceforafrica.net/images/stories/PDF/gambia_en.pdf

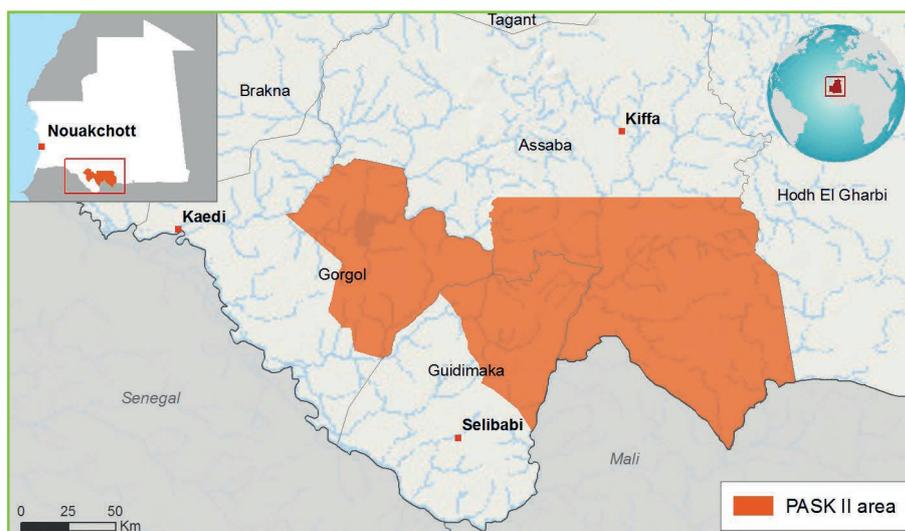
- About 5,300 farmers (women's groups and youth) have been trained in integrated pest management, the use of improved seeds and climate change issues. Over 10,500 women have been trained in climate-resilient production practices and/or technologies.
- Under a sub-component on youth inclusion, the project has supported the "Global Youth Innovation Network" Gambia chapter since 2017. Young people are also receiving support to prepare business plans and business development services, financing and coaching. NEMA is financing an analysis of business opportunities for youth in the rice and vegetable value chains and aims at getting 60 young women and men into profitable agribusiness, for which they also benefit from priority access to the Capital Investment Stimulation Fund.
- Since the NEMA design, IFAD has renewed its commitment to nutrition and NEMA aims to reduce child malnutrition in targeted households by 30 per cent and to improve their annual self-sufficiency in rice. The project is integrating nutrition into crop planning, literacy classes, farmer field schools and awareness-raising on horticulture and climate change adaptation. Partners are also key – FAO and several NGOs have organized awareness campaigns on the nutritional value of crops and FAO is preparing guidelines to integrate nutrition in farmer field schools. Increased vegetable production also has excellent potential to improve nutritional status, and IFAD is aware of the need to encourage smallholders to consume their own nutritious produce rather than selling everything, as part of a multipronged approach.

Box 6: Time-saving tractors empower women farmers



©IFAD/Demba Bah

In the North Bank Region, Amie Bah of Balal Kafo in the Sabach Sukoto Fula community (far left in photo) received a matching grant to purchase a tractor. She observes that *“Before my association with NEMA and the approval of my application, our entire community struggled to access tractors to plough our fields in good time. The demand–supply gap for ploughing services was so wide that we either had to plough our fields manually or risk waiting late into the cropping season before we could access tractors from other areas. This has all changed with the advent of the NEMA CISF scheme. Since the purchase of my tractor, we are able to undertake land preparation and planting on time for the community of Sabach and its surroundings. For women rice farmers in our community, this has been a life-changing scheme. Labour-intensive manual land preparation has been a back-breaking experience for generations of women in our community. Breaking this cycle of labour-intensive land preparation is indeed important for increased rice productivity and incomes. In addition, we must also acknowledge the nutrition, health and social effects on women and their young children.”* Amie Bah received her tractor in 2018 and already has generated enough to settle more than 75 per cent of her loan from an equipment supplier. She has also saved enough to maintain her tractor and ensure continued business operation.



