

Independent Office
of Evaluation



Republic of Sierra Leone

COUNTRY STRATEGY AND PROGRAMME EVALUATION



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of Evaluation



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Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation

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Photos of activities supported by IFAD-financed projects in the Republic of Sierra Leone

Front cover: Members of Karankothor Agriculture Business Centre in Kabala Koinadugu District pose in front of a truck provided by the Smallholder Commercialization Programme / Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme.

Back cover: A clonal garden in Pendembu run by the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (left); Beneficiaries at the rehabilitated Makakura –Yiffin road in Koinadugu District (right).

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Foreword

The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD conducted the first country strategy and programme evaluation in Sierra Leone in 2019. The main purpose of this evaluation is to assess the results and performance of the country strategic opportunities programmes implemented since 2003 and to generate findings, conclusions and recommendations for the upcoming country strategy to be prepared in 2020.

For a country emerging from a protracted civil war, the period from 2003 until 2019 was dynamic, characterized by reconstruction of the economic and productive sectors and a shift to fostering sustainable growth. The evaluation found that the IFAD portfolio aligned itself well with the national priorities and government strategies. Its shift from providing basic agricultural inputs and infrastructure, making rural finance accessible and affordable, to commercialization of agriculture, was appropriate. The standalone nature of its projects – agricultural production and rural finance – kept programme designs uncomplicated and implementation less demanding.

The outreach of the portfolio was impressive, with targets at or close to 100 per cent achieved. Vast areas of land hitherto unused are now rice fields. Financial services successfully reached rural areas, making the services accessible to over 200,000 households. About 88 per cent of the community banks and 83 per cent of the financial services associations supported by the portfolio are operationally sustainable. There have been positive economic changes such as increased productivity of rice and cocoa, and higher incomes for beneficiaries.

Despite the significant achievements, some shortcomings in the portfolio emerged. Firstly, true financial inclusion was missed; farmers constituted only a small proportion of the clientele of rural financial institutions. Secondly, while there was surplus production of rice, it was not effectively channeled to markets because interventions aimed at linking producers with the processing and marketing parts of the value chain did not work as intended. Thirdly, while youth have benefited from project activities, IFAD could have done more to develop activities to attract young people to agriculture, given the high level of youth unemployment in Sierra Leone.

Finally, the evaluation notes that the resources of the IFAD country office were overstretched by the large scale of operations, and by the number of projects and their geographic spread. IFAD was not able to fully leverage its potential to contribute to rural development through its policy engagement and strategic partnership efforts at the national level.

A number of recommendations are made by this evaluation, and as part of the process an agreement at completion point was signed by the Government and IFAD. The agreement is included in this report. I hope that the results of this evaluation will be useful in promoting accountability and learning that will make IFAD even more effective in fostering inclusive and sustainable rural transformation and poverty reduction in the Republic of Sierra Leone.



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Currency equivalents, weights and measures

Currency equivalent

Currency unit = Sierra Leonean (Le)

US\$1 = Le 2,500 (at the start of the period under evaluation in September 2003)

US\$1 = Le 9,100 (at the time of the field mission undertaken in June 2019)

Weights and measures

1 kilogram (kg)	=	2.204 pounds (lb)
1,000 kg	=	1 metric tonne (t)
1 kilometre (km)	=	0.62 miles
1 metre (m)	=	1.09 yards
1 square metre (m ²)	=	10.76 square feet (ft)
1 acre (ac)	=	0.405 ha
1 hectare (ha)	=	2.47 acres

Abbreviations and acronyms

ABC	agribusiness centre
ACP	agreement at completion point
AfDB	African Development Bank
AVDP	Agricultural Value Chain Development Project
CB	community bank
COSOP	country strategic opportunities programme
CPM	country programme manager
CPO	country programme officer
CSPE	country strategy and programme evaluation
DAO	district agricultural office
DSF	Debt Sustainability Framework
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FBO	farmer-based organization
FFS	farmer field school
FSA	financial services association
GAFSP	Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme
GALS	Gender Active Learning System
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GNI	gross national income
HDI	Human Development Index
ICO	IFAD Country Office
IDA	International Development Association
IVS	inland valley swamp
IVSA	inland valley swamp association
KM	knowledge management
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MTR	mid-term review
NPCU	National Programme Coordination Unit
NSADP	National Sustainable Agriculture Development Plan
ODA	official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ORMS	Operational Results Management System
OSS	operational self-sufficiency
PCRv	project completion report validation
PMU	project management unit
PPE	project performance evaluation
PRSP	poverty reduction strategy paper

RCPRP	Rehabilitation and Community-based Poverty Reduction Project
RFCIP	Rural Finance and Community Improvement Programme
RFI	rural financial institution
RIPMCO	Rice Processing and Marketing Company
SCP	Smallholder Commercialization Programme
SLARI	Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute
TAA	Technical Assistance Agency
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WCA	West and Central Africa Division of IFAD
WFP	World Food Programme

Map of IFAD-supported operations in Sierra Leone¹

Republic of Sierra Leone

IFAD supervised operations since 2003

Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation



The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IFAD concerning the delimitation of the frontiers or boundaries, or the authorities thereof.

Map compiled by IFAD | 11-11-2019

¹ The SCP-GAFSP was ongoing at the time of the evaluation in June 2019. It was completed (but not closed) on 30 September 2019.

Executive summary

A. Background

1. In line with the Evaluation Policy of IFAD and as approved by the IFAD Executive Board at its 125th Session, the Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) undertook its first country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) in Sierra Leone in 2019.
2. The main purpose of the evaluation was to assess the results and performance of the two country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) – COSOP 2003 and COSOP 2010 – undertaken by IFAD in Sierra Leone, along with its country strategy note for 2017-2018, and, on that basis, to generate findings and recommendations for the upcoming COSOP to be prepared in 2020. The findings have been categorized with a focus on four thematic areas: productive capacity, agricultural marketing, rural finance and institution-strengthening. Special attention has been paid to youth as a cross-cutting issue of immense importance to Sierra Leone.
3. The CSPE covers the performance of IFAD and the Government of Sierra Leone with regard to both lending and non-lending activities (such as knowledge management, partnership-building, country-level policy engagement and grants) provided for in the country strategy.
4. The evaluation team conducted a desk review of the available documentation. In order to corroborate the information gathered during the desk review, the team undertook extensive field visits to selected sites in March and June 2019. These field visits covered all the projects under review. Two missions were conducted in order to cover 12 districts of Sierra Leone: Moyamba, Bo, Pujehun, Tonkolili, Bombali, Kambia, Port Loko, Bonthe, Koinadugu, Kenema, Kono and Kainalu.

B. Portfolio

5. Since 1979, IFAD has committed US\$130.4 million in highly concessional loans and Debt Sustainability Framework (DSF) grants for eight projects. In addition, the Fund has supervised another project at the request of the Government. Five of these projects are covered in this evaluation. The projects have focused on the three main sectors of agricultural development (four projects), rural development (three projects) and credit and financial services (two projects).
6. A total of US\$201.2 million in funding has been provided for the five projects that have been evaluated. IFAD has supplied US\$98.1 million, the Government US\$21.1 million, local private financiers and beneficiaries US\$19.2 million and international financiers US\$62.8 million. At the time of their evaluation, the five projects were at different stages in their life cycles: two had been completed, two were ongoing or not closed and one had just recently been approved in December 2018.
7. Context. Around 60 per cent of the population lives on less than US\$1.25 a day. Even though the country has a rich natural resource endowment, the civil war that raged from 1991 until 2002 dealt a major blow to the economy, and Sierra Leone has suffered from serious economic setbacks and political instability ever since. The Ebola virus disease outbreak in 2014 also had an adverse impact on the country's GDP. Agriculture is very important to the country's economy, accounting for approximately 60 per cent of its total GDP, but Sierra Leone is still highly dependent on external aid.
8. Since the civil war ended, most farmers have returned to their farms, but they are still striving to cope with the after-effects of the conflict, notwithstanding a gradual improvement in their situation. Almost 60 per cent of rural households are still food-insecure, and 31 per cent of the country's children are chronically malnourished. In addition, culturally based gender inequalities persist, and the lack

of analyses informed by a gender perspective has resulted in poorly designed interventions. The unemployment rate among young people, who make up 40 per cent of the population, stands at 70 per cent.

C. Main findings

9. Relevance. The IFAD portfolio has evolved in step with Sierra Leone's changing political and economic situation. IFAD projects have been aligned with Sierra Leone's national strategies and policies and with the urgent priorities of a nation emerging from a protracted civil war that left most of its production base and infrastructure in disarray. The country therefore stands in great need of capital injections and of means of strengthening its grass-roots and decentralized institutions.
10. The design of projects to build agricultural productive capacity is a highly relevant aspect of the Government's strategic framework. Facilitating market linkages and improved crop marketability have been important components of project design, but their implementation on the ground has not been sufficient to realize the country's production potential. The construction of roads to provide poor people in rural areas with access to potential markets is a pivotal element of project design, and a rural finance support approach has also featured prominently. Interventions have been designed in full alignment with the Government's development priorities in a post-conflict situation where rural finance institutions are virtually non-existent.
11. The selection of existing farmers' groups interested and experienced in rice, cocoa or palm production was found to be a suitable approach for enabling the participation of poor and smallholder farmers with a sufficient level of production capacity. Quotas have been set for the inclusion of women and youth, but project activities have not been specifically tailored to them. There has been no direct targeting of rural finance components to ensure that the financial products will be suited to the capacities and needs of the smallholders who are supposed to be the primary beneficiaries.
12. The level of design complexity and clarity in the portfolio has been mixed and, while the intention of linking agricultural and rural finance projects is noteworthy, its implementation has not always been successful. In addition, the fit between budget and activities has not been a good one in all cases, and the limited amount of available resources has not always been sufficient to attain the desired level of support for large groups of beneficiaries. Internal linkages between production and marketing activities have not worked out as planned either. Still, the focus on a few commodities in agricultural projects has lent simplicity to the project designs.
13. Effectiveness. The outreach provided by the portfolio has been impressive, with target achievement being at or close to 100 per cent. The quantity and quality of rice production have vastly improved thanks to IFAD-supported inputs and capacity-building. Nonetheless, constraints typical of a fragile context – notably, limited access to quality seeds, fertilizers and mechanized equipment – interfered with the quality of initial outcomes. Moreover, the slow uptake of innovation and new technology on the part of some farmers has also hampered efforts to realize the beneficiaries' full production potential.
14. Agro-processing and marketing components have been less successful. Linkages between farmers and value chain actors have not been fully established during the life of these projects. Access to markets for the more plentiful harvests of recent years has, however, been improved by the road rehabilitation works.
15. The community banks (CBs) and financial services associations (FSAs) that have been strengthened or developed under these projects have proved to be highly successful in coping with the demanding operational environment existing in rural Sierra Leone. Nonetheless, although targets have been achieved in terms of the

number of clients, small-scale farmers have benefited less than expected. The low level of agricultural lending is attributable to the conservative strategies of rural financial institutions and a lack of specialized, focused training in agro-lending for those institutions, in addition to their weak capital base. The Apex Bank, which was set up as part of these projects, has been less successful than hoped.

16. The support model has proved effective for grass-roots production-based groups, but less so for agribusiness groups. There has not been a great deal of group sales activity, and interactions between farmer-based organizations and agribusiness centres have been far from perfect. Issues have arisen in relation to a lack of trust, elite capture in the agribusiness centres and the fact that some centres only perform basic post-production functions. The expected support for government institutions has not materialized, but this is not entirely under the projects' control, since the provision of support has been hampered by structural issues associated with the fragile context.
17. Efficiency. Overall, the time line of the Sierra Leone portfolio has mostly been in step with the average performance indicators of IFAD's West and Central Africa Division in terms of key milestone events such as the amount of time taken for approval, signing, entry into force (effectiveness) and first disbursement. The portfolio's overall disbursement performance has been good, and the corresponding absorptive capacity is high. Project management costs as a proportion of total project costs have been higher than the IFAD standard but comparable to the Division's average.
18. The cost-benefit analysis indicated that the closed portfolio had a positive economic return, but a close review of the analysis reveals some discrepancies between the assumptions or models applied in the analysis and the updated project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data. The economic efficiency of the different projects has been mostly positive, although the evaluation's recalibration revealed that efficiency levels were lower than had been reported, especially given the high rate of inflation.
19. Rural poverty impact. The increase in rice production capacity has been one of the projects' most significant income-enhancing achievements. The transfer of knowledge concerning rice production techniques has been successful, but the rate of adoption has been low. The rehabilitation of rural roads has largely been successful in increasing people's market access. The provision of financial services has contributed both directly and indirectly to increases in productive and consumption assets. Nonetheless, since only a small proportion of the loans have been for smallholder farmers, the micro-loans' impact on agricultural productivity has been far below their potential.
20. There have been almost no food security or nutrition-specific activities, and the only likely potential pathways for improvement in this regard are increased production, higher incomes and greater agricultural diversity, although the latter can be expected to have no more than a limited impact. In the domains of institutional capacity and human and social capital, the portfolio has had an impact through the delivery of various kinds of training. Agronomic training, mostly through farmer field schools, has been valued by the beneficiaries, who have been able to reproduce and use the knowledge that they had gained. Their business management skills have been strengthened to a limited extent by the training provided in agribusiness centres and cooperatives. The training provided to the staff of rural financial institutions has contributed to acceptable recovery rates and institutional resilience.
21. Sustainability. Most of the farmers and their organizations are still in the process of adopting improved practices. Their profits and yields, though gradually decreasing, are still above their pre-project levels, but one of the greatest challenges to be met in order to sustain those levels has to do with the affordability

and availability of inputs. The farmers appear to be unable to rely entirely on a collective process for marketing their produce owing to a general lack of trust in one another. Road construction works have continued to provide better physical access to markets but, given the lack of resources for road maintenance, they may, in time, fall into disrepair once again.

22. The outlook for the operational sustainability of the country's rural financial institutions is promising; 88 per cent of the CBs and 83 per cent of the FSAs have been able to cover their operating costs. Nonetheless, the inability of the Apex Bank to develop a convincing banking model and strategy poses a threat to the entire network of rural financial institutions. The Apex Bank has not succeeded in acting as a central bank for rural financial institutions and has not yet been able to operate without external support.
23. The sustainability of government institutions supported by IFAD, including district councils and ward committees, is still questionable owing to the lack of funding and high staff turnover. Even the sustainability of their acquired skills is at risk, since, after an election, staff replacements are common, and skill sets are not always transferred. Moreover, it is difficult for decentralized institutions to obtain funds from the central government for the maintenance and repair of IFAD-supported hardware.
24. Innovation. A number of innovations have been identified, such as the use of youth service providers. This innovation has proved to be beneficial for the young people concerned and has also helped to ease the burden on government resources. The establishment of property cadastral systems was an entirely new development in Sierra Leone and, though still at a very early stage, is yielding promising results. Rural institutional models had been applied in rural finance programmes elsewhere but had not been used in a post-conflict situation before. Other initiatives include the use of a loan recovery system for agricultural activities and the Open Data Kit approach for electronic data collection.
25. Scaling up. The local youth contractor strategy, which is now used by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and others, is seen as the best candidate for scaling up. Some replication has been observed, including of the pilot for a property cadastral system and the establishment of rural finance institutes in locations other than those receiving rural finance support.
26. Gender equality and women's empowerment. Positive results have been achieved with the Gender Action Learning System (GALS). In general, gender quotas have contributed to the achievement of equal participation on the part of women in activities and decision-making, but the level of participation by women in training activities has been very low. Many women have taken up managerial positions in community-based institutions, and the greater decision-making power that this has given them has helped them to take advantage of new economic opportunities; additionally, they have received equal treatment in terms of loan fund allocation. Even in the case of cocoa plantation owners, 35 per cent of the beneficiaries of IFAD's portfolio have been women. However, the Fund has not been able to do much to increase the proportion of female extension staff, which was flagged as a priority need by many respondents. Gender- and age-disaggregated data have not been consistently reported by the projects.
27. The environment and natural resource management. The agricultural activities supported by the portfolio are environmentally sound. Farmers have been equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to use good agricultural and water management practices, although the unavailability of improved certified seeds is seen as an impediment to the continued use of environmentally friendly practices and technologies. An effort has been made to work towards the introduction of fair trade and organic cocoa production, and demand for this type of cocoa appears to be promising.

28. **Adaptation to climate change.** Some activities have been specifically aimed at addressing the need to adapt to climate change; most of the funding for these activities has been provided by the Global Environment Facility. Although the design of these activities was promising, implementation has been less successful. For example, rainwater harvesting, community forests and weather stations have not taken off as expected, and a number of water catchment dams have already become dilapidated. The recently introduced short-duration rice seed is seen as a relevant solution for adapting to climate change, provided that it remains available.
29. **Knowledge management.** The 2003 COSOP did not identify actions related to knowledge management, but such actions were discussed in the 2010 COSOP. However, the knowledge management strategy is incomplete. In addition, the 2010 COSOP framework has not been used to mainstream learning and knowledge management, and relevant indicators have not been established or monitored. The focus of the knowledge management strategy has been on communication, while local experience has been used to no more than a limited extent in country-level policy dialogues or programme development work.
30. **Partnership-building.** IFAD's partnerships at national level have consistently focused on the exchange of information on intended actions. This is in keeping with the practices of the other major development partners in Sierra Leone, but strategic partnerships of this type have not contributed to the delivery of cofinancing or leverage in IFAD's country programme. IFAD did not make use of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework in 2014 as an opportunity to explore further potential partnerships and joint programming opportunities with other United Nations agencies.
31. **Policy engagement.** The policy areas identified in the COSOPs are all relevant, and successful forms of engagement with some government institutions have emerged, but most instances of policy engagement have focused on lending operations. IFAD's engagement in two of the four identified policy areas – rural finance and decentralization - has been undertaken directly with government agencies rather than being routed through the relevant sectoral working groups or ongoing policy processes. The Fund has not systematically drawn on lessons or experiences gained within the projects that could be used in policy development in the two policy areas where it has engaged in a substantive manner. The development of a new agricultural finance policy and strategy for the rural finance network in Sierra Leone is, however, a good example of engagement.
32. **Grants.** The majority of assessed global and regional grants have revolved around important themes that are relevant to the different country strategies. Nonetheless, they were not planned as part of those strategies. Although potential links are alluded to in some of the grant documents, it is difficult to detect linkages between the grants and loans. Moreover, current country programme management teams and implementation unit staff appear to be only minimally aware of IFAD's global/regional grants. Overall, the majority of the grants have been effective in introducing new techniques or practices and in promoting collaborative efforts with local and international partners and public-private partnerships, but the sustainability of these project benefits after grant completion has been relatively weak.
33. **IFAD as a partner.** Except during the civil war, IFAD has been constantly engaged with Sierra Leone over the past 40 years and has invested substantial resources and time in the design, supervision and support for implementation of the portfolio; it has also demonstrated its willingness to provide support in addressing implementation issues. The Fund has proactively made adjustments where desired, usually with good results. It has also drawn on its global experience in fostering the development of rural financial institutions in the country. It has not, however,

effectively brought its global experience to bear in helping to connect farmers with their potential markets.

34. The thematic approach to the design of agricultural production projects and rural finance projects has helped to avoid the complexity that is often a prohibitive factor in fragile contexts. The client survey shows that IFAD's performance is perceived as improving. Nonetheless, IFAD has not worked closely enough with other development partners on design and implementation support, and its limited country presence has hindered its meaningful engagement in non-lending activities.
35. Government as a partner. The Government of Sierra Leone has been a close partner of IFAD, providing active support in the design and implementation of IFAD projects, and has also consequently played a strong role in the conception and implementation of lending operations. The decision to have a dedicated national programme coordination unit for all IFAD-supported projects has resulted in the successful implementation of projects under its charge. The decision taken in 2009 to decentralize part of the project management staffing table at the district level so that staff would be in closer touch with project activities was a further step in the right direction.
36. The Government has discharged its fiduciary responsibilities reasonably well but has also consistently disbursed less of its share of the funding than had been planned at the design stage. The procurement processes and procedures have mostly been handled effectively and properly. M&E systems have been functional but weak in terms of data quality and consistency, especially with regard to the collection of data on outcomes, and insufficient use has been made of the data for decision-making and learning, with the focus being on communication as opposed to knowledge management.

