

The Sudan Country programme evaluation 2008/9

The Sudan covers an area of 2.508 million Km², with a varied ecology that stretch from desert in the North to tropical environments in the South. Its vast size, combined with its limited communications, transport infrastructure and a diverse population, presents a huge logistical constraint for delivery of social services and development assistance. Agriculture is the most important economic sector: it accounts for about 80 per cent of non-petroleum exports and provides economic livelihood for an estimated 70 per cent of the population in Sudan, mostly in the rainfed areas, which IFAD-funded projects have targeted. Poverty is deeply entrenched and is especially concentrated in Central and Western Sudan (Kordofan and Darfur), the Eastern Regions and the war affected areas of the Central and Southern Regions.

IFAD's presence in Sudan has been uninterrupted since 1979. The Fund has to date financed 16 projects for a total cost of US\$584.12 million, of which 41 per cent constituted IFAD loans and grants. The balance was provided as government counterpart funds and co-financing by the Islamic Development Bank. Despite its relatively modest assistance compared to total official development assistance (less than 1%), IFAD remains one of the few financial institutions with a substantial presence in agriculture and rural development in Sudan, along with the Islamic Development Bank and the Arab Fund. IFAD's operations in the period evaluated (1994–2007) were guided by the 1994 country portfolio evaluation which provided lessons and recommended directions for the future cooperation with Sudan, and the 2002 country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) which not only continued consolidation of these strategic directions but reinforced the focus of IFAD's interventions in rainfed farming areas. IFAD's assistance aimed mainly at institutional support, agricultural services, women's empowerment, rural financial service, and natural resources management.

Main evaluation findings

Sudan's irrigated sector has received most of the government agriculture sector budget while the rainfed crop and livestock sectors have received the least. Considering that support to smallholder agriculture in the rainfed areas is an effective strategy for inclusive economic growth that builds peace and reduces poverty, the evaluation found that the COSOP and activities in Sudan could further address the root causes of smallholder low productivity by focusing more on agriculture. The evaluation also notes that while the country programme performed moderately satisfactorily with regards to rural finance and institutional innovations, few technical innovations have been developed by research which could be adopted as technical packages in the context of IFAD-funded projects.

The evaluation also notes that the 2002 COSOP could have better captured the privileged status of IFAD at the time when the Fund remained among the funding development agencies in Sudan. The lack of consolidated



Village/Community Development Committees have been given a special place in all IFAD projects as focal points for provision of project services and tools for participatory rural development.

Source: A. Hussein

SUDAN AT A GLANCE

Population: 37 million (2006)

Population annual growth rate % (2000-06): 2.0

GDP per capita (US\$ 2006): 810

GDP per capita annual growth rate (2005-06): 10.7%

Agricultural value added % share of GDP (2006): 31

Inflation Rate, GDP deflator (annual): 10

Life expectancy at birth (2005): 55M/58F

Adult literacy rate (2000-05): 61%

SOURCE: WORLD BANK
WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2008

Human Development Index (HDI) 2005: 0.526

SOURCE: UNDP HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2007/2008

Current IFAD loans: US\$ 228.4 million

country presence restricted IFAD's engagement in the policy arena. Most results at the policy level have therefore taken place within the project context, with limited policy dialogue engagement occurring at the federal level. The 2002 COSOP also lacked a comprehensive strategy for ensuring sustainability of IFAD-financed activities. Moreover, some IFAD-financed operations such as increased livestock development have tended to introduce substantial changes over a short time period in fragile environments, at times resulting in adverse environmental effects.

Key recommendations

Recommendation 1: Agriculture as a key sector of intervention

IFAD must further address the root causes of smallholder low productivity by focusing more on agriculture in the next COSOP. Localities where basic services and infrastructure that have proved to support labour productivity and market access are available could be favoured. The issues of value-chain marketing and market access require adequate consideration. IFAD could also build on current efforts such as the decentralised agricultural extension services which have been beneficial to smallholders. Land tenure, traditional rainfed cultivation, overgrazing and livestock should continue to be addressed; however, consideration should be given to pursuing these in a more focused and systematic manner to ensure greater integration and synergies in these areas.

Recommendation 2: Promoting pro-poor agricultural innovations

Notwithstanding the programme's good performance in the areas of rural finance or institutional innovations, the evaluation recommends that IFAD redouble efforts in promoting pro-poor agricultural innovations. These have been weaker than innovations in the other programme components. A more systematic approach to replication and scaling up of agricultural innovations should also be developed. In particular, Government and IFAD will identify, test and replicate technological packages that constitute an adaptation to climate change such as technologies for increased soil fertility, herd and range management in drought affected areas, cost effective environmental conservation, energy efficient agro-processing.

Recommendation 3: Scaling-up policy dialogue

Agricultural policy dialogue should be scaled up to the national level by building on project-level policy dialogue initiatives that are currently being pursued. This could be done by presenting a limited set of strategic themes for dialogue in the forthcoming Sudan COSOP which are most relevant to the new strategic orientations. Policy dialogue on these strategic themes could then be enhanced and sustained through the regular follow-up and analysis mandated in the results-based COSOP framework, including annual workshops and mid-term review exercise. Regularly revisiting dialogue on policy issues also presents the potential to establish a more transparent partnership and consultation mechanism, making it possible to better engage with national and local level authorities, civil society and the wider donor community. The end result would be a more holistic country programme and, ultimately, more sustainable development impact.

Recommendation 4: Tackling sustainability

The evaluation recommends that, in the next COSOP, sustainability is incorporated in the broad framework of the strategic elements of the country programme in terms of design (e.g. clarity of exit strategies), and partnership (e.g. stakeholder ownership). Also, recognizing the contextual realities of Sudan, where conflict over natural resources is an integral part of the daily reality of farming and pastoral communities, the Government and IFAD should develop their capacity in disaster preparedness and quick response. As part of this, the projects would develop the capacity of the field staff in conflict prevention as an integral component of its programmatic interventions in Sudan in order to enhance sustainability. Furthermore, the Fund's assistance to the state-owned banks such as the Agricultural Bank of Sudan should be pursued if gains achieved are to be further enhanced and sustained.