Mauritania: South-South solutions boost women’s empowerment

Key facts

Project name	Poverty Reduction Project in Aftout South and Karakoro – Phase II (PASK II)
Dates	2012-2020
Financing	Total approximately US\$28,883,480: US\$8,946,840 from an IFAD loan, US\$8,946,840 from Debt Sustainability Framework, US\$3,499,800 from LCDF, US\$5,179,000 from the Government of Mauritania and US\$2,311,000 from smallholders
Target groups	21,000 poor rural households (119,700 household members) in the three <i>moughataa</i> ³³ of M’Bout, Kankossa and Ould-Yengé, with special attention paid to (i) poor women and (ii) young people aged 15 to 24 years

Development challenges

More than two thirds of Mauritania is desert, and soils are fragile and degraded. Groundwater in the project areas is depleted, partly owing to overuse of motorized pumps, and rural productivity has been undermined by a highly degraded natural resource base on a narrow strip of land where farming was practised and where rainfall is weak, irregular and often interrupted by long dry periods. Drought has had many consequences including mass sedentarization of pastoralists, and migration of

33 An administrative region.

men to find work, leaving behind women and children in rural areas.³⁴ Mauritania is also particularly vulnerable to climate change and shocks (WFP, 2016). Poor basic services, weak agricultural services and limited access to finance were also hampering food security and nutrition, and a severe drought in 2011 led to a sharp rise in food insecurity and malnutrition. Out of a population of about 4 million, food insecurity peaked at over 30 per cent in the lean season in 2011/2012, when the project was designed. Poverty remains a highly rural phenomenon, with 44 per cent of rural people living in poverty (Government of Mauritania, 2014).

IFAD-supported action

PASK II builds on an earlier phase, which had concentrated on providing local communities with food security and basic needs. PASK II moved on to include a greater focus on economic empowerment and climate change adaptation. This second phase aims to increase incomes and improve living conditions of the poorest rural people, especially women and youth, and specifically to establish inclusive and sustainable economic and social resources based on local natural resources. The three main thrusts concern (i) soil restoration and water management, (ii) support to agricultural systems, including livestock, and optimizing use of natural resources, and (iii) inclusive community development. The LCDF financing is focused on increasing the resilience of rural communities to growing water deficits and the loss of productivity of plant and animal production systems caused by climate change. This includes promoting suitable cropping techniques that build on effective traditional practices for sustainably improving soil fertility, and introducing new seed varieties adapted to climate change impacts. It also helps promote alternative energy sources to combat deforestation and offer more reliable energy to communities, together with climate-smart agricultural techniques and better water management.

As many of the challenges faced by Mauritania are common to its neighbours, IFAD supported the participation of PASK II project staff on a “learning route” in Niger in 2017. Organized by the PROCASUR Corporation and IFAD, the learning route included representatives from several IFAD-supported projects in Africa, and each of these selected a practice in Niger that could be usefully replicated in their own contexts. Mauritania, along with Chad, chose to focus on ANR, a proven strategy that has contributed significantly to “regreening the Sahel” (see Box 7).

Project results

As of March 2018:

- 19,783 households were reached, and almost 200 communities or 113,717 people (51 per cent female) were receiving services promoted or supported by the project
- 39,820 poor smallholder household members had been supported in coping with the effects of climate change

34 Project documentation based on field scoping missions.

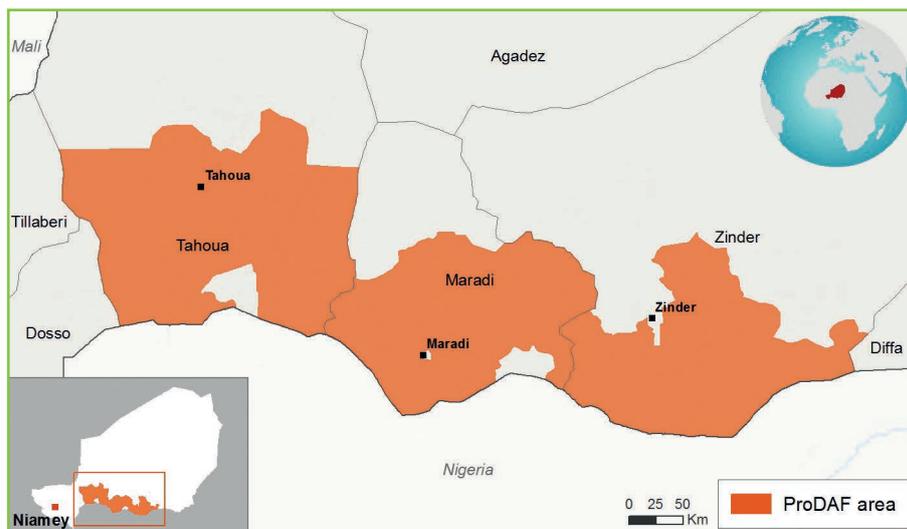
- 16,908 national/regional decision makers and 33 local groups had been trained in climate-smart agriculture. 3,709 people were trained in crop/livestock management techniques and technologies for arid climates (78 per cent female)
- 2,518 hectares had been brought under improved management practices, including 635 hectares sustainably managed for forage production in pastoral zones
- 176 groups related to water and other infrastructure had been established with women in management positions; 140 gauges had been installed, 70 rainwater harvesting systems established and/or rehabilitated and 2 dykes rehabilitated. 120 hectares of farmland benefited from newly constructed or rehabilitated water-related infrastructure
- 55 projects aimed at public investments based on local needs have been financed, and 24 projects to promote alternative energy sources from village woodlands adapted to arid zones have been approved
- 162 micro-projects for economic development benefiting 5,996 people have been approved
- Literacy of 2,875 women and 339 men has been supported
- Feedback from women confirmed additional nutritional co-benefits, and specifically more diversified diets than at the project start