D. Conclusions

37. IFAD has managed to maintain the relevance of its portfolio in Sierra Leone by responding to the priorities that are typically associated with a fragile context. Immediately after the civil war, the portfolio was oriented towards providing support for the building of productive assets and infrastructure and then was gradually shifted towards enhancing growth in production, rural finance and roads. The situation in the country has remained fragile, and the interventions undertaken in IFAD's portfolio have been carefully selected and implemented in line with that situation. Thus, the support for decentralization, the strengthening of the Government's limited capacity to support the nation's farmers and support for youth employment have all been particularly suitable components of the portfolio. Similarly, the rehabilitation of roads has been an especially significant type of intervention in a country with limited resources.
38. The overall focus on poverty has been successful, and IFAD support has reached an even larger target group than had been planned. With IFAD's support, vast areas of land that had not previously been used effectively for primary production activities have been converted into productive assets, thereby helping to raise the incomes of a large number of farmers who now grow crops on that land. The projects' reliance on self-selection processes for poverty targeting has worked out well in practice. All the projects have also been successful in setting up, supporting and capacitating rural grass-roots groups and rural financial institutions. This has not only contributed to their empowerment but has also helped to make the various activities more effective.

39. The portfolio's success in the area of rural finance has been driven by a well-conceived focus on expanding its reach, but it has fallen short of achieving true financial inclusion because it has left out some of the potential beneficiaries. Overall, the approach based on selected rural financial institutions has proved to be appropriate for the demanding operational environment existing in rural Sierra Leone; these local institutions are sustainable, and the network currently serves some 200,000 rural households. However, farmers have constituted only a small proportion of the clientele. The strategies and approaches for widening the scope of outreach and deepening the impact of this network of rural financial institutions, particularly in relation to the Apex Bank's role and ways to develop the scale and modalities of rural lending, need to be revisited.
40. The sequential approach has helped to build on the accomplishments of past projects, but inter-project synergy has been less successful. The thematic designs of IFAD projects have been very similar, and this has been helpful in applying lessons learned from predecessor projects to successor projects. On the other hand, because of delays in the implementation of predecessor projects, there has on occasion been insufficient time to learn lessons fully before attempting to apply them. Furthermore, some of the assumptions made when linking projects (such as having farmer-based organizations avail themselves of loans from rural financial institutions) have been questionable.
41. The portfolio's focus on youth inclusion is noteworthy, but a more strategic approach to mainstreaming young men and women, who make up such a large part of the population of Sierra Leone, should be adopted. All projects were designed to include women and youth in the target group, but none of these design components was based on the results of a youth analysis. Some effort has been made to structure the work in one of the projects, but its Youth Action Plan was introduced only towards the end of the project, which may have resulted in the use of an ad hoc approach to youth mainstreaming. The numbers of young beneficiaries have been reported, but this has been done in the absence of a specifically structured approach.
42. The country's resource-poor and fragile situation is likely to pose a threat to the sustainability of benefits, infrastructure and institutions. The lack of access to good-quality seeds, fertilizers, equipment and other inputs is putting downward pressure on the productivity levels of rice crops that were achieved during the project implementation periods, and the projects have capacitated far too few private sector input suppliers in order to reach all the farmers. Furthermore, mechanized farm equipment is in limited supply in the country, and its cost is also a constraint. There is a risk that the lack of sufficient government resources will result in a reversal of the benefits afforded by the available infrastructure (roads) and by government institutions (IFAD's implementing partners), government departments (for extension services) and decentralized government bodies (tasked with prioritizing and meeting community needs).
43. To attain the portfolio's development goal, the creation of market linkages should have been mainstreamed in the portfolio rather than treated as an ancillary production objective. Insufficient effort has been devoted to creating market linkages for farmers. The agribusiness centres are primarily engaged in supporting their members in processing their produce; they do not offer a service to help farmers to operate as a group and to buy inputs and sell their produce collectively. The rice cooperative has failed to perform as a buyer. Therefore, even though farmers have succeeded in increasing their output, they have ended up being price-takers, which makes it hard for them to realize the full income potential of that increase.

44. The singular focus on increasing food production has come at the cost of diversification and nutrition. The portfolio's focus has primarily been on crop production (mainly rice, cocoa and palm and, to a lesser extent, vegetables). There was a minor component dealing with livestock in one of the projects, but livestock-related activities have been absent for the most part. While boosting food production was critical in the initial stages, as part of the natural evolution of its portfolio, IFAD should have more actively pursued diversification into non-food crops and cash crops such as vegetables and livestock as a way of increasing beneficiaries' resilience to economic and climatic shocks.
45. The effectiveness of the lending portfolio has been diminished by the fact that IFAD has not prioritized or had the capacity to address constraints identified in the course of its non-lending work. Although the Government of Sierra Leone considers IFAD to be its partner of choice in driving the agenda on rural development forward, the Fund has not been able to fully leverage its potential in this regard. One of the reasons for this is that priority has not been placed on efforts to feed lessons about what has worked at the project level and challenges from the field level into the broader in-country discourse regarding ways of becoming more effective, thus limiting IFAD's potential contribution to rural development. Another reason is the insufficient number of staff available to manage the country programme.

E. Recommendations

46. Recommendation 1: Deepen the development impact of agricultural growth by focusing more on strengthening linkages along the value chain. Horizontal and vertical linkages should be strengthened along the value chain in order to facilitate sustainable pro-poor development in a fragile context. The new COSOP should focus on improving relationships among stakeholders, including buyers, sellers, service providers and regulatory institutions. Multi-stakeholder forums should be established that will bring together value chain actors so that they can engage in a dialogue that will result in improved communication and foster trust. Knowledge and information about prices and other market conditions should be provided to poor producers and their groups. The focus of future projects should also be on developing systematic partnerships with private sector actors and creating incentives for their participation, including risk- and cost-sharing mechanisms. A rigorous technical analysis of value chain viability must be undertaken early on in the project design stage, and the findings should be shared with all stakeholders. At the policy and regulatory level, IFAD must assist the Government in creating an enabling environment for private sector participation and for public-private partnerships, ideally in collaboration with other development partners.
47. Recommendation 2: Pursue diversification more vigorously as a strategy for improving nutrition and building economic resilience. The focus of the portfolio has primarily been on crop production. This has meant that beneficiaries' incomes remain exposed to climate- and market/price-related shocks. Furthermore, while nutrition has been emphasized in the COSOP, the assumption has been that increases in income (which depend on crops alone) will drive improvements in nutrition. The new COSOP should put the spotlight on resilience and nutrition based on a more emphatic approach to diversification. Thus, the scope of future projects should be expanded to include not only crop production but also other subsectors (e.g. livestock) as a pathway to increased economic benefits, improved resilience and better nutrition. Livestock is also a thrust area of the Government's development plan and has a proven potential in rural development. As women traditionally tend smaller animals, activities should be specifically targeted in that direction.

48. Recommendation 3: Elevate the level of engagement in rural finance by building on existing structures and increased awareness about rural finance in the country. IFAD should continue to engage with rural finance in Sierra Leone but should pay greater attention to the underserved farming community. Apart from the achievements of its rural finance projects and the structures that they have helped to create, future interventions will also benefit from an increased awareness in rural communities of financial products and their potential. IFAD should focus on making the Apex Bank a competent, profitable and professionally managed umbrella organization capable of serving the CB/FSA network through the design of an appropriate, comprehensive strategy and business plan. The design of a system for implementing a modern, flexible agricultural lending policy for CBs and FSAs needs to be finalized. IFAD must support the development of CB/FSA outreach and impact through the introduction of new services and policies on deposits, loans and dividends using IT-based solutions and linkages with other financial institutions where appropriate. The Fund should explore the possibility of opening a flexible refinancing window for the Apex Bank to attract incremental funding from multiple sources with a view to substantially expanding the rural portfolio in the CB/FSA network and beyond.
49. Recommendation 4: Strike a balance between the existing almost exclusive focus on development and oversight of individual projects and a focus on the management of the country programme. This should involve mainstreaming non-lending and grants programme instruments as part of a coherent strategy in the next COSOP. The following actions in this regard are recommended.
- (i) A well-designed knowledge management strategy should be adopted that facilitates improved M&E systems at the project level (that also feed into national donor-based M&E systems), promotes a deeper understanding of impact pathways in a fragile context and sets out indicators for measuring progress in knowledge management.
 - (ii) IFAD should participate more actively in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and the coordination groups for agricultural and rural sector donors. In order to shape its policy engagement with the Government of Sierra Leone, IFAD should cease to rely solely on the experience gained through its own projects and should instead provide a platform for a broader group of stakeholders, including research organizations, NGOs and private sector agencies that are involved in, or are a part of, the rural landscape. This platform could be created by inviting these stakeholders to donor and development partner coordination meetings. Greater efforts should be made to work with other Rome-based agencies on such issues as food security, gender equality and resilience. To achieve a greater impact, IFAD should also increase the scope of its engagement with the Government by working more closely with all the ministries involved in rural development.
 - (iii) Increased engagement should be supported by the provision of adequate financial and human resources. Adding additional capacity along with relevant technical skills in the IFAD Country Office (ICO) will leave the country programme manager (CPM) and the country programme officer (CPO) with more time to pursue non-lending activities. Increased proximity will also facilitate a deeper understanding of the fragility of the situation.

50. Recommendation 5: Strengthen the targeting focus of the country portfolio by mainstreaming youth into a country-specific youth strategy. A needs assessment based on a vulnerability analysis must be conducted to identify the needs of the young population in Sierra Leone and to determine which of those needs can best be addressed by IFAD-supported projects. A youth strategy should then be developed on this basis which will help unlock the potential of the nation's youth in the agricultural sector. The strategy should also include suggested activities, linkages to other development partners and suggested responsibilities. The youth strategy and related activities need to be implemented in a structural manner, and the targeting capacity of the National Programme Coordination Unit (NPCU) should be strengthened with the addition of dedicated staff who possess youth expertise. Youth participation must be closely monitored, not only in terms of the numbers of young people reached but also in terms of how effectively they are able to participate. Activities should be designed in such a way that there is a considerable likelihood that the young people concerned can sustain those activities without external support.

Agreement at Completion Point

A. Introduction

1. This is the first country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) in the Republic of Sierra Leone conducted by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE). The main objectives of the CSPE were to: (i) assess the results and performance of the IFAD-financed country strategy and programme; and (ii) generate findings and recommendations for the future partnership between IFAD and the Republic of Sierra Leone for enhanced development effectiveness and rural poverty eradication.
2. The CSPE assessed the IFAD-Government partnership pursued under the country strategic opportunity programmes (COSOPs) of 2003 and 2010. To inform the assessment, the CSPE covered: (i) the lending portfolio (US\$201 million across four loans effective between 2003 and 2019, and one IFAD-supervised project); (ii) non-lending activities (knowledge management, policy dialogue, partnership-building, and selected grants); and (iii) performance of IFAD and the Government.
3. This agreement at completion point (ACP) contains recommendations based on the evaluation findings and conclusions presented in the CSPE report, as well as proposed follow-up actions as agreed by IFAD and the Government. The ACP is signed by the Government of Sierra Leone (represented by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry as well as the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development) and IFAD Management (represented by the Associate Vice President of the Programme Management Department). The signed ACP is an integral part of the CSPE report in which the evaluation findings are presented in detail, and will be submitted to the IFAD Executive Board as an annex to the new country strategic opportunity programme for Sierra Leone. The implementation of the recommendations agreed upon will be tracked through the President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions, which is presented to the IFAD Executive Board on an annual basis by the Fund's Management.

B. Recommendations and proposed follow-up actions

4. Recommendation 1: Deepen the developmental impact of agricultural growth through a sharper focus on strengthening linkages along the value chain. The CSPE recommends strengthening the horizontal and vertical linkages along the value chain is important for sustainable pro-poor development in a fragile context to occur. In this regard, the new COSOP should focus on improving relationships among the stakeholders, including buyers, sellers, service providers and regulatory institutions. Multi-stakeholder forums that bring together value chain actors to develop dialogue between them, with the aim of improving communication and trust, should be pursued. Knowledge and information on prices and other market conditions should be provided to poor producers and their groups.
5. The focus of future projects should also be on developing systematic partnerships with the private sector actors and creating incentives for their participation, including mechanisms for risk and cost-sharing. A strong technical analysis on viability of value chains must be undertaken early at the project design stage, and shared with all stakeholders. At the policy and regulatory level, IFAD must assist the government in creating an enabling environment for private sector participation and for public-private partnerships, ideally in collaboration with other development partners.

6. The Round-table at the National Workshop proposed incentives for attracting private sector in agro-processing and agri-businesses by developing infrastructure such as storage and preservation facilities, providing assistance in obtaining certification for food standards, packaging and labelling of products, deploying financial instruments that play a catalytic role in directing private sector financing into rural micro, small and medium enterprises, etc.
7. Proposed follow up. IFAD and the Government agree with the recommendation to further strengthen linkages along the value chains with particular focus on strengthening the relations with the private sector. The activities to achieve that will include:
 - The design of future IFAD-financed value chain projects will be based on a strong viability analysis undertaken early at the project design stage;
 - Under the Agricultural Value Chain Development Project, multi-stakeholder platforms will be set up to bring together value chain actors to develop dialogue between them, with the aim of improving communication and trust. Likewise, the platforms will serve to exchange knowledge and information on prices and other market conditions;
 - IFAD will support the government in creating an enabling environment for private sector participation and for public-private partnerships, through the financing of analytical papers and knowledge exchange trips that can feed into the required policy formulation;
 - Building on past experiences, the IFAD-financed country programme will strengthen and expand outgrower schemes to better link smallholder producers to medium and large-scale entities for agricultural production and offtake;
 - IFAD-financed projects will continue to create the conditions for increased private sector investment by developing relevant infrastructure as well as enhancing technical capacity and soft skills among smallholder farmers.

Responsible partners: all projects, MAF and IFAD.

Timeline: 2020 onwards.

8. Recommendation 2: Pursue diversification more vigorously as a strategy to improve nutrition and build economic resilience. The focus of the portfolio has primarily been on crop production. This has meant that incomes of beneficiaries remain exposed to climate- and market/price- related shocks. Further, while nutrition has been emphasised in the COSOP, the assumption has been that income increases (which depend on crops alone) will drive improvements in nutrition.
9. The new COSOP should put the spotlight on resilience and nutrition through a more emphatic approach to diversification. Thus, the future scope of the projects should be expanded from crop production to include other sub-sectors as for example livestock as a pathway to increased economic benefits, improved resilience and better nutrition. Livestock is also a thrust area of the government's development plan and is an area with a proven potential in rural development. As women are traditionally keepers of smaller animals, activities should specifically target them.
10. Proposed follow up. The Government and IFAD agree that further emphasis should be put on livelihood diversification in order to strengthen nutrition and economic resilience. The Government and IFAD agree to:
 - Include activities to diversify the livelihood of the beneficiary families in future IFAD-funded projects and in the process create a balance between the main staple crops (rice and cassava) and the others. This is likely to include

livestock development, with particular focus on production systems and animal health.

Responsible partners: all projects, MAF and IFAD.

Timeline: From 2021/2022 when the next IFAD-funded project design is scheduled.

11. Recommendation 3: Elevate the engagement in rural finance by building on the existing structures and the increased awareness of rural finance in the country. The CSPE recommends that IFAD continue engaging in rural finance in Sierra Leone but pay greater attention to the underserved farming community. Apart from the achievements and the structures created under its rural finance projects, future interventions will also benefit from the increased awareness in rural communities on financial products and their potential.
12. IFAD should focus on making the Apex Bank a competent, profitable and professionally managed umbrella organisation capable of serving the CB/FSA network through the design of an appropriate, comprehensive strategic and business plan. The design of the implementation of modern, flexible agricultural lending policy for CB and FSAs needs to be finalised. IFAD must support the development of the outreach and impact of the CBs and FSAs through the introduction of new services and policies in deposits, loans and dividends, using IT based solutions and linkages with other financial institutions when appropriate. IFAD should explore a flexible, multi-financier re-financing window for the Apex Bank to attract incremental funding from multiple sources to substantially expand the rural portfolios in the CB/FSA network and beyond.
13. The Round Table at the National Workshop highlighted the need to strengthen the Apex Bank's operations, conduct capacity building of CBs and FSAs towards agricultural lending and for the rural financial institutions to expand their product portfolio by providing different products to suit different requirements, with borrowing terms and interest rates adequately reflecting the risk underlying each product. It was also proposed that IFAD-supported projects should include activities to sensitize the loan recipients on the need to avoid loan defaults.
14. Proposed follow up. The Government and IFAD agree to the recommendation to deepen the engagement in rural finance, particularly by making the APEX Bank a competent, profitable and professionally managed umbrella organisation capable of serving the network of community banks and financial service associations. In that regard, the IFAD-financed country programme will:
 - Strengthen the capacity of the APEX bank to provide agricultural lending by hiring specialised staff to the agri-finance unit within the APEX Bank and further fine-tune the agricultural lending policy;
 - Provide capacity building of the CBs and FSAs towards agricultural lending and for these rural financial institutions to expand their product portfolio by providing products to suit different requirements;
 - Strengthen agricultural lending by fast-tracking the implementation of the additional financing for the Agricultural Finance Facility under the APEX Bank;
 - To continuously look to improve cost-efficiency within the APEX bank and rural financial institution network, which will facilitate that competitive interest rates can be offered to the beneficiaries of rural financial services;
 - IFAD will support the APEX Bank in exploring the potential establishment of a multi-financier re-financing window for the Apex Bank to attract incremental funding from multiple sources;
 - In order to attract additional financing sources, the parties commit to ensuring that governance of the APEX Bank adhere to international practices

and in accordance with the institution's Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Responsible partners: RFCIP-II, APEX Bank, Bank of Sierra Leone, MOF, MAF, IFAD.

Timeline: 2020 onwards.

15. Recommendation 4: Re-balance the focus from an almost exclusive focus on development and over-sight of individual projects to management of the country programme. This should involve mainstreaming non-lending and grants programme instruments as part of a coherent strategy in the next COSOP. The CSPE recommends the following actions in this regard.
16. A well-designed knowledge management strategy should be adopted that facilitates improved M&E systems at project level (that also feed into the national donor-based M&E systems), promotes deeper understanding of impact pathways in a fragile context and proposes indicators to measure progress in knowledge management.
17. IFAD should participate more actively in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and the coordination groups for agricultural and rural sector donors. In order to shape its policy engagement with the Government IFAD should go beyond using only the experience of its own projects through providing a platform to a broader group of stakeholders such as research organizations, NGOs and private sector that are involved in, or are a part of, the rural landscape. The platform can be provided through inviting these stakeholders to donor and development partners' coordination group meetings. More efforts should be made to collaborate with other Rome-based agencies on food security, gender equality and resilience. To achieve greater impact, IFAD should increase the scope of its engagement with the Government by working more closely with all ministries involved in rural development.
18. Increased engagement should be supported by adequate financial and human resources. Adding additional capacity with relevant technical skills in the ICO, will leave the CPM and the CPO with more time to pursue non-lending activities. Increased proximity will also facilitate deeper understanding of the fragility context.
19. The Round Table at the National Workshop proposed that IFAD conduct regular discussions on its programmes in the country through media and other strategic policy making forums in order to present evidence from implementation of its projects to the Government. IFAD-supported programmes should also share the baseline data collected by them with users of agricultural information either through its website or through other media.
20. Proposed follow up. The Government and IFAD agree to the recommendation to further strengthen the country programme approach. This will include:
 - The design of a knowledge management strategy for the country programme which will facilitate improved M&E systems at project level as well as strengthen their linkages to the Government M&E systems, particularly those at Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Ministry of Planning and Economic Development. The strategy will also propose indicators to measure progress in knowledge management;
 - IFAD will play a more prominent role within the coordinated implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, particularly by regular participation of the IFAD Country Director in the UNCT meetings (despite his/her being posted outside the country) and the systematic participation by the IFAD Country Programme Officer in the Deputies' Group and the Programme Management Team. The Country

Programme Officer will furthermore play a proactive role in the revitalization of the agricultural working group under the UNCT;

- Subject to budget restrictions, IFAD will seek to maximise its presence in its Freetown office by also recruiting consultants, UN volunteers and other categories with required qualifications;
- IFAD and the Government will conduct portfolio results reviews at regular intervals in order to identify possible performance issues and take corrective action as required. The results should be communicated to relevant media in order to increase visibility.


Responsible partners: all projects, MAF and IFAD.

Timeline: 2020 onwards.

