

insights



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO COUNTRY STRATEGY AND PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Better targetting of vulnerable populations

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a fragile state marked by a long period of poor governance and conflict, with many war refugees and displaced persons, violence against women and other frequent human rights violations. A significant proportion of the rural population, such as refugees or those displaced by war, single mothers, unemployed youth, demobilized soldiers, landless people, indigenous groups, and persons living with HIV/AIDS or disabilities, find themselves in situations of vulnerability related to economic, social, food or personal security.

Reaching vulnerable populations

Vulnerable people are explicitly targeted by the country strategy financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and in the design of the projects it supports in the DRC, which seek, in particular, to improve gender equality and empower women, promote youth employment, and improve the social and economic integration of populations displaced by war, while reducing poverty and the marginalization of indigenous groups and people living with HIV/AIDS. Although the strategy and projects have incorporated reasonable vulnerability analysis in their design, they have not translated it into a differentiated approach tailored to vulnerable groups or into monitoring the level of vulnerability (or of poverty) of their beneficiaries. The projects have relied on self-targeting, using farmers' organizations as the main entry points, meaning that only those people expressing interest

received support from the projects. This approach could work well enough in a context where the majority of the population is poor, but it risks being syphoned by better-off members, the elite, or local politicians, and thus excluding the most vulnerable populations. The projects had neither a monitoring mechanism nor a risk management strategy.

Indeed, the very reasons for vulnerability (e.g. being HIV-positive or belonging to a group considered inferior, such as women or certain ethnic groups) can make those who are vulnerable not welcome (or not feel welcome) in farmers' organizations. The risks of exclusion are even higher in the most recent projects, where undefined requirements for membership into farmers' organizations make it difficult to identify possible obstacles to participation. The value chain approach proposed by the project to support the agricultural sector of North Kivu

Province, for which the loan agreement was recently signed, is also unlikely to allow for proper targeting of the most vulnerable groups because these groups practice subsistence agriculture that falls outside the project-supported value chains.

The Agricultural Rehabilitation Programme in the District of the Eastern Tshopo Province went furthest with the inclusion of vulnerable groups by: (i) training participants on issues of social equity, including gender, and the use of participatory methods and diagnostic tools to identify and target vulnerable groups in their activities; and (ii) offering support to vulnerable groups, specifically the education of girls, practical training for young people in infrastructure construction, and education for young people in the manufacturing of baked bricks. Income-generating activities have been offered to six associations of vulnerable groups supported by the programme, but the sustainability of most of these activities has proven quite low. The programme also funded an initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations that established “community listening clubs”, which mobilized nearly 2,000 people in an effort to reduce the impact of discriminatory practices and raise awareness of the concept of equity between men and women. However, the sustainability of these clubs was jostled by disruptions of operation of the community radio stations on which they depended for their internal activities. Some clubs have evolved into secured credit groups, members of a rural financial cooperative.

Targeting youth

Young people are considered among the priority target groups in the country programme. The 2012 country strategic opportunities programme explicitly targets unemployed youth living on the outskirts of large cities, with the aim of inserting them in agriculture and related sectors to create training, employment and income-generating opportunities. In general, the integration of youth in the socio-economic fabric of the country, and in particular in the IFAD project areas, is a major challenge for the efficiency and sustainability of projects. Indeed, the difficult conditions and low productivity of agricultural activities often lead youth to other more attractive activities such as working in mines, albeit in precarious conditions. Many of them end up migrating to urban centres in search of jobs, and some of them may even be tempted to engage in illegal activities. However, the country programme has not developed or implemented a specific targeting or insertion strategy for youth.

From its conception, the Integrated Programme for Agricultural Rehabilitation in Maniema Province prioritized targeting 2,200 young people but failed to propose specific actions for their support. At implementation stage, good intentions failed to materialize and young people were not targeted by any specific action. Yet the socio-economic context of the programme area required the development and implementation of a specific strategy to include young people in agriculture, since many of them had lost their job in the mining sector. In addition, the programme does not contain a component to support education, as was the case in previous projects.

Recommendations

Considering the importance of reaching the most vulnerable people, as highlighted in the IFAD country strategy in the DRC, it is absolutely necessary that:

- The country strategy clearly identifies the causes of rural poverty as they relate to fragility, which affects the poor and vulnerable;
- Projects improve their vulnerability analysis;
- Projects are provided with a more effective targeting strategy tailored to different target groups;
- Personnel within management units and from service providers employed by the projects are sufficiently aware and trained to take into account the specific needs of vulnerable people and differentiated approaches to supporting these groups;
- The leaders of farmers’ organizations and their umbrella organizations are aware of the risks of exclusion and elite capture, and trained in monitoring and mitigating these risks; and
- Monitoring and supervision of projects includes specific attention to the effectiveness of targeting and the impact of interventions on fragility and the various vulnerable groups in the areas of intervention.

Further information:

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