Gender equality and women's empowerment is one of the areas that received the highest rating during a 2018 supervision mission – indeed, the project also won an IFAD prize for outstanding achievements in this area. Market gardening, harvesting forest products and rearing small livestock are a few of the activities enabling women and young people to earn an income. Among the activities, a total of 88 income-generating micro-projects are benefiting over 1,500 women and 1,000 young people. Participants receive training and inputs to enable them to increase the quantity and quality of the goods they produce. With support to develop their commercial skills, women have also increased their competitiveness and their ability to negotiate with market traders. Cereal banks have been established so that farmers can store produce and sell when the price is right. Improvements in access to drinking water have made a huge difference to the daily lives of women and girls, saving them an average of five hours per day and freeing their time and energy for education, money-making activities and participation in the community. Women and young people make up more than 50 per cent of participants and are benefiting from the project's multidimensional approach to reducing poverty. In addition to contributing to household income, they are increasing their role in family decision-making. The women have grown in confidence and increased their voice and influence outside their households: about 40 per cent of the decision-making roles in the producer organizations are now filled by women. The project has also invested in a wide range of educational activities, including literacy training, awareness-raising on gender equality and the distribution of labour, sanitation and citizenship.

Box 7: Mauritania's Niger-inspired innovation plan

In November 2017, three project staff from PASK II took part in a 10-day learning route in Niger, which has great experience in various approaches with scale potential. For Dia Amadou Dioumo, Mohamed Hameny and Ousmane Mohamed Tomy, this offered a chance to discuss and share experiences with participants from other countries and identify practices that could be scaled up in PASK II. For them, the Niger experience in ANR emerged as particularly relevant as a climate change adaptation strategy, and they developed an innovation plan for implementation within the project framework. The plan, the first such plan at the local level, aims at improving the cover and management of sylvo-pastoral resources and soil fertility in 50 hectares within the pastoral perimeter area of Moibrack.

The plan benefits 200 people (65 women and 80 youth) belonging to livestock farming families, and envisages capacity development to raise awareness of the importance of local wood-based resources for soil enrichment, with the sustainable preservation of the environment a key thrust. In particular, village management committees will be targeted. In addition, 5,000 plants will be planted: *Acacia senegal*, *Balanites aegyptiaca*, *Ziziphys mauritiaca* and *Moringa oleifera*. These species have been selected for their income-generation potential and their soil management benefits. For example, acacia helps to fix nitrogen in soil, offers shade to other crops and provides gum Arabic, which has an international market – it is also a source of fodder for livestock and food for local communities.



Niger: scaling up regreening in the Sahel

Key facts

Project name	Family Farming Development Programme (ProDAF)
Dates	2016-2021
Financing	Total US\$205.3 million: US\$48.5 million from an IFAD loan, US\$12.9 million grant financing from IFAD's ASAP, US\$7.6 million from GEF through the Integrated Approach Programme on Food Security in sub-Saharan Africa, US\$48.5 million from the Debt Sustainability Framework, US\$28.2 million from the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, US\$33.4 million from the Government of Niger, US\$15 million from the OPEC Fund for International Development and US\$11.2 million from beneficiaries
Target groups	2273,600 family farms in Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder regions, with special focus on women and youth

Development challenges

Niger, a landlocked country with a territory of over 1 million square kilometres,³⁵ is one of the world's least developed, food-deficit countries, with around 80 per cent of its population living in rural areas.³⁶ The Tahoua, Maradi and Zinder regions of Niger are the most productive and are home to more than 60 per cent of Niger's population, but this productivity is hampered by a number of environmental

35 Source: www.worldbank.org/en/country/niger/overview

36 Source: <https://tradingeconomics.com/niger/rural-population-percent-of-total-population-wb-data.html>

problems. Desertification is expanding and erosion by water is leading to watersheds silting up, and the arid climate with high temperatures is exacerbated by low rainfall. Groundwater levels are declining and drought is increasing. Increasing river siltation is also adding to the situation. Forecasting models project a significant drop in yields if nothing is done to better adapt the country's production systems to climate change. As a result, food insecurity in the project area is worrying.