21. Recommendation 5: Strengthen the targeting focus by mainstreaming youth in the country portfolio through a country-specific youth strategy. A needs assessment based on vulnerability analysis must be conducted to identify the needs of the youth in Sierra Leone and select those that can be addressed by IFAD-supported projects. Based on this, a youth strategy should be developed which will help unlock their potential in agriculture, includes suggested activities, linkages to other development partners and suggested responsibilities. The youth strategy and related activities need to be implemented in a structural manner, and the targeting unit in the NPCU should be appropriately strengthened with a dedicated youth expert staff. Youth participation must be strongly monitored, not only in numbers but also in relevant monitoring questions. Activities should be designed in such a way, that there is a considerable likelihood that the youth can sustain them without external support.
22. Proposed follow up. IFAD and the Government agree to further focus on the involvement of youth in agriculture and the off-farm economy in the countryside. In order to do that the country programme will:
 - Based on the work of the National Youth Commission and in close collaboration with the Ministry of Youth Affairs, the country programme will conduct a needs assessment to identify the needs of the youth in Sierra Leone and select those that can be addressed by IFAD-supported projects.
 - Based on the assessment, a youth strategy will be developed which will help unlock young people's potential in agriculture. The strategy will include suggested activities, linkages to other development partners and responsibilities. The strategy will provide guidance for the improved implementation of the ongoing country programme and serve as blueprint for the design of future IFAD-financed projects in Sierra Leone.

Responsible partners: all projects, MAF, MYA and IFAD.

Timeline: 2020 onwards. Signed by:



H.E. Dennis K. Vandi
Minister for Agriculture and Forestry
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Government of Sierra Leone

 6/Feb./2020

H.E. Francis M. Kai-Kai
Minister for Planning and Economic Development
Ministry of Planning and Economic Development
Government of Sierra Leone



Mr. Donal Brown
Associate Vice-President
Programme Management Department
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Republic of Sierra Leone

Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation

I. Background

A. Introduction

1. In line with the IFAD Evaluation Policy, and as approved by the IFAD Executive Board at its 125th Session, the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) has undertaken a country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) in Sierra Leone. This is the first country programme evaluation to be conducted by IOE in Sierra Leone. It was originally scheduled to be conducted in 2014 but was postponed owing to the Ebola virus disease outbreak.
2. Since this is the first CSPE for the country, the evaluation has covered the results and performance of two country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) – COSOP 2003 (covering the period from 2003 to 2009) and COSOP 2010 (covering the period from 2010 to 2015) – and the country strategy note for 2017–2018. Consequently, the evaluation encompasses a period of 17 years, from 2003 to 2019. The CSPE has identified the factors that have contributed to the achievement of strategic and lending objectives and results, including the management of project activities by IFAD and the Government, and IFAD's non-lending activities in the country. On the basis of that analysis, it then sets out its findings and recommendations.
3. The CSPE has benefited from two IOE evaluations/validations that covered Sierra Leone: the project completion report validation (PCRVR) of the Rural Finance and Community Improvement Programme (RFCIP), and the project performance evaluation (PPE) of the Rehabilitation and Community-based Poverty Reduction Project (RCPRP), which was conducted in conjunction with the CSPE.

B. Objectives, scope, methodology, thematic issues and processes

4. CSPEs are designed to evaluate what has been achieved by IFAD in a particular country while also facilitating forward-looking operational improvements and providing strategic guidance for IFAD's future partnerships with that government. Thus, they support both the learning and the accountability dimensions of IFAD's operations in a country. In line with this, the main objectives of this CSPE are to: (i) assess the results and performance of the IFAD-supported strategy and programmes in Sierra Leone; and (ii) generate findings and recommendations that will contribute to the future success of the partnership between IFAD and Sierra Leone in their joint effort to promote inclusive and sustainable rural development. The findings, lessons and recommendations presented in this CSPE will inform the preparation of the new COSOP in 2020, which is to be drawn up by IFAD in close consultation with the Government of Sierra Leone.

Scope

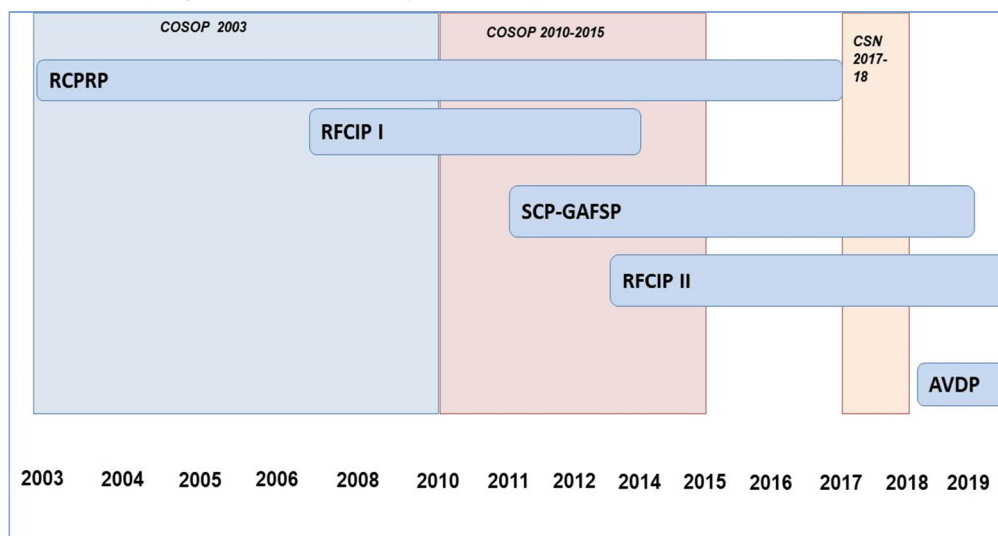
5. The CSPE provides an assessment of the outcomes, impact and performance of the activities conducted since 2003 and therefore covers both the 2003 and the 2010 COSOP. Three aspects of the IFAD country programme are assessed: lending activities, non-lending activities (knowledge management, partnership-building, implementation arrangements and country-level policy engagement), including grants, and IFAD's country strategy.
6. As part of the lending portfolio, this CSPE covers five projects approved after the 2003 COSOP (see table 1, below). Four are IFAD-funded projects, while the other one, the Smallholder Commercialization Programme (SCP), is funded by the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP) and supervised by IFAD. Although the latter is not strictly part of IFAD's lending portfolio, it has been

included in the evaluation in consultation with IFAD’s country programme manager (CPM) for Sierra Leone and the Government. The SCP is a government programme that has received a US\$50 million grant from the GAFSP and is therefore referred to as the SCP-GAFSP. Given IFAD’s long-standing experience in the agricultural sector, in general, and in Sierra Leone, in particular, and in view of the fact that the SCP-GAFSP includes most of the elements of IFAD-funded projects in the country, the Government requested that IFAD design and implement the programme. IFAD accepted that responsibility and has since finalized the design of the project and has supervised its implementation.

- (i) In terms of their implementation status, the five projects can be grouped as follows:
- (ii) Two projects – the RCPRP and RFCIP – are closed. The former has also been subject to a project performance evaluation by IOE.
- (iii) Two projects are at an advanced stage of implementation: the RFCIP-II and SCP-GAFSP.¹
- (iv) One project – the Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (AVDP) – was approved by IFAD’s Executive Board in 2018 and has become effective very recently.

Figure 1

Time line of projects and COSOPs (2003–2019) included in the CSPE



Source: Data compiled for the CSPE.

7. Figure 1 shows the time lines for the five projects covered in this CSPE and how they fit in with the two COSOPs. Projects that have been completed or have passed the mid-term review (MTR) point, i.e. projects in groups (i) and (ii) above, were evaluated on the basis of all the criteria, while the new project, AVDP, i.e. the group (iii) project above, was evaluated on the basis of its relevance. In the case of the RCPRP, since a PPE was undertaken by IOE, the CSPE used the ratings provided by the PPE; for the RFCIP, for which IOE had prepared a PCRV, the ratings provided by the PCRV were used in those cases where they were found to be in line with what was observed in the field by the evaluation team. The standard rating scale adopted by IOE for evaluating performance in terms of the established criteria is: 1 = highly unsatisfactory; 2 = unsatisfactory; 3 = moderately unsatisfactory; 4 = moderately satisfactory; 5 = satisfactory; 6 = highly satisfactory.

¹ The SCP-GAFSP was ongoing at the time of the writing of the first draft of this report. It was completed in September 2019 but is not yet closed.

Table 1
Evaluability of lending operations

<i>Project name</i>	<i>Project type</i>	<i>Total project cost</i>	<i>Board approval</i>	<i>Loan effectiveness (a)</i>	<i>Project completion (b) (duration a-b)</i>	<i>Evaluation criteria²</i>
Rehabilitation and Community-based Poverty Reduction Project (RCPRP)	Rural development	US\$45.8 million	18/12/2003	02/03/2006	31/03/2017 (11 years)	All (PPE ratings)
Rural Finance and Community Improvement Programme (RFCIP)	Credit and financial services	US\$12.63 million	18/04/2007	30/05/2008	30/06/2014 (6 years)	All (PCR/V ratings)
Smallholder Commercialization Programme (SCP-GAFSP)	Agricultural development	US\$56.46 million	11/05/2011	29/07/2011	30/09/2019 (8 years)	All
Rural Finance and Community Improvement Programme (RFCIP-II)	Credit and financial services	US\$47.38 million	03/04/2013	26/06/2013	30/06/2022 (9 years)	All
Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (AVDP)	Agricultural development	US\$60.30 million	13/12/2018	-	-	Relevance

Source: Operational Results Management System (ORMS), 2018.

Methodology

8. The evaluation framework presented in annex VIII also guided the overall assessment. The CSPE has covered three key aspects of the country programme that are crucial for achieving results on the ground:
- Assessment of lending activities. In preparing the CSPE, ample time and attention were devoted to the project portfolio assessment, as the bulk of IFAD activities at the country level are based on loan- or grant-funded investment projects and programmes. The analysis has followed a thematic approach in order to ensure coverage of some of the main issues identified in the approach paper. These issues were identified using the data provided by other IOE evaluations, which were supplemented with an analysis of the available monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data, project documentation and information collected during the preliminary mission to the country in March 2019.
 - Assessment of non-lending activities. The CSPE also includes an assessment of the relevance and effectiveness of non-lending activities, i.e. policy dialogue, knowledge management, partnership-building and grants. For grants, the assessment has included a review of a sample of global, regional and country-specific grants and their synergy with the lending portfolio. The assessment of non-lending activities is particularly important because IFAD plays a leading role in agricultural development in Sierra Leone and is therefore in a solid position to influence policy and partnerships through the knowledge gained from its experiences.
 - Partner performance. The CSPE covers the performance of partners in the management of the country programme. This evaluation includes an assessment of IFAD's implementation support and country presence as well

² The evaluation criteria are: rural poverty impact, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability of benefits, gender equality and women's empowerment, innovation and scaling up, natural resource management and adaptation to climate change. For more details on these criteria, see the 2016 IOE Evaluation Manual.

as the Government's contributions and role in the achievement of country programme results.

9. At the level of the country strategy and programme, the CSPE includes an analysis of how IFAD has defined and implemented its strategy (the 2003 and 2010 COSOPs) for reducing poverty in partnership with the Government, what results it has achieved and how. The CSPE assessment of the relevance and effectiveness of the country strategy and programme has been prepared by synthesizing findings regarding lending and non-lending activities and country programme management. In this regard, the CSPE has examined the two COSOPs and their reviews and operationalization, including how the strategy has been managed with a view to achieving the intended results.
10. Theory of change. The CSPE has used a variety of tools, approaches and resources as part of its methodology, one of which is the theory of change (TOC). The CSPE reviews the logical chain that has underpinned IFAD's partnership with the country during the period under review and identifies the underlying hypotheses and assumptions. As part of the theory-based approach to evaluation, the CSPE has traced the causal pathways for achieving the COSOP objectives using a TOC. The TOC presented in annex IX describes the results chain, from outcomes at programme level to outcomes at strategic level. The design and implementation of the projects should lead to the achievement of intermediate and final outcomes at the programme level, which in turn should lead to the achievement of higher-level outcomes or objectives at a strategic level. The CSPE has identified four project-level outcomes or impact pathways that were expected to drive results for attaining the strategic objectives of the country programme: improved production and productivity, improved and increased market access, enhanced institutional capacity to deliver results and strengthened rural financial services. Alongside these four areas, the achievement of strategic objectives was also expected to be underpinned by IFAD's policy engagement, its partnerships at strategic and programmatic levels, its knowledge management activities and the strategic use of grants.
11. Sources of data and information. An analysis of all relevant IFAD documentation during the desk review phase was undertaken to generate preliminary findings, identify missing information and assess the availability of data prior to the main mission. The preliminary findings were used to develop an evaluation matrix (annex VIII). The desk review included design documents, mid-term reviews, supervision reports, completion reports and impact assessments, as available. The review of non-lending activities used grant documents, COSOPs, portfolio review documents and knowledge products such as studies and publications. The bibliography can be found in annex X. IFAD corporate sources of data and information, such as the Grants and Investment Projects System (GRIPS), the Operational Results Management System (ORMS) and the Financial Management Dashboard, were used to retrieve information.
12. In order to gather additional information and to corroborate the information gathered during the desk review, the CSPE team undertook extensive field visits to selected sites in March and June 2019 covering all the projects under review. Field visits for the RCPRP and RFCIP were undertaken during the RCPRP PPE mission in March 2019, and the CSPE main mission team in June visited RFCIP-II and SCP-GAFSP project sites. These two missions covered 12 districts of Sierra Leone: Moyamba, Bo, Pujehun, Tonkolili, Bombali, Kambia, Port Loko, Bonthe, Koinadugu, Kenema, Kono and Kailahun. The missions conducted institutional visits and stakeholder interviews with IFAD, Government representatives, NGOs, private sector actors, service providers, beneficiaries and other development partners to gain insights into the lending, non-lending and strategy aspects of the projects. A list of respondents is given in annex V. In addition, focus group discussions were held with groups of beneficiaries in the field, and a focus group

discussion on the topic of agricultural marketing was conducted with key experts in Freetown.

13. Field study. A mixed-method rural finance study was also conducted as part of this CSPE with a view to identifying the profiles of RFCIP-II beneficiaries who accessed loans. Those profiles were determined by such factors as whether they were mainly farmers or had alternative primary income sources, how the loan was used and what impact it generated. They were then coupled with an assessment of the constraints on the demand side (nature of agricultural production and nature of markets) and the supply side (lack of products tailored to the particular aspects of agricultural production). However, it is noted that, due to the absence of a baseline and a lack of information on the quality of recall data, the results could be used for the purposes of a correlation analysis, but not as a basis for drawing causal inferences. Additionally, the sampling of the rural financial institutions was not random, whereas the sampling of the households was (see the report in annex XI).
14. Evaluation criteria. The loan projects were assessed using the standard IOE evaluation criteria.³ As per IOE's norms, the CSPE did not re-rate criteria from prior evaluations for closed projects. For the non-lending activities, the levels of performance on policy engagement, partnerships and knowledge management were assessed (and rated) separately, but an overall rating was given. The performance of partners (IFAD, Government) was assessed and rated. Finally, the findings from all these analyses were synthesized to arrive at a country strategy and programme performance evaluation, and ratings for relevance and effectiveness were assigned.
15. Thematic areas. Based on the desk review, meetings with present and past CPMs, government officials, development partners and other stakeholders, the CSPE identified four thematic areas in the lending portfolio. These areas fully encapsulate the thrust of IFAD's strategy and programme for shaping development efforts in a context of fragility, and they therefore constitute the underlying focus of this CSPE.
16. In addition to these areas, there are cross-cutting elements, such as youth, that were taken into consideration where relevant. Young people are particularly important to agriculture. Given that 80 per cent of the population is under 35 years of age and that 60 per cent of young people (aged 10-35) are unemployed or underemployed, agriculture has the potential to enhance the role of youth in the development process.

³ The 2017 Agreement between IFAD Management and IOE on the Harmonization of IFAD's independent evaluation and self-evaluation methods and systems establishes the most up-to-date set of evaluation criteria. IFAD, 2017, annex I, p. 5.

Box 1

Thematic areas selected for analysis in this CSPE

Productive capacity. Production of major crops has recovered since the end of the civil conflict. However, domestic yields of rice, cocoa and palm oil are still far below the desired levels, with the result that the country spends US\$200 million of its sparse foreign exchange on rice imports. Additionally, rice has been identified as one of the four main clusters targeted by the Government's new policy initiative. This theme has played a part in the strategic objectives of both the 2003 and 2010 COSOPs. IFAD's interventions in this area have been aimed at helping the rural production sector to transition from rehabilitation to longer-term development. Projects in which this theme is one of the focus areas: RCPRP, SC-GAFSP and AVDP.

Agricultural marketing. The marketing of agricultural produce in Sierra Leone is hampered by: (i) the low quality and a lack of standardization of farmers' products; (ii) the absence of formal contracts between farmers/farmer groups and the private sector; (iii) the scarcity of technical and economic support for farmers; and (iv) poor infrastructure. This theme has played a part in the strategic objectives of both the 2003 and 2010 COSOPs. IFAD-supported and -supervised projects in the country have attempted to establish market linkages for farmers by linking farmer groups to cooperatives, supporting agribusiness centres (ABCs) and rehabilitating roads. Projects in which this theme is one of the focus areas: RCPRP, SC-GAFSP and AVDP.

Rural finance. The importance of rural finance in the portfolio is underscored by the fact that it is a strategic objective in the 2003 and 2010 COSOPs. IFAD's focus in the area of rural finance has been on strengthening and broadening financial services' outreach to the rural sector through the provision of support for the operation of sustainable and autonomous rural financial institutions and the promotion of agricultural financial products. The CSPE has assessed the sustainability of financial institutions based on the presence or absence of a conducive policy framework, good governance, financial independence and technical capacity. Projects in which this theme is one of the focus areas: RFCIP and RFCIP-II.

(Decentralized) institutional strengthening. In 2004, the Government adopted a strategy for consolidating peace and reducing poverty based on decentralization and local empowerment. Local councils (district councils and ward councils) were established as a result. These councils also have a role in coordinating the donor programmes involved in local and rural development. Their leadership in this area is complemented by the active participation of representatives from farmers' organizations and the private sector in these coordination activities (quarterly meetings, mapping, etc.). Thus, the performance of local governments directly impacts the delivery of IFAD's interventions and their sustainability. This theme was a focus of the 2003 and 2010 COSOPs. Projects in which this theme is one of the focus areas: RCPRP and SCP-GAFSP.

Source: Data compiled for the CSPE.

Process

17. The CSPE has followed the standard process laid out in the IOE Evaluation Manual, which includes an initial desk review. This was followed by a preparatory mission to brief stakeholders on the upcoming evaluation and to review the availability of M&E data and the feasibility of a mini-survey. The desk review phase (April to May 2019) included a comprehensive review of the available documentation for the lending and non-lending portfolios.
18. Country mission. The main country mission took place from 10 to 27 June 2019. The purpose of the mission was to cross-check and verify the initial findings from the desk review and the self-assessment. This included extensive stakeholder consultations in order to obtain feedback on the COSOPs' performance and focus group discussions.
19. Draft report and review. The draft report was first peer-reviewed by IOE. Thereafter, it was shared with the West and Central Africa Division (WCA) and the Government simultaneously for their review. The draft report will also be shared with development partners, as appropriate. The report will be revised

independently by IOE, and audit trails will be prepared to explain how comments were taken into consideration

20. Finalization, dissemination and follow-up. The report is to be finalized by IOE. A national workshop was organized in Freetown in November 2019 to discuss the issues and recommendations raised by the CSPE, to agree on key points to be included in the agreement at completion point (ACP) and to reflect on strategic issues that will inform the forthcoming Sierra Leone COSOP. The final CSPE report will be presented by IOE to the Evaluation Committee in 2020. It will also be presented for discussion with the IFAD Executive Board when it is considering the new proposed Sierra Leone COSOP.
21. Stakeholder participation and communication. At the end of the CSPE process, a national workshop was conducted in order to: (i) discuss the main issues emerging from the CSPE; (ii) provide inputs for the preparation of the ACP; and (iii) provide an opportunity for reflecting on key recommendations and issues for the next COSOP, to be prepared in 2020.
22. Agreement at completion point. According to the IFAD Evaluation Policy, evaluations conclude with an agreement at completion point (ACP), which presents the main findings and recommendations contained in the evaluation report that the Government and IFAD's Programme Management Department agree to adopt and implement within a specific time frame. The ACP will be prepared after the national workshop is held so that it can incorporate the outcomes of that discussion. IOE does not sign the agreement and is responsible only for facilitating the process leading up to the preparation of the ACP. After the Government and IFAD have agreed on the main follow-up actions, the ACP will be shared with IOE for review and comments and thereafter signed by the Ministry of Finance and the Associate Vice-President for Programmes of IFAD. The ACP will be included in the final published report and included as an annex in the COSOP document to be discussed with the Executive Board of IFAD.
23. Limitations. The main limitation in regard to quantitative data has had to do with the availability and quality of data on outcomes and impacts, which is in turn attributable to the inadequacy of the M&E frameworks and to the fact that the relevant indicators have not been fully defined. Primary data collection was conducted by the evaluation team using qualitative methods (focus group discussions and key informant interviews) but was in some instances limited in terms of coverage. In addition, especially since the interviews were qualitative in nature, it is possible that interviewees' recollections were not exact or that they tended to give what they deemed to be a socially acceptable response. However, the evaluators were able to triangulate the information from various sources to some extent in order to overcome this issue insofar as possible. The period under evaluation was quite long and, in the case of the RCPRP, the evaluation was ex post, as the project had closed by 2015. Many of the people who had been involved in the projects during the first years of the period under evaluation were no longer available. However, the evaluators were able to draw upon the institutional memory of the National Programme Coordination Unit (NPCU), which has coordinated all the projects except the SCP-GAFSP.

II. Country context and IFAD's strategy and operations for the CSPE period

A. Country context

Geography, population, fragility and vulnerability

24. General context. Sierra Leone is located on the west coast of Africa, bordered by Guinea, Liberia and the Atlantic Ocean. The country is divided into the Northern, Southern and Eastern Provinces and the Western Area. The regions are subdivided into 14 districts, further divided into 394 wards managed by district councillors and 149 chiefdoms managed by paramount chiefs. The country has a total area of 71,740 km² and an estimated population of over 7 million. Around 40 per cent of the population is between the ages of 15 and 35 and the annual population growth rate is 2.2 per cent.⁴
25. The country is divided into four main relief regions: coastline, interior lowland plains, interior plateau and mountains, each of which can be subdivided into various (agro) ecosystems.⁵ About 74 per cent of the territory is cultivable land; the arable land is divided into uplands (80 per cent of the total land area) of a relatively low level of fertility and lowlands (20 per cent of the total land area), which are fertile swamps that would have considerable potential for increased cultivation if proper farm management techniques were to be applied.⁶
26. Political fragility. The country underwent five military coups and a violent civil war that lasted almost 11 years (from 1991 to 2002). The causes of these upheavals included the Government's loss of control over the diamond mining areas and the population's frustration about the country's poor governance, poverty, corruption and the high youth unemployment rate. Most of the country's social, economic and physical infrastructure was destroyed and local community, social and productive infrastructure was vandalized; over 50,000 people were killed, and 2 million people were displaced.⁷ In the post-war period, there have been significant reforms in government institutions. Peace and security have been consolidated, and democracy has been strengthened by the national elections held in 2002, 2007 and 2012.⁸ Since 2008, the Government of Sierra Leone has adopted a stronger strategic focus and direction. One important element in this regard has been the Agenda for Change, which is considered to be its main planning strategy for attaining its development, peacebuilding and state-building objectives.⁹
27. Despite various initiatives and elements of resilience, however, several factors are still obstructing the country's development process. These include a weak institutional system, a lack of transparency and accountability for state resource management, continued high youth unemployment and unsatisfactory fiscal and exchange-rate management processes.¹⁰ The country is therefore still considered to be fragile and vulnerable to the forces that led to the collapse of the state and the outbreak of civil war 17 years ago. According to the 2018 report entitled "The underlying causes of fragility and instability in Sierra Leone" of the LSE-Oxford Commission on State Fragility, Growth and Development, the focus of the post-conflict peace agreement and the Agenda for Change was more on ending the conflict and restoring the state to its former position in the expectation that state institutions' performance would improve, instead of addressing the underlying issues.¹¹

⁴ World Bank Indicators, 2019.

⁵ IFAD, 2018.

⁶ IFAD, 2003.

⁷ International Monetary Fund, 2005.

⁸ The most recent election was held in 2018.

⁹ OECD, 2011.

¹⁰ UNDP, 2009 and 2014.

¹¹ <https://www.theigc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Sierra-Leone-Report-v2.pdf>

28. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) categorizes Sierra Leone as being in a “chronically fragile” situation¹² in its States of Fragility 2018 report.¹³ The fragility assessment published by Sierra Leone’s Ministry of Finance¹⁴ is, overall, forward-looking and focused on the progress that has been made. The report paints a picture of how Sierra Leoneans view the country’s sources of resilience and its current position on a spectrum of fragility that runs from crises, at one extreme, to rebuilding and reform, transition, transformation and, finally, resilience, on the other.
29. Vulnerability to natural resource depletion and climate change. Sierra Leone has extensive natural resources, but these resources are under pressure from population growth, dependence on biomass for energy, water pollution and environmentally unsound mining activities, all of which leads to high rates of deforestation, increased soil erosion and frequent landslides. The annual rate of deforestation between 1990 and 2010 was 20,000 ha per year.¹⁵
30. Heavy dependence on agriculture and natural resources, coupled with high rates of poverty and environmental degradation, combined with the country’s fragile governance structure, leave the country vulnerable to climate change impacts. Climate variability and change pose significant challenges in terms of the availability and quality of the country’s water resources and pose risks to two of Sierra Leone’s primary – yet vulnerable – food sources: rice and fish. The loss of forest cover and briefer but more intense rainfall have led to more frequent flooding and mudslides that have had a particularly strong impact on Freetown and its surrounding areas. Despite various Government initiatives,¹⁶ the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index ranks Sierra Leone as the 24th most vulnerable of the countries that it covered for 2015 and as 46th in terms of its readiness to adapt to climate change. In 2016¹⁷ it was ranked as the 25th most vulnerable country, but in terms of readiness for adaptation, it slipped to 52nd place on that index.

Economic, agricultural and rural development processes

31. Sierra Leone is a highly aid-dependent country. Foreign assistance accounts for over 50 per cent of its national budget.¹⁸ It is also a least developed country, with a GDP per capita of US\$462 (in constant 2010 US dollars) in 2017 and an economic freedom score of 47.5, which put its economy in 167th place in the 2019 index.¹⁹
32. Two exogenous factors have had an adverse effect on the country’s GDP: the Ebola virus disease outbreak in 2014 and the fact that it coincided with a steep decline in the price of iron ore, a major commodity export for Sierra Leone.²⁰ Prior to that time, Sierra Leone had one of the highest economic growth rates in the world. Its GDP rose sharply from 3.2 per cent in 2009 to 20.7 per cent in 2013 but then fell to 4.2 per cent in 2017, largely as a consequence of the weak recovery of ore

¹² Chronically fragile contexts have appeared in every report since 2008.

¹³ Until 2018, Sierra Leone was classified as being in a fragile situation in the World Bank’s List of Fragile Situations. In the 2019 List of Fragile Situations, however, Sierra Leone is no longer placed in that category. Similarly, the country now ranks 52nd out of 163 countries, sixth in Africa, on the Global Peace Index (GPI).

¹⁴ The 2013 fragility assessment was conducted together with the Development Assistance Coordination Office. It covers intensive workshops involving over 50 representatives from government ministries and agencies, regional governance bodies throughout Sierra Leone, parliamentarians and civil society groups.

¹⁵ FAO, 2010. Global Forest Resource Assessment. Country Report Sierra Leone. FRA 2010/189.

¹⁶ Since 2000, the Government has introduced three national strategies on climate change, and in 2009 it adopted a special programme on the topic. In 2007, it also launched a national adaptation programme of action (NAPA). Moreover, Sierra Leone’s Environmental Protection Agency was established in 2008 and its National Secretariat for Climate Change in 2012 (Irish Aid, 2017).

¹⁷ ND-GAIN data are available up to 2016.

¹⁸ UNDP, 2009b.

¹⁹ The Index of Economic Freedom measures economic freedom in 186 countries based on trade freedom, business freedom, investment freedom and property rights.

²⁰ From US\$139.87 per metric ton in 2013 to US\$41 by 2015. *Primary commodity booms and busts* report - relevance to Sierra Leone, UNDP, May 2016.

production.²¹ Growth has also been hindered by a restrictive regulatory environment, inadequate infrastructure and weak contract enforcement. Protection of property rights is nearly non-existent. The financial system remains in a post-conflict recovery mode and lacks capacity.

33. Agriculture (including agroforestry and fisheries) is the economy's mainstay, accounting for about 60 per cent of its GDP in 2017. Other important sectors are mining, services and, to a lesser extent, manufacturing. The country is running a trade deficit as a consequence of the overall low productivity levels of all economic sectors, the narrow manufacturing base and unfavourable terms of trade. GDP growth is projected to increase to 5.6 per cent in 2019 and to 5.8 per cent in 2020, however, with the main drivers of economic growth being increased private agricultural and mining investment amid business climate reforms.²²
34. Agriculture. During the civil war, many farmers fled from their homesteads; a significant proportion of their plantations were left unattended for several years and subsequently reverted to forest. After the launch (and continuation) of several road construction and rehabilitation initiatives, agriculture has taken centre stage in the country.²³ Agriculture employs about 62 per cent of the labour force, of which 70 per cent are women. Women are mainly active in the crop-farming, small ruminants (goats and sheep) and poultry subsectors, while men dominate the livestock (cattle and pigs),²⁴ hunting, forestry and fishery subsectors.²⁵ Rice and cassava are the main staple foods in the country. Tuber crops, such as sweet potatoes, and cereals, such as millet and maize, are also produced. Tree crops constitute the bulk of agricultural exports and include mainly cocoa, coffee and palm oil. Although Sierra Leone was a net exporter of rice before the civil war, it soon thereafter began to rely on imports to supplement its domestic output.²⁶
35. Challenges in agriculture. Despite the ample availability of land for use in expanding production, the agricultural sector is dominated by subsistence farming, and productivity is low. This situation is linked to major constraints such as poor extension services, a lack of credit and microfinance facilities, weak farmers' organizations, a lack of quality infrastructure such as roads, post-harvest losses and declining soil fertility due to land degradation and deforestation.²⁷ As shown in figure A1 (see annex VII), rice yields in Sierra Leone were lower than the regional and continental yields in 2007. This was mainly due to the unavailability of improved seed, a lack of physical and financial access to fertilizers, crop protection products and mechanization, the absence of irrigation and water control mechanisms in lowland areas and weak extension services. As is also shown in the figure, Sierra Leone's rice yields followed an upward trend starting in 2008 and almost merged with the regional trend in 2013. Rural entrepreneurial activity is still fragmented and value addition is low in the absence of modern processing equipment. Moreover, the lack of rural infrastructure constrains farmers' market access, and most value chains are still short and underdeveloped.²⁸
36. The rehabilitation of inland valley swamps (IVS) and the introduction of new agricultural technologies, such as high-yield crop varieties, have played a major role in the restoration of rice and other forms of agricultural production in Sierra

²¹ World Bank, 2019.

²² <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/west-africa/sierra-leone/sierra-leone-economic-outlook/>

²³ IFAD, 2010.

²⁴ Poultry-farming is widespread and is, in fact, the most common form of stock-raising. Pig-farming is the least widespread but is found around urban centres. Most of the country's livestock is owned by semi-nomadic herders. Fisheries are predominantly artisanal, while foreign fleets mainly engage in industrial fishing (IFAD, 2003).

²⁵ FAO and the Economic Community of West African States, 2018.

²⁶ FAO (no date).

²⁷ IFAD, 2018, and USAID, 2019.

²⁸ IFAD, 2010b, and GAFSP.

Leone and in boosting harvests through cropping intensification and diversification (such as rice, groundnuts and vegetables).

37. Youth and unemployment. In Sierra Leone, 8 out of 10 people are under 35 years of age.²⁹ As mentioned earlier, youth unemployment was a major root cause of the outbreak of civil conflict in Sierra Leone, and an improvement in the youth employment rate is therefore an important factor in promoting pro-poor growth and maintaining peace in Sierra Leone. The fact that unemployed and underemployed youth make up the vast majority of the population in the country (with around 70 per cent of youth unemployed or underemployed) has serious economic implications and makes young people susceptible to involvement in illegal activities. There are a number of different factors underlying this situation, including high illiteracy rates, a growing supply of labour that is not matched by collective demand, political instability and a difficult economic environment. In addition, most young people in the country do not possess the necessary job skills.³⁰ Agriculture-related work and the private informal sector are the leading employers of young people, perhaps because of those sectors' relatively lower skill and experience requirements.³¹
38. Rural finance. Rural financial services are an important factor in investments in agriculture and in the establishment of value chains and thus a key contributor to rural employment and rural poverty reduction. Rural finance institutions at the grass-roots level have emerged over the years with the help of donor assistance, yet access to financial services for the rural poor is still limited, and existing financial products and lending terms are not (yet) suitable for longer-term investments in agriculture. In addition, links with service providers are generally weak.³²
39. According to the Global Findex database, the proportion of the total population above the age of 15 accounted for by persons who have a bank account in Sierra Leone increased from 15.6 per cent in 2014 to 19.8 per cent in 2017, which is less than half the rate for sub-Saharan Africa (42.6 per cent). This rate is lower for women (15.4 per cent), adults belonging to the poorest 40 per cent of the population (12.9 per cent) and generally all adults living in rural areas (14.4 per cent). The number of persons using a savings account for building up capital and reserves appears to have declined from 10.9 per cent in 2014 to 5.2 per cent in 2017. These rates compare with 14.9 per cent of persons in sub-Saharan Africa in that same year who had savings in a financial institution and 25.3 per cent who used a savings club or who entrusted their savings to a person outside the family.³³

Poverty characteristics

40. Sierra Leone belongs to the group of least developed countries and has qualified for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. The country meets criteria established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for classification as a low-income food-deficit country.³⁴ Sierra Leone's Human Development Index (HDI) value for 2017 was 0.419, which puts the country in the low human development category and positions it at the 184th ranking out of 189 countries and territories.
41. Figure A2 (see annex VII) shows Sierra Leone's progress as measured by the HDI indicators between 1990 and 2017. While the HDI value increased significantly in

²⁹ According to the National Youth Policy (2003) and the draft revised policy (2012) of Sierra Leone, the category of youth is defined as including all persons between 15 and 35 years of age.

³⁰ Sierraexpressmedia.com, 2010.

³¹ Statistics Sierra Leone, 2017.

³² IFAD, 2018.

³³ Asli Demirguc-Kunt, Leora Klapper, Dorothe Singer and Peter Van Oudheusden, The Global Findex Database 2014. Measuring Financial Inclusion around the World. Policy Research Working Paper #7255. World Bank.

³⁴ IFAD, 2010.

this period, the 2017 value was still below the 0.537 average for the countries of sub-Saharan Africa and below the 0.504 average for countries in the low human development group. While most indicators follow an upward trend, Sierra Leone's gross national income (GNI) per capita decreased by 18.2 per cent between 1990 and 2017.³⁵

42. Rural poverty. According to data compiled by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), around 60 per cent of the population lives on less than US\$1.25 a day. Poverty is prevalent in rural areas, where the rural poverty headcount of over 66 per cent is double that of urban areas.³⁶ Poverty is concentrated among small-scale farmers, women and youth; geographically speaking, the highest poverty rates are mostly in the eastern part of the country. The various interrelated causes of this situation include the absence of income sources, limited access to financial services, a lack of inclusive land rights, poor infrastructure and fragile governance institutions.³⁷
43. Food security. While progress has been made in terms of agricultural recovery and production, food security concerns persist along with high levels of malnutrition.³⁸ An estimated 59.7 per cent of rural households in Sierra Leone are food-insecure, compared with 25.1 per cent of the country's urban households.³⁹ According to the Sierra Leone National Nutrition Survey of 2017, chronic malnutrition among children under 5 stands at around 31.3 per cent. The Global Hunger Index (GHI) values show that, even though scores have improved, Sierra Leone is still in the "alarming" category. This persistent situation is caused by different forms of inequality relating to geography, gender, socio-economic status and access to services. Rural households' expenditure on food averages 63 per cent of their total expenditure. Women and youth are particularly vulnerable.⁴⁰
44. Gender. Gender equality and women's empowerment gained attention as items on the political agenda in 2007 with the introduction of a number of gender policies and, in 2013, this issue figured as a pillar of the third Agenda for Prosperity. Gender inequality is particularly notable in terms of access to and control over land, financial services, productive resources and extension or market services. Extension systems tend to promote innovations that benefit farmers who have more assets and a higher level of education, and women have a lower literacy rate than men (59 versus 76 per cent, respectively, in 2016).⁴¹ High illiteracy rates and time constraints hinder women from participating in rural organizations and from having an equal voice in decision-making processes.⁴² Sierra Leone has a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.645, which places it at a ranking of 150th out of 160 countries in the 2017 index.⁴³

Rural governance and rural development policies

45. Responsibility for the promotion of rural development lies with a number of different government ministries in Sierra Leone, including the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, and the Ministry of Agriculture and

³⁵ UNDP, 2018.

³⁶ IFAD, 2018.

³⁷ UNDP, 2018.

³⁸ IFAD, 2010.

³⁹ Government of Sierra Leone, WFP and FAO, *State of Food Security in Sierra Leone 2015*.

⁴⁰ IFAD, 2018.

⁴¹ UNDP, Human Development Indicators, 2018.

⁴² FAO and the Economic Community of West African States, National gender profile of agriculture and rural livelihoods. Sierra Leone. Country Gender Assessment Series, 2018.

⁴³ UNDP, 2018.

Forestry.⁴⁴ According to a FAO review,⁴⁵ the agricultural sector in Sierra Leone has never lacked good policies or policy content. Instead, the problems that have plagued it in the past and that to some extent continue to do so are mainly attributable to an overreliance on donor support, a lack of capacity and excessive political interference in sectoral activities and, as a result, mismanagement.

46. Following the passage of the Local Government Act, which provided the legislative framework for decentralization in Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has decentralized its offices at the district level and has set up an extension services department. Progress has been made in terms of rural services, but access to credit, infrastructure and extension services remain limited. Few farmers receive advisory assistance or training owing to the scarcity of human and financial capacity.
47. (Rural) development policies. In 2002, after the end of the civil war, Sierra Leone adopted a comprehensive national recovery strategy, and the Government and donors agreed on a framework for peace, recovery and development. This initiative was followed in 2003 by the development of the National Long-Term Perspective Framework (Vision 2025), which emphasizes leadership, reconstruction and peacebuilding, sound economic management and democratic governance.
48. To translate this vision into operational plans, the Government and its development partners prepared the country's first poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) in 2004, whose pillars incorporated the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. This was followed by a second phase, the PRSP-II (2008-2012), which is better known as the Agenda for Change. Among other things, this phase focused on increasing agricultural productivity and competitiveness and on promoting sustainable human development through decentralized service delivery. The PRSP-III (2013-2018) is also known as the Agenda for Prosperity and the Road to Middle-Income Status by 2035.
49. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has also developed various plans to turn agriculture into the engine for socio-economic growth and development. These plans' main strategic policy orientations deal with fostering agricultural productivity and promoting commercial agriculture, private sector activity and value chain development. They also focus on the improvement of roads and irrigation works as well as the provision of better access to financial services specifically tailored to rural farming groups or individuals. The most relevant of the recent plans of this type is the Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019-2023.

International development assistance

Official development assistance

50. Between 2010 and 2017, Sierra Leone received around US\$4.5 billion (at constant 2015 prices) in official development assistance (ODA).⁴⁶ In 2017, the largest bilateral donors were the United Kingdom and the United States of America, while the largest multilateral donors were the International Development Association (IDA), the International Monetary Fund, the European Union and the Global Fund.⁴⁷ IFAD is currently the 17th on that list. Bilateral ODA from OECD countries to Sierra Leone was largely directed towards the health and population sector (40 per cent), followed by other social infrastructure and services (20 per cent) and economic infrastructure and services (15 per cent). ODA commitments to production were notably smaller, at 3 per cent of the total.⁴⁸ AidData estimates that

⁴⁴ Other important ministries for rural development are the Ministry of Lands, Country Planning and the Environment, the Environment Protection Agency and the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

⁴⁵ FAO (last accessed on 18 March 2020)

http://www.fao.org/docs/up/easypol/forum/31/31_review_of_past_agricultural_policies_in_sierra_leone_-_final%201%20.pdf

⁴⁶ Data on World Bank indicators are available up to 2017.