IFAD-supported action

IFAD and partners are responding to the scale and complexity of the above challenges by working in partnership, and by scaling up best practices from a previous IFAD-GEF investment in the same area that closed in 2017, the Food Security and Development Support Project in the Maradi Region. ProDAF is also building on IFAD's considerable experience in Niger, specifically the ongoing Ruwanmu Small-scale Irrigation Project. ProDAF will focus on two interlinked issues: sustainable family farming and improved access to markets. The GEF support will include sustainable access to water resources through soil and water conservation, soil protection and restoration works on a large scale, and IFAD's ASAP is also bringing a climate lens to bear on the overall goal of sustainably increasing the income of target groups and their resilience to climate change.

The project's approach to soil and water management is twofold: first, it helps smallholders on family farms to gain more reliable access to water; and second, it pays attention to the sustainability of the underlying natural resource at the level of the watershed. Reliable access to water is promoted through multiple measures such as building and rehabilitating small and mini dams as well as ponds to store surface water. The agricultural potential of these water reserves is to be developed through recession crops and crops irrigated by gravity from the mini dams or by pumping through boreholes. The project will also help bring land under irrigation so as to reduce farmers' dependence on unreliable rains. Equipment for small-scale irrigation techniques suitable for family farms is being supported, and the capacity of water user associations is being strengthened to maintain the infrastructure as well as manage the precious resource.

However, the above measures need to be supported by attention to the natural resource in order to maintain water supply and water quality. For this reason, the project is supporting the capacity of farmers, including through farmer field schools, to adopt soil and water management techniques such as ANR, which helps improve water infiltration in soil. The project also promotes underground storage by recharging groundwater, and some structures have an anti-erosion function to help stabilize stream banks and restore degraded soils. The project is scaling up some traditional technique successes that have contributed to the "regreening" of the Sahel, such as *zai* and *demi-lunes* (half-moons).

The market development dimension is being carried out through "economic development clusters", a model that also allows for precise site-specific agroclimatic data to inform local development. This also supports the integration of climate change adaptation into community development plans.

Scaling up is not limited to within Niger, because the GEF Integrated Approach Programme funding also promotes learning across other 12 GEF cofinanced projects in West and East Africa. Moreover, IFAD is supporting the uptake of relevant approaches from ProDAF even further afield, through a “learning route” on “climate change adaptation strategies to improve the resilience of rural communities; experiences from Niger.” Organized in late 2017 by the PROCASUR Corporation and IFAD, the learning route included representatives from several IFAD-supported projects in Africa. Each of these selected a ProDAF practice that they felt could be usefully replicated in their own contexts. These included farmer field schools (Benin), improved weather forecasting in communities (Côte d’Ivoire), soil and water management (Senegal), and ANR on agricultural sites (IFAD-GEF investments in Chad and Mauritania).

Project results

- Over 997,500 people are receiving project services, of whom 336,722 are women and 380,240 young people. Around 142,500 households have been reached, of which just over 49,000 are headed by women and 42,000 by youth.
- 364 community groups are engaged in natural resources management and climate risk management activities, coming in over target, and over 28,600 women and men have been trained in climate-resilient crop and livestock management; 148 natural resources management groups are operational.
- Almost 280 women’s groups have been strengthened or created, 36 women’s cereal banks have been set up and have improved the food security of almost 11,000 women and their households; almost 12,000 production kits have been distributed.
- Six financial institutions are now participating in the project and providing services to target groups.
- Over 9,200 hectares of degraded lands have been rehabilitated, approximately 27,000 hectares of watersheds have benefited from soil and water management, and 40,000 from ANR – around 70,000 very vulnerable households in total are benefiting from these improvements. In total, 47,300 hectares of land have been brought under climate-resilient practices.
- Nutrition outreach has been very successful in that community groups include both women and men, and have been hosting cooking demonstrations and supporting communities to maximize the nutritional benefits of locally available foods. In Tahoua, for example, 58 such groups have been formed, almost 700 awareness-raising sessions conducted, reaching 20,540 people.

Box 8: Improving traditional planting pits in Niger



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Zai are improved traditional planting pits, dug with a hoe to break the surface crust before the onset of the rains. They collect and store water and runoff, and organic matter is often placed in them to improve soil fertility. Termites are attracted to this organic matter, which they digest, making nutrients more easily available to the plant roots. Termites also dig channels, which increase the soil's water-holding capacity. Various impact assessments have shown that *zai* planting has a positive impact on grain production and household food security. This is because, in years of good rainfall, many farmers produce surplus grain, which provides a buffer in years of low rainfall. Soil fertility under *zai* treatment has also shown systematic improvement after three and five years according to some studies.