⁴⁷ Gross ODA disbursements in millions of United States dollars (OECD, 2019).

⁴⁸ Average 2016-2017 figures (OECD, 2019).

China committed around US\$247 million to Sierra Leone between 2000 and 2014.⁴⁹ China's ODA is mainly channelled into medical aid, infrastructure/telecommunications, mineral resources and rice production.

51. Country programmable aid (CPA)⁵⁰ is an indicator that is used to track the proportion of ODA over which recipient countries have, or could have, a significant say.⁵¹ CPA contributions to Sierra Leone fluctuated between US\$242 million and US\$281 million per year in 2000-2007. Between 2007 and 2014,⁵² flows gradually rose and peaked in 2014 at US\$536 million. IFAD was one of the top 10 CPA providers to Sierra Leone in 2014, ranking as the eighth-largest CPA provider, but was not on the list of the top 10 providers in any of the other years during that period.

Donor coordination and international cooperation

52. The leading role played by three donors (the United Kingdom, the European Commission and the IDA) has somewhat facilitated aid coordination in the country, although the Government's weak institutional capacity still poses a problem in this regard. Donor coordination revolves mostly around Sierra Leone's poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) and is channelled through the working relations existing among the main donors in the field.
53. Since 2003 the Government of Sierra Leone has set up a two-tier structure for aid coordination. The first tier is the Development Partnership Committee (DEPAC), which provides a framework for a policy dialogue between the Government and its development partners. According to the 2016 Sierra Leone monitoring profile prepared by the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC), the performance of the sectoral working groups is uneven, and they are not operational in all sectors. The second tier is the Development Assistance Coordination Office, which was established in 2004 by the Government of Sierra Leone in partnership with UNDP, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and the European Commission. This office is the focal point for both financial and technical assistance provided by multilateral and bilateral sources and NGOs and serves as a forum for discussions concerning aid effectiveness. In 2007, the Development Assistance Coordination Office was transferred to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

B. IFAD's strategy and operations for the period under analysis

54. Investment financing. Since 1979, IFAD has committed US\$80.4 million in highly concessional loans and Debt Sustainability Framework (DSF) grants to Sierra Leone to support rural poverty reduction and agricultural development. The Government of Sierra Leone also asked IFAD to supervise a US\$50 million grant from the Global Agricultural and Food Security Program (GAFSP) under the Government's Smallholder Commercialization Programme (SCP).
55. Since 1979, the portfolio has included eight loan-funded/DSF-grant projects and one IFAD-supervised project (SCP-GAFSP), as is reflected in table 2. These projects have focused on three main sectors: agricultural development (four projects), rural development (three projects) and credit and financial services (two projects). Six of these projects are now closed; two were ongoing at the time that the evaluation⁵³ was conducted and one was approved in December 2018 and was

⁴⁹ According to AidData, China does not publish a country-by-country breakdown of its international official finance activities. <https://www.aiddata.org/china-official-finance#first-panel>

⁵⁰ Country programmable aid is the proportion of aid that is subject to multi-year programming at the country level. It excludes spending that is unpredictable, aid that entails no flows to recipient countries and aid that is usually not discussed between donors and governments (e.g. food aid). In addition, CPA does not net out loan repayments (OECD, 2019).

⁵¹ As such, CPA comes closer to capturing actual aid flows to countries than ODA does and has been proven to be a good proxy for aid recorded at the country level.

⁵² OECD data currently cover up to 2014.

⁵³ Includes the SCP-GAFSP, which is completed but not closed.

awaiting a top-up loan approval (expected in September 2019).⁵⁴ With this top-up, IFAD's total contribution to this project will be US\$52.6 million – the most in the Sierra Leone portfolio for any project.

Table 2
A snapshot of IFAD operations in Sierra Leone since 1979

<i>Summary of IFAD operations in Sierra Leone</i>	
First IFAD-financed project	1979
Total loan-/DSF grant-funded projects and programmes approved	1 IFAD-supervised project (SCP-GAFSP - US\$50 million) 8 IFAD-funded projects and
Total amount of IFAD funding (current)	US\$80.4 million (loans) - US\$50.0 million (DSF grants) US\$130.4 million (total)
Counterpart funding (Government and beneficiaries)	US\$49.6 million
Cofinancing amount	US\$58.8 million
Total portfolio cost (IFAD-funded portfolio)	US\$238.8 million
Total portfolio cost (including IFAD-supervised portfolio)	US\$288.8 million
Lending terms	Highly concessional
Focus of operations	Agricultural development, credit and financial services, rural development
Main cofinanciers	AfDB, IDA-World Bank, UNDP, WFP, GEF, Adaptation Fund, Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme
Number of ongoing projects (as of February 2019)	3 (of which 1 is only being supervised by IFAD)
Responsible IFAD division for operations	West and Central Africa Division (WCA)
Country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP)	2003 COSOP 2010-2015 COSOP 2017-2018 Country strategy note
Country presence in Sierra Leone	Since 2013 (Country programme officer)
Country programme managers	Mr. Jakob Tuborgh 2018 – present Ms. Ndaya Beltchika Stjoste 2014 – 2018 Mr. Hubert Boirard 2008 – 2014 Mr. Mohamed Tounessi 2002 – 2007

Source: IFAD Business Intelligence, 2018.

56. The portfolio in the period under evaluation (2003-2018) included five projects. These projects amount to US\$201.2 million,⁵⁵ of which IFAD provided US\$98.1 million (loans and grants), the Government US\$21.1 million, local private financiers and beneficiaries US\$19.2 million and international financiers US\$62.8 million (out of which US\$50 million is the GAFSP grant). More details on IFAD's portfolio in Sierra Leone can be found in annex IV.
57. IFAD counterpart agencies. While the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has been the counterpart agency, IFAD's key implementation partner has been the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Other partners have been the Bank of Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Local Government, the district councils, ward and district development committees, the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI), the Sierra Leone Roads Authority and, to some extent, the private sector (e.g. cooperatives) and NGO service providers (e.g. the Kenyan NGO K-Rep). IFAD's strategies also refer to collaboration with Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers institutions, such as Africa Rice, to

⁵⁴ The top-up of US\$28.5 million was approved by the Executive Board in September 2019.

⁵⁵ This figure does not include the projected top-ups for the Agricultural Value Chain Development Project.

disseminate and accelerate innovation adoptions. IFAD has also reached out to FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP) for assistance with implementation.

Grants

58. A total of 33 IFAD-funded and/or -managed grants have been implemented in Sierra Leone.⁵⁶ For the initial analysis of the CSPE, 18 grants totalling US\$47.9 million were selected (see table 3). Annex IV provides an overview of these grants.

Table 3

A snapshot of IFAD-supported grants for Sierra Leone

<i>Selection for the CSPE</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Value (US\$)</i>
Grants provided under the global/regional window	17	44.5 million
Grants covered under the country-specific window	1	3.4 million
Total	18	47.9 million

Source: IFAD Financial Management Database, 2018.

59. The selected grants meet the following criteria: (i) they have an approval date between 2007 and 2018; (ii) Sierra Leone is one of their focus countries;⁵⁷ (iii) disbursement (not only advance payment) has begun; (iv) they are currently not suspended or on hold; (v) they cover CSPE thematic areas and/or knowledge management and policy dialogue elements; and (vi) they have linkages with the investment portfolio. Grants that are officially part of investment projects were not included. For the two grants that were designed in 2018, only the design was evaluated. Grants contributing to finance investment projects were not included.

⁵⁶ Information retrieved from IFAD's Financial Management Dashboard (2019). Top-ups to an existing grant are not counted individually.

⁵⁷ This means that grants whose recipient is based in Sierra Leone but that are not being implemented in the country were not taken into account.

Box 2

Overview of the technical components of the five projects covered in the CSPE

- Rehabilitation and Community-based Poverty Reduction Project (RCPRP)
1. Support for smallholder agriculture commercialization: (a) rehabilitation of tree crops; (b) rehabilitation of inland valley swamps (IVSs); and (c) rehabilitation of feeder roads coupled with intensive capacity-building.
 2. Support for community development and decentralization.
 3. Capacity-building of staff at the local council and ward levels. Construction of district agricultural offices and ward offices, youth centres, provision of logistics, equipment and material, and support in revenue collection at the local council level.
- Rural Finance and Community Improvement Programme (RFCIP)
1. Access to rural financial services: (i) creation of grass-roots financial services associations (FSAs); (ii) support for community banks (CBs); (iii) support for a favourable environment for rural finance (including assistance in the creation of an apex body for the CBs and FSAs).
 2. Support for community development: (i) capacity-building for communities; (ii) a community development fund (including funding for seeds, tools and other implements for farmers); (iii) communication and information.
- Rural Finance and Community Improvement Programme - Phase 2 (RFCIP-II)
1. Consolidation of the rural finance system: (a) sustainable and autonomous rural finance institutions (RFIs); (b) promotion of agricultural financial products.
- Smallholder Commercialization Programme (SCP-GAFSP)
1. Smallholder agriculture and commercialization: support for grass-roots farmer-based organizations (FBOs); improved commercialization through access to agro-services and value chain development; and enhanced long-term technical support and representation through the institutional development of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and farmers' organizations.
 2. Small-scale irrigation works (IVS rehabilitation).
 3. Rural finance (establishment of FSAs and CBs).
- Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (AVDP)
1. Climate-resilient and climate-smart agricultural production (support for smallholder rice and tree crop production and productivity).
 2. Agricultural market development: (a) promotion of market access by strengthening the business skills of agribusiness centres (ABCs), farmers' organizations and farmer field schools; (b) climate-resilient rural infrastructure (warehouses, construction of secondary roads and farm tracks, and spot improvements on trunk roads).

Source: Data compiled for the CSPE.

Box 3

Financial services associations and community banks

Financial services associations (FSAs) are owned by shareholders, mobilize share capital for onlending and do business only with their shareholders. A minimum of one share (of Le 5,000 or US\$1.6) is required to become a stakeholder and earn dividends. FSAs do not take deposits. It is a model designed for short-term lending without the need for hard collateral. In some cases, group lending is used as an implicit form of collateral. FSAs have typically been set up at locations where they can serve two or more villages.

Community banks (CBSs), on the other hand, are set up as companies limited by shares rather than as companies limited by guarantee. They offer deposit services. All loans are secured either by savings or by physical assets. CBs are typically located in and around townships.

Source: Data compiled for the CSPE.

Overview of the IFAD country strategy

60. Between 1979 and 2002, IFAD financed four projects in Sierra Leone that mainly dealt with agricultural development. Cofinancing played an important role in these

projects, as three of the four projects were cofinanced.⁵⁸ Additionally, in terms of the value of contributions, 53 per cent of the US\$87.6 million total value of the four projects came from cofinanciers, while IFAD funds constituted 37 per cent of the total. These projects were largely production-oriented initiatives. However, the difficult situation that prevailed in the early 1990s – with the downturn in the world economy, structural adjustment programmes and the outbreak of civil conflict – prevented project objectives from being achieved.

61. Since 2003, IFAD has launched two COSOPs in Sierra Leone: one in 2003 and another in 2010. Although the 2010 COSOP covered the period from 2010 to 2015, the next COSOP was postponed owing to the outbreak of Ebola virus disease, which brought project implementation to a standstill, and to expectations of instability in the wake of the 2018 elections. As a result, a country strategy note was prepared to cover the period 2017-2018.
62. The 2003 COSOP proposed a strategic approach to development-oriented recovery assistance in Sierra Leone. In the short-term, the strategic thrust for IFAD was to provide rapid assistance to communities as part of the reintegration and regeneration process, while the focus was on restoring basic services and reviving economic activities. Key interventions were in the provision of basic agricultural packages (seed, tools, livestock and inputs) for expanding cultivated areas and the rehabilitation of feeder roads. The three strategic thrusts of this COSOP were: (1) community development; (2) revitalization of the rural financial market in order to promote rural growth; and (3) crop diversification, income-generating activities and small-scale rural enterprises. The geographic focus was on the two districts – Kono and Kailahun – that had been most severely affected by the civil war.
63. Two projects – RCPRP and RFCIP – were formulated under this COSOP. Both projects had clear-cut themes. The RCPRP was an agricultural rehabilitation project that also provided for the rehabilitation of roads and was designed to achieve objectives 1 and 3 of the COSOP. The RFCIP corresponded to objective 2 and was a core rural finance project with the aim of creating rural financial institutions that would bring the rural poor into the fold of microfinance. These two projects were interlinked, with RCPRP beneficiaries being encouraged to take up micro-loans and credit from the institutions developed under the RFCIP. At the design stage, in keeping with IFAD's policy of not supervising its supported projects directly, the African Development Bank (AfDB) was appointed to serve as the implementing institution.
64. The 2010 COSOP was developed at a time when the Government's focus was shifting towards economic development, following the country's emergence from the earlier phase of reconstruction and rehabilitation of the agricultural sector in the aftermath of the civil war. The 2010 COSOP also had three strategic objectives: (i) supporting agriculture by improving smallholder farmers' access to irrigation, technical skills and markets; (ii) supporting rural finance by facilitating access for the rural poor to reliable and sustainable financial services (savings, credit, transfers, remittances, etc.); and (iii) supporting local development by helping the rural poor to increase their level of participation in the management of local decentralized institutions. The themes underlying these objectives were similar to those of the 2003 COSOP, namely, community development, rural finance and agricultural production. The geographic focus was expanded to cover four districts: Kono, Kailahun, Kenema and Koinadugu.
65. Progress in implementing the RCPRP and the RFCIP had been extremely slow until 2009, and both projects were therefore continued under COSOP 2010.⁵⁹ Additionally, a new core rural finance project, RFCIP-II, was devised under the new

⁵⁸ The cofinanciers were UNDP, IDA, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and WFP.

⁵⁹ Progress in the implementation of these projects and their disbursements was very slow during the first three years (2006-2008), with the result that the bulk of their implementation came under COSOP 2010.

COSOP with the aim of expanding the effort to establish rural financial institutions to include other parts of the country not covered under its predecessor project, the RFCIP. Another project, the Smallholder Commercialization Programme (SCP) (2011–2018), a US\$50 million programme funded by a grant from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP), was placed under IFAD's supervision by the Government. The SCP-GAFSP leveraged the successful approaches of RCPRP for promoting agricultural production but placed emphasis on developing new, or strengthening existing, agribusiness centres (ABCs) as a way of enabling farmers' groups to add value and to sell their produce. The latest project, the AVDP, focuses on the use of a value chain approach. It also includes some of the beneficiaries from its predecessor projects (referred to as "legacy farmers") with whom it will continue to work.

66. Thus, IFAD's strategic thrust in Sierra Leone over the past 17 years has been one of revival and consolidation. The continued focus on enhancing productive potential and strengthening rural finance through stand-alone thematic projects underscores this point. At the same time, its focus has shifted somewhat towards a greater emphasis on creating market linkages and on moving away from community development and towards local (institutional) development.

Table 4
COSOPs 2003 and 2010

<i>Strategic objectives and focus over the evaluation period</i>	<i>COSOP 2003</i>	<i>COSOP 2010</i>
COSOP objectives	Strategic objective 1: Community development Strategic objective 2: Revitalization of the rural financial market to promote rural growth Strategic objective 3: Crop diversification, income-generating activities and promotion of small-scale rural enterprises	Strategic objective 1: Support for agriculture Strategic objective 2: Support for rural finance Strategic objective 3: Support for local development
Geographic priority	Kono and Kailahun districts	Starting with Kono and Kailahun and extended to Kenema and Koinadugu
Subsector focus	Community development, rural finance, crop production, productive infrastructure (irrigation, roads), rural enterprise development	Decentralization, rural finance, infrastructure (roads), community empowerment
Main partners	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Bank of Sierra Leone, four district councils and district agriculture offices, farmers' cooperatives and inland valley swamp associations (IVSAs), NGOs	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Bank of Sierra Leone, four district councils and district agriculture offices, farmers' cooperatives and IVSAs, NGOs
Main target group	Smallholders Women Youth Internally displaced persons	Smallholder farmers, landless rural households and vulnerable groups such as woman-headed households and landless young people Smallholder farmers working farms of less than 1.5 ha Rural entrepreneurs and small business operators
Country programme management	Until 2008, supervision support was provided by AfDB; from 2009 onward, IFAD assumed this responsibility	Country presence was established in 2013 through a country programme officer

Source: COSOP documents.

67. IFAD set up its Country Office (ICO) in Freetown in September 2013. It is currently staffed with a country programme officer (CPO). As part of the decentralization of IFAD, the CPM has been based in Côte d'Ivoire since 2018.

Key points

- Sierra Leone belongs to the group of least developed countries and has qualified for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. Around 60 per cent of the population lives on less than US\$1.25 a day.
- The country has a rich natural resource endowment but has suffered from serious economic setbacks and political instability since the 1991-2002 civil war. The Ebola virus disease outbreak in 2014 also hurt its GDP.
- At 60 per cent of GDP, agriculture is the country's mainstay, but Sierra Leone is highly dependent on external aid.
- Young people comprise 40 per cent of the population, and the youth unemployment/underemployment rate is worryingly high at 70 per cent. The lack of economic opportunities has led to internal and external migration.
- Even if most farmers have returned to their farms, they are still grappling with the consequences of the civil war. Though the situation has improved over the past decade, almost 60 per cent of rural households are still food-insecure, and 31 per cent of the country's children are chronically malnourished.
- While some gender policies are in place, culturally based gender inequalities persist, and the lack of analyses informed by a gender perspective has resulted in poorly designed interventions.
- Between 2010 and 2017, Sierra Leone received around US\$4.5 billion in official development assistance (ODA), but donor coordination is constrained by the Government's weak institutional capacity.
- Since 1979, IFAD has committed US\$80.4 million in highly concessional loans and DSF grants to support rural poverty reduction and agricultural development with eight loan-funded projects and one IFAD-supervised project, out of which five are covered by this evaluation.
- Whereas the 2003 COSOP took a strategic approach to development-oriented recovery assistance, the 2010 COSOP was geared more towards supporting farmers' productive capacity and market linkages and strengthening access to rural finance.

III. The lending portfolio

A. Project performance and rural poverty impact

68. The purpose of this chapter is to assess the performance of programmes funded by IFAD in Sierra Leone during the period under review (2003-2019). The assessment employs internationally accepted evaluation criteria based on the concepts of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, rural poverty impact, sustainability, innovation and scaling up, and gender equality and women's empowerment. The definition of these concepts is provided in annex I. A composite assessment of the programme portfolio's overall achievements is also provided.

Relevance

69. Under the heading of relevance, four dimensions have been analysed: the extent to which the portfolio conforms to the policies and priorities of the Government; the relevance of the thematic areas of the portfolio; the targeting mechanisms used; and the complexity and coherence of project designs.

Strategic alignment

70. The evolution of the portfolio has kept pace with the changing political and economic situation in the country, and the portfolio remains in alignment with that situation. At the beginning of the evaluation period, the focus of the portfolio, through the RCPRP, was on reviving the rural economy by supporting agriculture and infrastructure, the mainstays of the economy. This was the right approach in a country that was just emerging from a civil war, with most of its productive resources in disarray. Given this situation and the country's extremely high poverty levels, the next step was to promote investment by the rural poor through the revival and development of grass-roots financial institutions, FSAs and CBs,⁶⁰ that would provide microcredits and loans not only to the farming community but also to the non-farming community and to (farm and non-farm) microenterprises and small businesses in order to help generate rural employment. This focus was an important one in such a fragile context. Later, the focus of rural finance rightly moved on to covering the whole country through the RFCIP-II, with its additional emphasis on creating an umbrella organization for the FSAs and the CBs and for the Apex Bank, which would provide support services, in addition to performing oversight functions delegated to it by the Bank of Sierra Leone.

71. In parallel, the portfolio was correctly focused on the next stage in agricultural development: commercialization, diversification and tapping into the potential of the private sector as a partner. The SCP-GAFSP, which used the agribusiness centres model to provide value addition services to primary producer groups and links with buyers, was the vehicle for this effort. The more recent AVDP aims to consolidate the gains made by the SCP-GAFSP by providing its beneficiaries with technical assistance and rice and tree crop marketing support.

Thematic relevance

72. Productive capacity. IFAD's country portfolio has been aligned with a number of national priorities, policies and strategies related to primary agricultural development. For instance, the Agenda for Change (PRSP-II: 2008-2012) states that "economic development and poverty reduction in Sierra Leone will only be sustained with developments in the agricultural sector".⁶¹ The Agenda for Prosperity (PRSP-III: 2013-2017) reaffirms the Government's focus on agriculture and rural development. The RCPRP, with its focus on production, was aligned with both of these agendas. The IFAD-supervised SCP-GAFSP⁶² is at the heart of the National

⁶⁰ In principle, the difference between FSAs and CBs is that FSAs cannot take deposits, whereas CBs can, and that CBs need to meet a minimum capital requirement of Le 1 million, whereas there is no such requirement for FSAs.

⁶¹ The Republic of Sierra Leone, *An Agenda for Change, Second Poverty Reduction Strategy 2008-2012*.

⁶² The components of SCP-GAFSP include: (i) improving smallholder production and commercialization; (ii) developing small-scale irrigation works; (iii) providing better access to rural financial services; (iv) improving market access; (v) providing a social protection safety net to vulnerable households; and (vi) implementation and support.

Sustainable Agriculture Development Plan (NSADP) 2010-2030, which was launched within the framework of the Agenda for Change.⁶³

73. The various agricultural projects focusing on the rehabilitation of IVSs and cocoa and palm plantations destroyed during the war are also relevant to IFAD's own policy and strategy framework and are aligned with IFAD's 2008 Improving Access to Land and Tenure Security Policy. They are also aligned with IFAD's Climate Change Strategy and its Environment and Natural Resource Management Policy, inasmuch as they focus on improving water management capacity and promoting good agricultural practices by introducing a short-duration rice variety and by supporting organic cocoa production and community forestation.
74. While most stock-raising activities in Sierra Leone are currently subsistence-level operations, the country's Roadmap for the National Agricultural Transformation (2018) identifies livestock development as a priority. Even though livestock husbandry was characterized as an important strategy for income diversification and strengthening resilience in the portfolio, it mainly focused on crop production. Under the RCPRP, in fact, there was no livestock component. Under the SCP-GAFSP, livestock support, including veterinary capacity,⁶⁴ was piloted for 25 transformed ABCs, but at the time that this evaluation was being prepared, no ABCs that were still engaged in livestock activities were identified. The AVDP envisions support for fisheries and improved livestock watering systems, but does not provide for any specific support for livestock development.
75. Interventions aimed at linking farmers to markets and improving the marketing of their crops have been seen as relevant aspects of national programmes and as priorities,⁶⁵ but they have not been actively pursued. The emphasis has clearly been on production and, while the private sector has been brought into the picture, agricultural projects have lacked an institutional approach to private sector engagement. The priorities in Sierra Leone include enhancing the quality of agricultural products such as cocoa, some of which is marketed under organic and fair-trade labels, and rice, which is now being branded in some areas of Sierra Leone. The RCPRP design supported efforts on the part of cocoa cooperatives to meet these standards, but this line of action is not visibly pursued in the AVDP's design. The SCP-GAFSP design document mentions that sustainability certification for exports should be considered,⁶⁶ but this line of action was not pursued either.
76. Roads have been a prominent feature of IFAD's focus on development. As a result of a complete lack of maintenance during the entire period of civil war, most of the roads in the country were totally destroyed. In consequence, rural communities were completely isolated, not only from markets but even from each other. IFAD's focus on roads under the RCPRP was therefore critical, not only in overcoming these issues but also in ensuring the implementation of its own projects.
77. Rural finance. The rural finance support approach of IFAD in Sierra Leone is of pivotal importance from the standpoint of both policy and development strategy. IFAD's rural finance support covers the two phases (projects) of the RFCIP.⁶⁷ The RFCIP interventions were designed to be in full alignment with the Government's development priorities in a post-conflict situation, which formed the three pillars

⁶³ The Republic of Sierra Leone, *National Sustainable Agriculture Development Plan 2010-2030*, Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (version adapted by the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Compact of 18 September 2009).

⁶⁴ FAO established and trained community animal health worker groups and provided equipment (feed mills for processing food for ruminants and solar refrigerators), start-up kits, drugs and vaccines.

⁶⁵ The results framework of the National Agricultural Transformation Programme 2023 includes strategic objectives that are reflected in IFAD's country portfolio. These objectives deal with agricultural market information systems, infrastructure for delivering products to markets, commercial farming, institution-strengthening, rice processing and marketing, and commercial rice farming and out-grower schemes.

⁶⁶ IFAD, Sierra Leone, SCP-GAFSP design document, March 2011.

⁶⁷ The supplementary financial support included funding for the establishment of 7 additional CBs and 15 FSAs from the SCP-GAFSP. The RFCIP was responsible for implementing this expansion.

the Poverty Reduction Strategy for 2005-2007.⁶⁸ Injecting capital into rural areas where growth had been stifled by the civil war as a means of reviving production and employment was the correct approach.

78. The RFCIP-II interventions have been aligned with the key rural and agricultural development policies of the Government, and this is particularly true of the NSADP and the PRSPs, which included access to appropriate financial services as a prominent and critical component in poverty reduction. The RFCIP-II has also been aligned with the objectives of the Financial Sector Development Plan 2009 of the Bank of Sierra Leone, which called for increased financial inclusion and an intensification of the outreach of community-based RFIs in rural areas.
79. Concerning IFAD's overall policies and COSOP strategies for Sierra Leone, rural finance interventions are closely aligned with its main development strategies. For instance, IFAD's Rural Finance Policy (2009) emphasizes that developing inclusive rural financial systems in order to increase poor and marginalized women's and men's access to a wide range of financial services is central to IFAD's mandate. Given the many challenges inherent in marginal areas and in post-conflict situations, IFAD's strategic frameworks emphasize the need to improve the access of the rural poor to appropriate financial services and to improve their resilience in today's rapidly changing environments. In accordance with these principles, both COSOPs identified rural finance as a key sector for support interventions to alleviate poverty on a sustainable basis.
80. Youth. All project designs refer to a focus on youth and gender. The Gender Active Learning System (GALS) was introduced into the more recent programmes to improve gender outcomes. The country portfolio was therefore found to be aligned with IFAD's Gender Policy 2012 and responsive to IFAD's Youth Guidance Note: Designing Programmes that Improve Young Rural People's Livelihood. The National Youth Programme 2014-2018 is another relevant document for the portfolio, as youth is seen as one of IFAD's main target groups. It sets out rules and defines areas of responsibility in this connection. It also defines young people as persons between 15 and 35 years of age. The national youth councils that were established under that programme in each district were important partners and participants in the RCPRP.
81. Most projects have used direct mechanisms, notably quotas, to target youth and women; The RCPRP set quotas of 30 per cent for women, 50 per cent for youth and 20 per cent for female youth, while the RFCIP had quotas of 50 per cent for women and 50 per cent for youth and the AVDP has ones of 40 per cent for women and 40 per cent for youth. The RCPRP and SCP-GAFSP also both made use of youth contractors. The RCPRP's support for youth councils and youth centres was fully aimed at the young population. The SCP-GASFP design document mentions specific extension services for women and specific measures for the promotion of RFI services for women's groups.
82. Decentralization. The portfolio has been in line with Sierra Leone's decentralization programme. The country launched its decentralization effort in March 2004 after the passage of the Local Government Act. However, in the wake of the civil war, local governments' budgets and human resource capacity were limited. Austerity measures made necessary by the Ebola crisis again temporarily aggravated this situation. Even though the RCPRP had already been designed when the Local Government Act was passed, the project adopted decentralization as a focus, and its approach was adapted to the new government decentralization framework. The RCPRP helped to strengthen decentralized institutions in the four target districts, particularly in the case of the local councils, the ward development

⁶⁸ These pillars were: (1) good governance, security and peacebuilding; (2) pro-poor sustainable growth for food security and job creation; and (3) human development through microfinance, specifically the use of community banks and microfinance institutions as effective vehicles for the implementation of the national microfinance policy.

committees and the district agricultural offices. The SCP-GAFSP backed up the decentralization strategies of the Government of Sierra Leone by building the capacity of FBOs to contribute to the local economy and by supporting the decentralized structure of agribusiness centres, which contributed to their penetration into more remote areas.⁶⁹

Targeting mechanisms

83. To effectively reach poor people, area-based targeting was followed up by a number of socio-economic targeting approaches. The geographic focus of the earliest project, the RCPRP, was chosen chiefly in response to the effects of the civil war. The two districts that were initially selected, i.e. Kailahun and Kono, had the highest concentration of vulnerable farm families in Sierra Leone and were the ones where the civil war had raged for the longest period of time. These two districts also had the highest number of newly resettled refugees and internally displaced persons who required urgent assistance. Later, in the next project (the RFCIP), the focus shifted to targeting the seven poorest districts, with a population of approximately 2.25 million (45 per cent of the national total); at the time of the project's design, around 80 per cent of the population was living below the poverty line.⁷⁰ The focus of the subsequent projects – RFCIP-II, SCP-GASFP and AVDP – has been national in scope.
84. The selection of priority chiefdoms and wards within these districts was based on a number of criteria which have been found to be relevant. They include: the most vulnerable wards/communities (as identified on the basis of social, poverty and demographic indicators); the potential for crop production and value addition; and the development orientation of local institutions. Following this area-based targeting, the poor were identified through self-targeting, direct targeting and participatory approaches.
85. Targeting in core agricultural projects. Poverty targeting in agricultural projects at the design stage focused on reaching out to small-scale farmers and entrepreneurs, women, youth and persons with disabilities. In doing so, IFAD acknowledged the need to include vulnerable groups and avoided reinforcing patterns of exclusion. There were four focus groups for the targeting of the RCPRP and SCP-GAFSP: (i) smallholder farmers; (ii) women; (iii) youth, particularly unemployed youth; and (iv) micro-entrepreneurs and small-scale business operators.⁷¹
86. Previously displaced poor farmers who had been hit hard by the civil war formed the bulk of the beneficiaries of these two projects. In order to reach this group, a self-targeting mechanism⁷² was deployed that was specifically designed to identify existing farmers' groups that had an interest and experience in rice, cocoa or palm crops. The members of these groups had to be fairly homogeneous in terms of their socio-economic status. The projects also targeted farmers who were working a certain amount of land for the provision of assistance in connection with tree crops. Although targeting farmers who own a certain amount of land entails a risk of bypassing the poor, land tenure is usually not an issue in Sierra Leone, even among the poor. Most families own arable land, although those who are relatively better-off tend to be the ones who are engaged in cultivating tree crops. This targeting strategy therefore did make it possible to include poor farmers.
87. Targeting in core rural finance projects. Both the RFCIP and the RFCIP-II were designed primarily to serve the economically active rural poor, including microentrepreneurs and small-scale business operators. The long-term objective

⁶⁹ Draft findings, evaluation of SCP-GAFSP, January 2019.

⁷⁰ The districts selected for the rural finance activities of the RFCIP were Bonthe, Koinadugu, Kono, Kailahun, Kenema, Port Loko and Pujehun.

⁷¹ IFAD, Sierra Leone, RCPRP project completion report, 21 April 2017.

⁷² Self-targeting occurs when goods and services respond to the priorities, assets, capacities and livelihood strategies of identified target groups, without any specific interventions being necessary (IFAD Targeting Policy, 2008).

was for the investments made by beneficiaries thanks to the availability of microfinance to promote overall rural development, both directly and through their spillover effects. In order for loans to reach the poorer sections of society, the financial institutions developed under these projects charged quite low interest rates. However, although one of the primary targets was smallholders, there was no direct targeting⁷³ to ensure that the financial products were suited to their capacities and needs. Furthermore, although this targeting approach for IFAD-supported rural finance operations in post-war Sierra Leone, with the focus being on the poorer districts and vulnerable groups, was appropriate, it was also ambitious. In an area where no community-based financial institutions existed at all, the projects not only had to establish such institutions, but also had to capacitate them to act independently and ensure that they would be sustainable.

88. Youth and gender targeting. Although this type of targeting was seen as a good start to ensure that all projects at least reached a basic minimum number of youth and women, often no distinction was made in terms of approaches or activities specifically designed to match up with women's and men's needs and opportunities. In 2011 the RCPRP conducted a capacity and needs assessment for youth and persons with disabilities as a basis for developing action plans for these two groups, but this did not lead to specific adaptations. The designs of both the RFCIP and RFCIP-II emphasized the importance of including women, youth and smallholders as the clientele of the CBs and FSAs, but there were no specific strategies for bringing this about in practice, and none of the designs was based on a gender and/or youth analysis. Therefore, although the project design did succeed in reaching sufficient numbers, it may not have been optimally tailored to women and youth.
89. The portfolio provided for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, but their engagement was not well consolidated. In 2015, between 30.4 and 34.5 per cent of persons with disabilities in the target provinces were engaged in employment.⁷⁴ Persons with disabilities were one of the target groups of the RCPRP,⁷⁵ and the SCP-GAFSP included associations of persons with disabilities (amputees, other war-wounded, etc.) in various activities at the district level in its targeting scheme. Even though this was relevant in a country where many people came out of the war with disabilities, the projects did not put any specific activities in place for them, and monitoring of this group was not pursued. As a result, the evaluation was able to identify no more than a few disperse activities in which persons with disabilities participated. The RFCIP-II piloted a special product for providing access to finance for young people living with physical disabilities,⁷⁶ even though the group was not specifically included as a target group at the design stage. Engaging persons with disabilities is a specific endeavour, and given all the priorities the portfolio already had, agricultural production may not have been the best project focus for engaging persons with disabilities.

Design complexity and design coherence

90. The level of design complexity and clarity in the portfolio has been mixed. The 2010 COSOP underlined the need to keep the design simple and to limit the number of interventions. The design of the rural finance programmes and the RCPRP was consistent and simple, but that of the SCP-GASFP was quite ambitious.
91. Design of agricultural and marketing projects. At the outset, the RCPRP rightly focused on post-war reconstruction and rehabilitation and on supporting production capacity. However, the challenges associated with implementing projects in a fragile context exacerbated by a civil war had not been fully

⁷³ Direct targeting occurs when specific measures are used to channel services and resources to specific members or groups in the community that would otherwise not be reached by project activities (ibid).

⁷⁴ Sierra Leone Statistics, Population and Housing Census Thematic Report on Gender 2015, October 2017.

⁷⁵ IFAD, Sierra Leone, RCPRP draft appraisal report, September 2003.

⁷⁶ IFAD, RFCIP-II supervision report, October 2016.

foreseen.⁷⁷ Upon a recommendation made at the time of the mid-term review in 2009,⁷⁸ the design was simplified. This increased its coherence and the feasibility of the project's implementation.

92. The ABC model used by the SCP-GAFSP, which involves a decentralized structure owned by farmers that provides aggregation and processing facilities and joint marketing potential, is a relevant one for the Sierra Leone context. There is no other institution providing such services, with the exception of a limited number of NGOs in a few districts. However, no feasibility study or value chain analysis was conducted to guide the support to ABCs and the selection of rice as a target crop. Moreover, its design was an ambitious one. The project was initially supposed to support 193 ABCs, but during implementation this target group turned out to be too large for the project's time frame and resources, and the number was reduced to 52.⁷⁹ Similarly, a crucial element of the objective regarding market linkages was to connect FBOs with ABCs, yet not all the FBOs supported by the SCP-GAFSP could be linked to ABCs. Equipment provided to FBOs and ABCs was also limited and, in some cases, no equipment was provided to all, leaving some groups of beneficiaries in a more advantageous position than others. The AVDP has a similar design, budget and duration, and it is also aimed at nationwide coverage. Its design is therefore foreseen to face the same risk.
93. A focus on a limited number of agricultural commodities has, however, lent simplicity to the designs of the RCPRP, the SCF-GAFSP and the AVDP, all of which focus on the development of three crops: palm oil, cocoa and rice. Not only is the selection of these commodities consistent with government priorities and pro-poor approaches to value chain development, but this crop mixture also contributes to the increased availability of a dietary staple (rice)⁸⁰ and higher incomes (tree crops).⁸¹ Importantly, the narrow focus on a few commodity subsectors has avoided the complexity that comes with working across several subsectors.
94. Design of rural finance projects. The transfer of the component on community development from the RFCIP to the RCPRP was useful in attaining consistency of design.⁸² At the same time, there was lack of clarity in the project design of certain operations and activities that limited their potential progress and results. This was particularly true of the role and tasks of the apex organization in the RFI network. The Apex Bank, formed under IFAD-supported projects to play an advisory and technical support role for the RFIs, lacked a professionally designed strategic plan based on realities on the ground. It also lacked a clear-cut definition of the key mandate of the institution, and this also ultimately undermined its role. In addition, the strategy for reaching the poorer groups of farmers was not entirely based on realistic assumptions in the RFCIP. Furthermore, the RFCIP-II approach to agricultural lending policy, based on the development of three agricultural products, was outdated and too simplistic.⁸³

⁷⁷ These included cumbersome institutional bureaucracies, a shortage of qualified human resources and the centralized structure of project management, which resulted in a lack of coordination with district coordinating units.

⁷⁸ IFAD, RCPRP mid-term review, January 2009. The review indicated that the RCPRP was relevant but that its design provided for too many small-scale activities that were not priorities for the community.

⁷⁹ IFAD, SCP-GAFSP supervision report, June 2016.

⁸⁰ Rice is grown by 85 per cent of the farmers on over 50 per cent of the total land area under cultivation and contributes 39 per cent of the 2,330 kcal/capita/day Sierra Leonean diet (AVDP design report, 2018).

⁸¹ Cocoa is a key foreign-exchange earner, with annual export values of about US\$35 million (ibid).

⁸² The design of the RFCIP included, in addition to rural finance support, a large community development component. At the time of its design, this was seen as highly relevant. Over the course of project implementation, however, it became increasingly clear that this component did not fit in well with the main rural finance activities of the RFCIP. Therefore, this component was gradually transferred to the RCPRP from the mid-term review point onward.

⁸³ The design of the RFCIP-II provided for the development of three new loan products: seasonal farm loans, agricultural rehabilitation loans and agricultural equipment loans. However, the findings of this CSPE indicate that these interventions would not have changed the situation that prevailed at the time that the RFCIP came to an end, in which practically no agricultural loans were being issued by IFAD-supported financial institutions. In particular, the pre-implementation decision to focus on the development of the above-mentioned loan products as the potential catalyst for agricultural lending is difficult to justify. A more modern, and more recommendable, approach would have been to analyse the situation in the agricultural loan market carefully and aim at designing a suitable agricultural lending policy

95. Finally, the financing plan of the RFCIP-II for capitalizing the FSAs and CBs so that they could undertake more agricultural lending was based on very optimistic assumptions about the availability of external funding and an insufficient analysis of possible threats. Ultimately, that funding did not materialize. These types of design weaknesses, which could have been avoided with relatively small additional investments in professional support during the planning process, have delayed the development of the upper structures of the RFI network and adversely affected the expansion of the financing operations of the CBs and FSAs.
96. During implementation, various changes were made in the approach that have generally been beneficial in terms of the project's overall performance, such as the separation of rural finance activities from community development operations, as mentioned earlier. Similarly, the creation in 2009 of the Technical Assistance Agency (TAA) to provide support services to CBs and FSAs, first as a part of the NPCU and then as a company, was a step that paved the way for the establishment of the Apex Bank at a later stage. On the other hand, it has taken a long time to initiate corrective actions for RFCIP-II aimed at finding a solution for the problems that emerged when the planned financing options for the Apex Bank and RFI capitalization did not materialize. This has had an adverse impact on outreach, financing volumes and impact.