Demi-lunes are earth embankments in the shape of a semi-circle, used for growing crops but also for rangeland rehabilitation. Much larger in size than *zai*, *demi-lunes* also capture runoff water from slightly sloping land and concentrate water and organic matter (IFAD, 2011).



©IFAD/David Rose

Looking ahead

Challenges and opportunities

The preceding pages give an overview of IFAD's work in the WCA region. Challenges faced by IFAD in supporting investments in the region include declining cofinancing levels from national governments, although historically WCA has been second only to the Asia and the Pacific Division. This is largely due to the fact that there is a high proportion of low-income countries in the region. More recently, the budgetary situation in many countries has deteriorated due to the lower price of oil, for example in Chad, Gabon and Nigeria, and the growing insecurity in the Sahel including in Burkina Faso, Chad, the Central African Republic, Mali and Nigeria. In response to these realities, IFAD has stepped up financial commitments in the region, including from climate and environmental finance, and is working on revitalizing long-standing partnerships. Major efforts are under way to strengthen portfolio management in WCA, particularly given the large increase in IFAD11 allocations to these countries resulting from the renewed focus on the poorest countries and most fragile situations. IFAD in WCA has also been active in seeking new partners, such as the Abu Dhabi Fund and the governments of Denmark, Italy and Spain. The private sector is also an important partner, and IFAD is aiming to build on over US\$20 million of private-sector cofinancing.

Another challenge is to translate quality country strategies and project designs into results, because project implementation can be a struggle in some contexts. Again, IFAD is responding with increased and innovative implementation support, and this is paying off. Today, 39 out of 41 ongoing projects have been given an average rating

of “moderately satisfactory” for “overall implementation progress” and “likelihood of achieving development objectives”. IFAD’s decentralization drive is already proving instrumental in building stronger policy dialogue and engagement at the local level, with key partners including governments, and in building effective partnerships. Today, IFAD has also established subregional hubs in Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal to deepen this engagement. Subregional hubs act as service centres and are equipped with technical and administrative staff to serve all or part of a region; they also carry out country programme functions for a smaller group of countries. Hubs are designed to support countries that are geographically close and benefit from additional technical and administrative capacity in order to do so. Technical services for cross-cutting issues are expected to enhance operational performance and support for procurement and financial management will improve project efficiency and overall portfolio performance.

More than mainstreaming

The case studies in this report reflect IFAD’s belief that “inclusive and sustainable rural transformation” (ibid.) in line with Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals cannot happen without women, men, young people and indigenous peoples involved as change agents as well as beneficiaries. Given the strong evidence that climate change is already affecting all dimensions of food security and nutrition (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2018), IFAD is committed to integrating climate change adaptation and food security and nutrition in its support to countries and has refreshed action plans across all of these issues. However, IFAD is going further than mainstreaming individual issues and aiming for much greater “transformative” synergy between the mainstreaming themes for holistic programming that leverages their synergies and minimizes trade-offs and risks. With this in mind, IFAD targets at the corporate level are as follows:

- 100 per cent of projects to mainstream climate and environment
- 25 per cent of IFAD’s programme of loans and grants to be climate-focused
- 25 per cent of projects to be gender-transformative
- 50 per cent of projects to be nutrition-sensitive
- 50 per cent of projects to mainstream youth and youth employment.

An example of the integrated approach is a recently approved US\$72.6 million project that aims to improve food and nutrition security and raise incomes of smallholder farmers by modernizing agriculture, increasing production and developing markets. About 34,000 vulnerable rural households in Sierra Leone will benefit from this Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (AVDP). The new project will increase production and contribute to the government’s priorities of rice self-sufficiency, crop diversification and rural poverty reduction. The AVDP will invest in agricultural

mechanization, irrigation and water management. It will strengthen and climate-proof rural infrastructure through the rehabilitation of feeder roads and warehouses to improve product drying and storage capacity. It will also build the capacity of smallholder farmers through farmer field schools and provide them with credit for their investments in smallholder farms. At least 40 per cent of the project's participants will be women and youth.

As the WCA region embarks on achieving these targets, it will maximize the many opportunities arising from women's and youth empowerment, and has identified areas where accelerated progress is a priority. WCA will continue to promote South-South and triangular cooperation between countries and with other regions, to strategically use grants for learning and building capacity, and to seek additional climate and environmental finance given the high vulnerability and mitigation potential of many countries.

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