Relevance of other design-related aspects

97. The fit between budget and activities has not always been harmonious. Given the limited nature of available resources, in some cases there has been insufficient support for large groups of beneficiaries. This was, for instance, the case with the SCP-GAFSP, which in some instances provided only one piece of equipment to an ABC or FBO when many members needed the same equipment at the same time due to agricultural seasonality. This led to situations in which the most vulnerable members were left without access to the equipment they needed. Also, the provision of one-off support to rice farmers under the RCPRP led to a situation in which their profits gradually tapered off. In the case of ABCs, the underestimation of the costs of building a fully functional ABC also led to the need to scale down their number from 193 to 52.
98. The results in terms of project design, building forward on achievements and lessons learned from previous projects are mixed. The AVDP is aimed at working with rice and tree crop farmers who did not benefit from the SCP-GAFSP, and it will follow up with linkages of FBOs to ABCs. The SCP-GAFSP built on RCPRP lessons concerning the flexibility of the private sector and the pivotal importance of its engagement and on the lesson that working through ABCs and FBOs is a good basis for supporting productive capacity but that support must be tailored to their needs. However, while the RFCIP-II scaled up the approach of its predecessor RFCIP, it still did not place the required emphasis on designing specific financial products for primary agricultural producers even though they had clearly not been able to avail themselves of these products under the RFCIP.
99. The intention behind linking different projects was noteworthy but was not always successful. The linking of agricultural projects to the rural finance projects was a sensible decision, since the former did not have their own credit provision mechanism. The designs of the agricultural projects mitigated risks related to agricultural lending and facilitated farmers' access to credit, but the linkages that were established were insufficient. Thus, only some of the beneficiaries of support for agricultural productivity and marketing also benefited from the support provided in the area of rural finance. In the case of the SCP-GAFSP, for instance, the project raised the awareness of ABCs about the possibility

for these small rural finance institutions and their network (e.g. loans based on flexible terms, interest rates and forms of collateral and a variety of loan products, each with different terms, based on the nature of investment and its risk profile). This was done more recently, during the implementation of the RFCIP-II (outside the design) at the initiative of the Apex Bank.

of using FSAs and CBs, and many of them had an account, but none of the ABCs that were interviewed for the purposes of this evaluation had actually taken out a loan. Many farmers also still found it difficult to obtain a loan that matched their needs and, since the project design did not set a requirement for a minimum number of farmers as clients, FSAs often preferred less risky clients.

100. The internal coherence of project components was not always strong. Both the RCPRP and the SCP-GAFSP (as well as the AVDP) provided for activities designed to link food producers to their markets. However, these linkages have not been strong enough to ensure that the majority of the beneficiaries of agricultural production and productivity support have better market linkages than they had before. One example concerns the support provided to farmers' groups and ABCs. Farmer group members need to participate in farmer field school (FFS) training in order for their group to become an FBO, and only FBOs can become members of ABCs. The SCP-GAFSP had included support for numerous inland valley swamp associations (IVSAs), many of which were not coupled with an FFS. As a result, the IVSAs could not benefit from the marketing support available from ABCs. A number of tree crop farmers, on the other hand, had FFS training and did form an FBO, but most ABCs are focused on rice and, in most cases, these farmers could not find an ABC that could help them market their tree crop produce. Also, the location of some ABCs was found to be motivated by factors other than feasibility in terms of aggregation and marketing considerations, including political factors. As a result, some FBOs and FFS members had only limited access to ABCs.⁸⁴
101. In summary, IFAD's projects have been fully in line with the urgent priorities of a nation emerging from a protracted civil war with most of its production base and infrastructure in disarray and in great need of infusions of capital and stronger grass-roots and decentralized institutions. The targeting approach used by the projects has been suitable enough to enable the participation of poor and smallholder farmers with some measure of production capacity, although the focus has been almost entirely on crop production. Attention was given to women and youth by including quotas to ensure outreach to these groups. With the focus on production, roads and finance, however, less attention was devoted to the marketing of produce, whereas greater marketing support would have helped to realize the beneficiaries' production potential. In addition, no feasibility study or value chain analysis was conducted to guide the support provided to ABCs. The failure to design financial products suited to the farmers' needs has continued to be a feature of these rural finance projects, especially in the case of the RFCIP-II. Finally, while having stand-alone thematic projects is a good approach, the assumptions underlying the interlinkages between projects were not entirely sound. These projects' relevance is therefore rated as moderately satisfactory (4) given that, while, on the one hand, the projects have been very relevant to the needs and priorities of the nation, their designs, on the other hand, have suffered from a number of shortcomings.

⁸⁴ FAO evaluation of SCP-GAFSP in Sierra Leone, 2019, and observations by the CSPE team.

Effectiveness

102. Under the heading of effectiveness, the CSPE is intended to measure the extent to which the interventions have achieved the planned objectives and results for their target groups and to look into the factors that contributed to or hampered their results. The CSPE has analysed the effectiveness of the lending portfolio on the basis of thematic areas where possible.

Outreach

103. For all the projects, outreach has generally been achieved at or close to 100 per cent under most of the components. Table 5 shows the outreach numbers attained at the time of the evaluation. In the case of the SCP-GAFSP, even though its achievements fell short of what had been planned in terms of the establishment of FBOs, its outreach ranged from 80-85 per cent of planned outreach (for cacao plantations and small-scale irrigation) to 100 per cent and above (for oil palm farmers and for general product intensification and marketing). The RFCIP-II is expected to attain its targeted outreach of 285,000 by its completion.

Table 5

Outreach (number of households reached)

<i>Projects</i>	<i>Actual number reached</i>	<i>Percentage of planned outreach</i>
RCPRP	149 520	107%
RFCIP	49 062	123%
RFCIP-II	193 800	68%
SCP-GAFSP	428 700	107%

Source: PCRs and supervision reports.

Effectiveness of objectives under thematic focus areas

Agricultural production

104. The projects met their targets for rehabilitated land area under rice and tree crop cultivation and achieved their objective of increasing production. Both the RCPRP and the SCP-GAFSP met their targets for the rehabilitation of rice and tree crops (see table 6). In the case of rice, the improved New Rice for Africa (Nerica) seed varieties were used, while in the case of oil palm, the improved Tenera variety was employed.⁸⁵ Improved varieties also led to higher productivity, with rice farmers undertaking double or even triple cropping per year.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

Table 6
Achievement of rice and tree crop rehabilitation (ha)

<i>Project</i>	<i>Actual number of hectares</i>	<i>Percentage of planned land area</i>
RCPRP		
IVS rehabilitated	2 960	99%
Cocoa rehabilitated	8 000	100%
Oil palm rehabilitated	1 000	100%
SCP		
IVS rehabilitated	2 000	100%
Cocoa rehabilitated	3 200	85%
Oil palm rehabilitated	3 000	100%

Source: PCRs and supervision reports.

105. However, constraints typical of a fragile context and limited access to quality seeds and fertilizers are threatening the level of outcomes initially attained. One of the issues constraining the achievement of the objective related to increased production is the availability of inputs. Although it is possible for FBOs to get inputs from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, they have reported receiving seeds very late in the rainy season, which has hampered cropping intensity. Good-quality or improved seeds are difficult to come by in the private sector and, while some farmers preserve and multiply their own seeds, this is not commonplace. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry had provided rice farmers with fertilizer in exchange for in-kind payments in rice after the 2017 harvest, but in 2018 this practice was discontinued, and the private sector has not yet been able to provide the necessary quantities. Evidence from many respondents having different backgrounds indicates that, in the case of the RCPRP, the shortage of fertilizer, combined with the practice of continuously using seed that had been replicated from the same original seed has resulted in a decline in yields from the levels that had initially been attained.
106. The extent of the uptake of innovation and new technology among some farmers is constraining the realization of the full potential of production growth. FFS training in rice production techniques was provided to beneficiary farmers. Some of the farmers who acknowledged having acquired that knowledge refrained from using the new technology, however, because they found it to be labour-intensive.⁸⁶ Resource constraints hamper extension offices' efforts to provide effective services to farmers. In addition, there are very few research linkages, and research institutions such as SLARI also have very limited resources and capacity. Extension workers are therefore unable, in most cases, to support farmers in adopting innovative productivity-boosting measures.
107. The technologies transferred through the FFSs for increasing production and productivity require specific equipment (such as tractors and power tillers), especially when it comes to IVS and boliland cultivation. A limited number of such pieces of equipment were distributed to ABCs, but some of them had broken down, and spare parts were not found to be readily available. This kind of equipment is not locally available in the market, cannot be rented and, in most cases, is too expensive for small-scale farmers to own individually. Moreover, in the case of the ABCs that had only one tractor but a large number of members, there was a risk that the most vulnerable members would have the least access, especially since, because of the seasonality of agriculture, all members need to use the equipment during a similar time frame.

⁸⁶ FAO evaluation of SCP-GAFSP in Sierra Leone, 2019.

Agricultural marketing

108. While the objective of increasing production was largely achieved, efforts to meet objectives related to agroprocessing have been less successful. Both the SCP-GAFSP and the RCPRP had aimed at strengthening agroprocessing. The RCPRP managed to reach small-scale farmers with production- and productivity-related support but did not succeed in setting up the small-scale post-harvest operating units (28 rice mills, 30 oil palm presses and 35 cassava graters) which were to be provided.⁸⁷ The rice mills and oil presses were reprioritized at the time of the mid-term review, but it is unclear how many have been provided and whether they are fully operational.⁸⁸ Only one IVS among the eight visited by the team had a rice mill provided by the RCPRP and it was no longer functioning properly. Under the SCP-GAFSP, processing equipment was provided to a number of ABCs. The results of the adoption survey conducted by the project indicated that 73.5 per cent of the farmers in the project areas had access to processing facilities such as rice hullers, cassava processing machines, rice mills and threshers, but there is no baseline value.
109. In the case of the SCP-GAFSP, a large part of the 52 ABCs that were selected for transformation have been provided with refurbishment and equipment according to an assessment conducted under the European Union's Food Facility Programme.⁸⁹ The plan was for distribution to be completed by May 2019,⁹⁰ but most of the untransformed ABCs that were visited did not have functional production and processing equipment apart from rice mills, and they thus had a limited capacity to provide these kinds of services to their member FBOs. The project had not always identified, agreed upon and appropriately documented the exact specifications of the equipment needed by the ABCs, which contributed to occasional mismatches.
110. Linkages between farmers and other value chain actors on either side of the production function were less effective. On the marketing side, the projects aimed to link farmer groups either directly to cooperatives (RCPRP) or through the ABCs (SCP-GAFSP). The RCPRP assisted in the creation of a cooperative, the Rice Processing and Marketing Company (RIPMCO), which was to buy primary produce directly from farmers. RIPMCO is having difficulty operating effectively, however; the amount of time that its equipment is operational has been quite limited, and it has not been able to enlarge its capacity in this connection on its own.⁹¹ As a result, RIPMCO stopped collecting rice from IVSAs, and farmers have therefore had to transport the rice themselves to local millers, which adds to their costs, or are selling unmilled rice to intermediaries and therefore obtaining lower prices.
111. In the case of the SCP-GAFSP, support for ABCs focused on service provision, which helped to increase production and stimulate the local economy, but project activities fell short of their objective of helping the ABCs to create stronger market linkages. The ABCs are mostly engaged in supporting their members in processing their produce but do not have a service that helps farmers operate as a group and buy inputs and sell their produce collectively. In the few cases where collective selling practices were observed, they had been organized by the group itself. Most of these groups have been formed by women for the collective sale of vegetables.

⁸⁷ The team saw one oil press, provided by RCPRP to a community, which was in good condition.

⁸⁸ IFAD, Sierra Leone, RCPRP Project completion report. Main report and appendices, 21 April 2017.

⁸⁹ Refurbishment of the ABC and drying space (paintwork and repairs), larger milling machines, power tillers (for IVS rice), tractors (for *boliland* rice and other food crops), other value addition machines (e.g. cassava graters, rice millers, destoners) and solar panels.

⁹⁰ IFAD, SCP-GAFSP aide-memoire, February 2019.

⁹¹ With its current business model, the available data suggest that RIPMCO is facing a high risk of failure. The supply of rice by the four cooperatives established by the project is a major issue due to: (i) high transportation costs; (ii) a shortage of operational transport trucks and drivers; (iii) an unfavourable pricing policy arrangement between RIPMCO and the cooperatives; and (iv) the fact that the cooperatives have insufficient operating funds (project completion report, para. 200).

112. Furthermore, only a limited number of FBOs have been linked up with ABCs. For instance, out of 827 FBOs supported by the SCP-GAFSP, only 104 have been linked to ABCs. This is because not all of the IVSAs had been trained in FFSs, which was a condition for becoming a member of an ABC. Tree crop FBOs, on the other hand, whose members have received FFS training, often cannot become members of an ABC because only a very few ABCs are focused on tree crops. In addition, in some cases, the distances between the locations of FBOs and ABCs are too great to allow linkage.⁹²
113. On the farm input side, extension staff and representatives of Njala University and NGOs⁹³ who were all engaged as service providers⁹⁴ for capacity-building through the delivery of various kinds of training were unable to play a role in providing inputs and buying produce without project support. The private sector has not been sufficiently engaged to become a reliable partner. Furthermore, there is no indication that any ABC (transformed or untransformed) has been linked up with an agro-dealer. The slow development of the agro-dealer network has potentially contributed to this situation, as well as the fact that seeds are being distributed free of charge by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and other development partners.
114. The SCP-GAFSP had planned to build the capacity of agro-dealers, as there were only a few that were available to work with ABCs and small-scale farmers. Seventeen agro-dealers were selected to participate in a workshop on the development of proposals, financial management and basic agronomic practices. These dealers were also to be provided with working capital. This number is very small given the large area covered by the project.
115. Road rehabilitation works were highly successful given the infrastructure's prior state of disrepair and the need to move farmers' increased output to market. The RPCRP succeeded in rehabilitating roads as per its plan, and the good condition of these roads helped to improve market accessibility for farmers by facilitating the flow of produce and other goods. The RCPRP improved access on 86 per cent of the targeted 1,500 km of roadways; tools were provided and structures were put in place for their maintenance. In 2015, an impact assessment found that 80.6 per cent of respondents were very satisfied with the general condition of the roads.⁹⁵
116. Efforts to provide other infrastructure, such as storehouses and drying floors, also proved to be successful. This helped the targeted IVSAs to process and store their rice and increase the price potential of their output. On the other hand, the very low target for this component (only 13 such structures) left the majority of IVSAs without such support, and this was regularly cited as a challenge. The lack of storage facilities and drying floors meant that non-recipient farmers had to sell their rice immediately after production at whatever prices were offered by the available buyers at the time of sale.

Rural finance

117. Against a backdrop of war and fragility, the CBs and FSAs proved to be able to operate successfully in the demanding operating environment existing in rural Sierra Leone. The implementation of the IFAD-supported rural finance operations started up during the reconstruction phase that followed the 11-year civil conflict. There was a huge unmet demand for financial products in the

⁹² IFAD Sierra Leone, Smallholder Commercialization Programme – Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (SCP-GAFSP), February 2019.

⁹³ ACDI-VOCA (Koinadugu, Bombali, Port Loko and Tonkolili); CARD (Moyamba, Bonthe and Pujehun); WHH (Kenema and Bo); COOPI (Kambia and Western Area); HELP (Kono and Kailahun); PADECO (nationwide).

⁹⁴ According to the SCP-GAFSP draft project completion report, 22 service providers were trained out of a target group of 26.

⁹⁵ NPCU, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, impact assessment of rehabilitated roads in Kailahun, Kenema, Kono and Koinadugu Districts, February 2015.

country, and the FSAs and CBs were successful in reaching large numbers of potential beneficiaries while at the same time being able to cover their own costs. Table 7 shows the progress made as measured by key performance indicators in mid-2019, including all the supported FSAs and CBs from both project phases, with three years of the RFCIP-II remaining. All 76 RFIs were operational as per target, were serving over 193,000 rural households and were projected to reach the target of 285,000 before the end of the RFCIP-II. A majority of CBs and FSAs already cover all their operational costs on their own. For the RFIs, the average operational self-sufficiency (OSS) ratio is high. In general, the performance trends in these small, relatively new community-based financial institutions can be considered to be promising. Since 2018, none of them has received financial support for operating costs, and access to financial services has improved significantly, as is also evidenced by the findings of IOE's rural financier study.⁹⁶

Table 7
Progress towards key RFCIP-II targets in IFAD-supported RFIs

<i>Indicator for RFCIP-II</i>	<i>Target for end 2022</i>	<i>Achieved by end 2018</i>	<i>Percentage of target</i>
Number of functional CBs/FSAs	76 (17/59)	76 (17/59)	100%
Number of shareholders/depositors	285 000	193 452	68%
Number of borrowers	NA	68 944	NA
CBs with 100%+ OSS	17	15	88%
FSAs with 100%+ OSS	59	49	83%
CBs with portfolio-at-risk (30 days) below 5%	17	12	71%
FSAs with portfolio-at-risk (30 days) below 5%	59	33	56%
Share of agro-lending in CB portfolio	37%	14.6%	38%
Share of agro-lending in FSA portfolio	37%	26%	71%

Source: RFCIP-II final project design report and RFCIP-II supervision report for March 2019.

118. However, the level of agricultural lending has been low. Initially this was due to conservative strategies and a lack of special, focused training in agro-lending. The active participation of RFIs in agricultural lending has been one of the key objectives of the two rural finance projects and is especially important for IFAD's strategies in Sierra Leone. However, during the RFCIP, results in this area were limited (except in the case of agricultural trading).⁹⁷ There were several reasons for this. First, while both the CBs and FSAs largely operated using funds raised through their own efforts from their low-income shareholders/clients, the only way that the FSAs could build their portfolio was by increasing their share capital. This led to the use of very conservative lending strategies and a focus on short-term, higher-interest loans to traders and wage earners rather than on riskier and more complex farm loans.⁹⁸ Second, programme staff and the TAA (later called the Apex Bank) were not very involved in the lending activities of the CBs and FSAs. No special focused training in agro-lending was provided to the RFIs by the TAA. Consequently, at the closing of the RFCIP in 2014, only 10.7 per cent of the

⁹⁶ The key factors that facilitated rural communities' access to credit included less stringent requirements (e.g. regarding guarantors and collateral) on the part of the lending institutions, shorter travel distances to lending institutions and greater knowledge about where to obtain credit.

⁹⁷ As also noted in the IOE rural finance study, the biggest segment of agricultural borrowers is made up of agricultural traders (80 per cent of the 113 RFI clients who had taken out loans in the last 12 months).

⁹⁸ As indicated in the IOE rural finance study, RFI borrowers have a more stable income flow than those who have not taken out a loan. The majority of those who have borrowed are in higher daily and monthly income flow brackets.

total portfolio of the CBs was made up of agricultural loans, while, in practice, the FSAs did not have any agricultural portfolio at all.⁹⁹

119. Subsequently, training efforts were accelerated, but the weak capital base of the CBS and FSAs still posed a challenge for efforts to increase agricultural lending. During the RFCIP-II, following more active training efforts by the TAA/Apex Bank, the share of agricultural loans in the CB/FSA portfolios has increased. This share reached 26.1 per cent at the end of 2018, which is a good growth rate but one that is still below the targeted rate of 37 per cent. In addition, operational differences among the RFIs are still substantial. Many CB/FSAs still focus on simple agro-marketing loans with short loan periods and fast turnovers, while only a few provide genuine production loans having appropriate grace periods that take into consideration the time required to harvest crops and effectively market the resulting produce.

Box 4

The CSPE assessment of the future plans of the Apex Bank

Apex Bank has recently developed an agricultural finance policy and strategy for the rural finance network in Sierra Leone. This appears to be a useful initiative that is in line with the sector's best practices. The policy provides practical guidance on how to organize agro-lending at the CB and FSA levels and how to connect these operations to the Apex Bank's planned direct lending activities involving the lead companies in the relevant value chains when synergies so require. If successfully implemented, the new strategy can lead to improved effectiveness in larger-scale financing operations involving incremental IFAD funding (see below). The evaluation team's observations on the CBs and FSAs, however, indicate that this is likely to happen only if: (a) the CB/FSA network is adequately and appropriately staffed at all levels to cope with the increasing workload; and (b) managers and credit officers are fully trained in the new agro-lending approaches and products well before the new capital injections reach the RFIs.

As the additional funding is not yet effective and the special-purpose vehicle (SPV) arrangements have not yet been completed, this evaluation can refer only to some of the design aspects of this additional RFCIP-II funding and their potential impact on the future effectiveness of the planned operations. First, practically all community banks operate below the minimum share capital requirement of Le 1 billion, although some are just reaching the required level. The Apex Bank is also undercapitalized, especially as the shareholders (CBs and FSAs) have paid up only a small fraction of the equity that is shown on its balance sheet. The proposed model for capitalizing the Apex Bank and the CBs/FSAs with additional IFAD funding may not be the optimal solution for the capitalization of the RFI network. The planned debt/loan funding is not an appropriate way to increase the equity/share capital of either CBs or the Apex Bank (increases in equity must be either genuine investments in share capital or, potentially, grants, as opposed to loans). Furthermore, if such investments are made with the IFAD/SPV funds, careful consideration will have to be given to the question of who will actually own the shares.

Second, the plan of having the Apex Bank, once the original SPV-issued loans are paid back by the CBs/FSAs in three years' time, invest capital in the equity of CBs and FSAs is not the most appropriate option. CBs and FSAs are the only owners of the Apex Bank, and the Bank of Sierra Leone may not agree to a system based on cross-ownership of shares between the Apex and CBs. There are also issues related to the allocation of investment capital between different CBs/FSAs and around the question as to whether the investments should reward the CBs/FSAs that have more share capital or should favour the weaker ones.

Third, the bulk of the new IFAD financing is meant to be treated as refinancing capital (not equity) from which the Apex Bank would issue wholesale loans to CBs/FSAs. This is a core function of the Apex Bank and the one from which it is likely to earn most of its future income. However, the current fragmented organization of these facilities in the Apex Bank does not follow best practices in this area and will not necessarily yield the best possible results for either the Apex Bank or its CB and FSA borrowers.

⁹⁹ RFCIP project completion report, pp. 14 and 29.

The Apex Bank is working on a new version of its strategic plan. With the new IFAD capital allocations, operational support and the bank's share of earnings from the loans from the SPV to CBs and FSAs, the bank aims to break even for the first time in 2021. This would be a positive development for the entire IFAD-supported rural finance network, which needs the services of a strong, well-functioning apex institution. This development could also lead to a reduction of the fairly high percentage that the CBs and FSAs are paying out every month from their revenue to support their financially and operationally weak apex institution.

Source: CSPE evaluation team.

120. One reason for the weak capital base of the CBs and FSAs is the low capitalization of the apex institution that was established and has been supported by IFAD projects. Some of the key functions of the Apex Bank are supposed to be to administer refinancing facilities for loan capital provisions for CBS/FSAs and to organize incremental equity capital for CBs. However, since the RFCIP-II became operational in 2013, the results of these Apex Bank-centred activities have not been satisfactory, and there have been major delays in implementation.¹⁰⁰
121. As the capitalization of the Apex Bank and the CBs and the provision of additional refinancing capital to the CBs/FSA have not materialized, the Apex Bank has remained highly dependent on project support in its daily operations. The target was that, with increased operational volumes, the Apex Bank would reach full operational sustainability during the third or fourth year of the RFCIP-II (2016-2017). However, while its income has gradually increased, the OSS of the Apex Bank is still at a low 42 per cent, with the project covering its operating deficit. As the volume of refinancing operations with the RFIs has not increased from their RFCIP levels, the improvements in the OSS are largely due to the increase in the volume of service/support fees from the CBs and FSAs, which these community-based institutions now pay to the Apex Bank at a relatively high rate of 5 per cent of their total monthly revenue.

Institutional context

122. For grass-roots groups, the model of support for production-based groups generally proved effective; the same cannot be said for agribusiness groups. The RCPRP and SCP-GAFSP supported the creation and capacity-building of grass-roots institutions such as IVSAs, FBOs and ABCs. Some good results were registered in terms of capacity-building, improved production and group formation. Members of IVSAs were able to bundle efforts to start using IVSs for rice and vegetable production, and tree crop FBOs managed to revive tree croplands for production of cocoa and palm oil. However, when it came to making collective sales, the members of FBOs and IVSAs did not do so effectively. There are trust issues among the farmers and a general lack of record-keeping capacity.
123. Based on the recommendations of the 2013 supervision mission, the SCP-GAFSP selected 52 out of the initial 196 ABCs for transformation:¹⁰¹ training was provided to all ABCs, but equipment and financial support for the payment of the ABC managers were supplied only to the selected core group. As a result, the prospects of the selected ABCs has improved, but, for the majority of the remaining 144

¹⁰⁰ A core reason is that the US\$7.9 million capital from external investors (National Social Security and Insurance Trust and International Finance Corporation) earmarked for these operations never materialized. It was not until early 2019 that an agreement was reached between the Government and IFAD on additional IFAD funding of US\$9 million to fill this financing gap. This agreement was expected to become fully operational by October-November 2019, and its results are therefore yet to be seen. This additional financing package is to be used to: (a) capitalize the rural finance network; (b) strengthen Apex Bank's Agricultural Finance Facility, which was started up during the RFCIP and provides refinancing capital to CBs and FSAs; and (c) provide working capital to the Apex Bank.

¹⁰¹ In 2013, a supervision mission noted that the approach being used to strengthen ABCs was too rigid and hardware-focused and that the supported ABCs demonstrated a low level of activity. It recommended the development of a strategic framework for the institutionalization of ABCs that would incorporate the principles of the transformation model. The SCP-GAFSP was to postpone further expansion and select a core group of successfully operating ABCs for transformation.

ABCs, the prospects are poor and will remain so unless the current transformation approach is expanded.¹⁰²

124. The RCPRP also supported three cocoa cooperatives in Kono, Kailahun and Kenema¹⁰³ with training, tools and equipment¹⁰⁴ that contributed to their effective operation as a group. Capacity-building support was the same for all the cooperatives, but the evaluation team observed variations in their results and in the capacity of their trained staff.
125. Support for government institutions did not materialize as expected, but this had less to do with the projects themselves and more to do with the structural issues associated with a fragile context. Capacity-building support for various government bodies, such as district councils and ward offices, under the RCPRP had been well-received. Budget shortages and the lack of an ongoing capacity-building system continue to hamper staff members' efforts to implement their operations effectively, however. Out of 330 ward offices, 42 per cent were found to regularly conduct operational meetings and to be reporting on a consistent basis.¹⁰⁵
126. The RCPRP's provision of financing and technical input to the Sierra Leone Roads Authority has helped to foster an increased commitment on its part. Nonetheless, the Authority's struggle to obtain the necessary funding from the central government hampers its ability to live up to its commitment. The RCPRP also introduced an innovative cadastral system for tax collection that is slowly gaining ground.
127. The RCPRP had provided considerable support for increasing the capacity of SLARI to supply planting materials, but the evaluation team found that many of the SLARI staff at Pendembu were not fully committed to this effort, and there was little evidence of proper maintenance of the garden where cocoa plants were being grown.¹⁰⁶ Importantly, there was either a lack of funding or funding was not regularly received from the Government.
128. Under the SCP-GAFSP, there was much less emphasis on support for government institutions. The project helped reinforce the capacities of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to ensure the fulfilment of its mandate. To this end, the Ministry was engaged as a partner, and the project helped to strengthen the capacity of nine district agricultural offices (DAOs). Support for decentralization was not part of the project design, however, and the project did not engage other government institutions to any significant extent.
129. Capacity-building support has been provided by the projects to DAOs in the form of equipment, furniture, means of transport and training (on FFS and group dynamics). This support has enabled the DAOs and their staff to supervise their extension staff and ensure that more farmers received extension services. Nonetheless, these services have continued to struggle with high staff turnover rates, insufficient staff capacity and a lack of resources. Many extension workers shared that they were (in part) engaged as volunteers, had not received payment for a long time and were not provided with means of transportation or a shelter where they could work when they were in the field.
130. External factors such as the Ebola outbreak also hampered the achievement of objectives. External factors that slowed progress and interfered with the projects' achievements included the Ebola virus disease outbreak in Sierra

¹⁰² IFAD, Sierra Leone supervision report, 19 May–02 June 2016.

¹⁰³ IFAD, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Impact Assessment of Fairtrade Certification Scheme, June 2015..

¹⁰⁴ The RCPRP provided tools, the GAP provided demonstration farms, payment for nursery work, administration expenses, office items, bikes, furniture, computers, and training in agronomics, bookkeeping and in GALS.

¹⁰⁵ IFAD, GEF, GASFP, RCPRP and the GEF project IACCAPFS in Sierra Leone, final project impact evaluation report for RCPRP, October 2017.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

Leone in 2014-2015. The epidemic lasted for 18 months and, in addition to hindering the implementation of the RCPRP, led to the suspension of the implementation of the SCP-GAFSP from August 2014 to September 2015. It also had an impact on the operationality and functionality of ABCs. Many RCPRP-supported cocoa farmers had plantations in Ebola-affected areas, and their sales suffered as a result of the Ebola crisis, which took place as the project was nearing its end. Some of the previous buyers did not dare to engage with the cooperatives any more, once the project was not supporting them. There were travel bans in certain locations, which hampered beneficiaries and project staff from conducting business as usual, and supervision missions could not be fielded for any of the projects. Apart from the Ebola crisis, extremely heavy rains that caused flooding and mudslides in 2017 also had an impact on the beneficiaries.

Effectiveness of targeting

131. The projects' targeting strategies enabled them to reach small-scale farmers. The targets for women's participation were achieved, but those targets were often low. The SCP-GAFSP and RCPRP managed to target areas where most small-scale farmers work and are in need of technical assistance. The projects primarily worked with pre-existing groups of producers, which meant that structures were already established and group dynamics were stable. However, elite capture in ABCs were not uncommon; one reason for this is that the procedures for election to leadership positions appear to be flawed in ways that lead to elite capture of the lead management in some cases.
132. At the time of the implementation of the RCPRP, 28 per cent of households were headed by women.¹⁰⁷ The project often targeted these households in order to reach women but also managed to reach women in other types of households. The project did well in reaching a target group in which 40 per cent, on average, of its final beneficiaries were women. On the other hand, the target of 40 per cent was quite low in view of the fact that half of the population is female and that women still lag behind men in many ways. Moreover, only approximately a quarter of the participants in technical training sessions such as those provided for DAOs and district council staff were female.
133. The SCP-GAFSP also included a focus on women and especially female-headed households. The project's adoption survey indicated that some 31 per cent of the beneficiary FBO members were female, which is not very high considering how many women are employed in agriculture. Gender targets were not always ambitious either. For FBOs, the target was a minimum of 30 per cent of women in the committees and, for youth contractors, the target for women's participation was 25 per cent. In the case of the SCP-GAFSP Management Unit, 25 per cent of its staff was supposed to be female, but this was not achieved. In the ABCs, most of the female members were engaged in vegetable farming. The RFCIP design, which was formulated in the post-war period, also included ex-combatants and sexually abused young women/single mothers as a specific target group. There is, however, no documented evidence indicating that data on this indicator were collected during implementation.
134. There are no comprehensive data on the social or income status of the households benefiting from IFAD-supported rural finance projects. For the purposes of this evaluation, use was therefore made of the depth-of-outreach indicator, which was developed specifically for the purpose of evaluating poverty targeting in a microfinance scheme. This commonly used outreach indicator measures the average client's poverty level by comparing the average size of outstanding loans in the scheme with the GNI per capita in the country.¹⁰⁸ In the

¹⁰⁷ Sierra Leone Statistics, Population and Housing Census Thematic Report on Gender 2015, October 2017.

¹⁰⁸ For further information, see, for instance, Richard Rosenberg, *Measuring Results of Microfinance Institutions*, CGAP/World Bank, 2009.

IFAD-supported RFIs in Sierra Leone, the total portfolio at the end of 2019 was Le 102.9 billion and was spread over 68,944 active borrowers. This gives an average outstanding loan size of Le 1.49 million, or US\$165. As the average GNI per capita in the country is around US\$510, this yields a depth-of-outreach value for the CB/FSA scheme of 32 per cent. In the Sierra Leonean household income and poverty context, any value around 30 per cent indicates that the borrowers are indeed, on average, low-income persons. This was also the target in this IFAD-supported microfinance operation.

135. It is also obvious from the lending statistics that certain types of clients have had readier access to loans than others. Earners of even small but regular salaries have been preferred borrowers in the eyes of the managers responsible for maintaining the viability and sustainability of the new CBs and FSAs. IOE's rural financial study also shows that RFI clients who have accessed a loan in the last 12 months have a more stable income flow than those who have not taken out a loan.¹⁰⁹
136. Youth were a notable target for various activities, but the lack of a structured approach hampered effective engagement. Youth were the main target group in some activities of the RCPRP, such as in support for youth centres and in support and rehabilitation activities.¹¹⁰ Training and capacity-building in youth centres were reported to have been very effective by the target group, which was made up entirely of young people. Three youth centres were built and provided with equipment.¹¹¹ Training was provided to 80 young people (20 young women and 60 young men, only half of the target figure of 160).¹¹² The project also engaged 702 youth contractors in IVS work, and young people were involved in road construction. The SCP-GAFSP trained 316 youth contractors in IVS rehabilitation and maintenance.
137. In activities that supported agriculture, the approach was slightly less structured. Young people were also included as participants in IVSAs and tree crop production activities, but in a less systematic manner. The project provided for half of the beneficiaries of IVS and tree crop activities to be young people, but information on the actual proportion was not provided. As another example, a pilot for oil palm production was established in 2010 for 100 young farmers with Goldtree but, owing to a lack of targeting support and follow-up, only around 18 per cent of the participants were actually young people.¹¹³
138. As in the RCPRP, youth were engaged in various activities of the SCP-GASFP. Youth, in particular unemployed youth,¹¹⁴ were targeted for the provision of agricultural inputs and training, employment opportunities and the promotion of youth contractors for IVS development. Half of the FBO membership was supposed to consist of young people, but as FBO formation is self-driven, the application of this criterion was already regarded as being flexible at the design stage. Nonetheless, by the end of 2018, more than 75 per cent of the beneficiaries were young people.¹¹⁵
139. The projects were successful in creating jobs for young people; the effect outside the projects was not visible, however. Youth contractors were seen as valuable resources for their community because of their training and engagement. It was expected that these assets would help them engage in work for other IVSs,

¹⁰⁹ It is reported that 45 per cent of non-RFI clients have irregular income flows, compared with 15 per cent of the RFI clients.

¹¹⁰ A total of 702 youth contractors were trained to support IVSAs, and 6,572 young people were employed in the rehabilitation of tree crops, IVSs and roads.

¹¹¹ Computers, printers, photocopiers, scanners, projectors, a public address system, furniture and a TV/DSTV set.

¹¹² The training dealt with business management, report writing, bookkeeping, conflict resolution, and management and leadership skills.

¹¹³ IFAD, Sierra Leone, RCPRP supervision mission (10-21 October 2016), 14 November 2016.

¹¹⁴ IFAD, SCP-GAFSP project design document (main report and annexes), March 2011.

¹¹⁵ IFAD, SCP-GAFSP aide-memoire, February 2019.

yet none of the youth contractors interviewed for the purposes of this evaluation had worked outside the IVS in their community, and they did not display a strong intention of doing so. As a result, they had not earned any money apart for what they received from the project, and the effect on youth unemployment was not visible. In the design of the AVDP, a potential avenue for resolving this issue has been the inclusion of support only for FBOs, cooperatives and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in which at least 40 per cent of the members are young people. The project also provides for an expanded use of the youth contractor model pioneered by the SCP-GAFSP and the provision of mentoring and business development services to youth contractors.¹¹⁶

Table 8

Proportion of youth among CB and FSA depositors, shareholders and borrowers

<i>Indicator for the RFCIP-II</i>	<i>Target: end 2022</i>	<i>Achieved: end 2018</i>	<i>Percentage of target</i>
Proportion of youth among CB depositors	50%	43%	86%
Proportion of youth among CB borrowers	50%	42%	86%
Proportion of youth among FSA shareholders	50%	38%	76%
Proportion of youth among FSA borrowers	50%	38%	76%

Source: RFCIP-II final project design report and RFCIP-II supervision report, March 2019.

140. In the area of rural finance, young people accounted for 43 per cent of CB depositors and 42 per cent of outstanding loans. Youth made up 38 per cent of FSA shareholders and the same share of the borrowers. The target for the whole RFCIP-II implementation period for all the above indicators was set at 50 per cent. The results, as shown in table 8, demonstrate that the proportion of young people who obtained a loan was only slightly below the target, even though it is difficult for the FSAs and CBs to influence this indicator, since they are accessible to everyone.¹¹⁷
141. As no criteria had been set for actually reaching people with disabilities in any of the projects and as there was no aggregation of data,¹¹⁸ this group was not tracked and probably has not been included as intended in the design. Project managers were struggling with many priorities, and resources were not earmarked for this purpose.
142. Summary – effectiveness. The projects managed to achieve positive results by increasing the quantity and quality of production through the rehabilitation of land and capacity-building of stakeholders and beneficiaries. The improvement of infrastructure, especially roads, made a clear change in the socio-economic situation of the beneficiaries. However, due to constraints related to inputs and production equipment, their full potential could not be achieved. Similarly, efforts to link farmers’ groups with markets fell quite short of expectations due in part to the lack of a deeper analysis at the design stage and to high ambitions. The interventions reached small-scale farmers, including women, as planned, but the targets for women were low and a structured approach for youth was lacking. Support for government institutions produced positive effects, but the outcome was also less successful than it could have been owing to an insufficient budget and the unavailability of capacity on a regular basis, both problems which are typically associated with a fragile context. Effectiveness is therefore rated as moderately satisfactory (4).

¹¹⁶ IFAD, AVDP design completion report (main report and annexes), October 2018.

¹¹⁷ The proportions of women and youth participants were already averaging between 40 and 45 percent during the implementation of the RFCIP.

¹¹⁸ IFAD, Sierra Leone, RCPRP project completion report (main report and appendices), 21 April 2017.

Efficiency

143. The efficiency criterion provides a measure of how economically resources (e.g. funds, expertise, time) are converted into results. The standard indicator is the economic (or financial) internal rate of return (EIRR), which measures the stream of costs and benefits. Other parameters and proxy indicators are also used, such as: (i) the time lapse between loan approval and first disbursement; (ii) disbursement performance; (iii) project and financial management processes and costs; and (iv) unit costs of infrastructure. The assessment focuses on the completed or nearly completed implementation of the RCPRP, RFCIP and SCP-GAFSP.
144. Time line. The average time line of the Sierra Leone portfolio is generally in keeping with the West and Central Africa Division's average performance in terms of the time lapse between key milestone events such as approval, signing, entry into force (effectiveness) and first disbursement (see table 9). This is, in part, attributable to the provision of additional financing or the addition of a second phase that built upon existing structures/conditions and thus facilitated implementation readiness (RCPRP and RFCIP). The RCPRP suffered from a slow start-up, as reflected in the time lapse between its approval and effectiveness because of a delay in the Government's fulfilment of the requirements for the disbursement of IFAD funds, among other factors. The SCP-GAFSP outperformed its peers because, as IFAD was only supervising this grant-funded programme, no IFAD standard disbursement conditions were applicable.

Table 9

Time line from approval to first disbursement (in months)

Project	Approval to signing	Signing to effectiveness/ entry into force ^a	Approval to effectiveness/ entry into force	Effectiveness to first disbursement	Approval to first disbursement
RCPRP	2.1	24.7	26.8	9.5	36.3
RCPRP AF-2010	1.4	0.0	1.4	2.8	4.2
RCPRP AF-2012	2.0	4.7	6.7	12.0	18.7
SCP-GAFSP	0.6	2.0	2.6	4.4	7.0
RFCIP	2.3	11.3	13.6	5.0	18.6
RFCIP-II	1.1	1.7	2.8	12.5	15.3
RFCIP-II AF-2018	7.4	NA	NA	NA	NA
Sierra Leone average for the first loan	1.5	9.9	11.5	7.9	19.3
West and Central Africa Division average ^b	3.9	7.1	11.0	7.2	18.1

Source: IFAD Flexcube, 2019.

^a Since the General Conditions for Agricultural Development Financing were amended in September 2009, financing agreements between IFAD and governments enter into force upon the signature by both parties (unless the respective financing agreement states that it is subject to ratification). Prior to this, financing agreements used to contain conditions for effectiveness, upon fulfilment of which the financing agreement was declared effective. Hence, for the financing agreements signed after this change, the date of effectiveness, or what is now called "entry into force" is the same day as the date of the financing agreement.

^b This is for projects approved between 2011 and 2017.

145. Disbursement. The suitability of the portfolio's disbursement performance was moderate and it exhibited a high degree of absorptive capacity. RCPRP disbursement was slow in the initial three years, as the country was still recovering from the civil war. The project therefore disbursed more slowly than follow-on projects that already had systems in place. The SCP-GAFSP was suspended between 2014 and 2015, and disbursement finally picked up after October 2016. In

fact, its implementation did not actually start until 2016.¹¹⁹ For the three completed or nearly completed projects (the RCPRP, RFCIP and SCP-GAFSP), the disbursement rates at financial closing were 100,¹²⁰ 97.1¹²¹ and 95.5 per cent,¹²² respectively; it should also be noted, however, that the RCPRP achieved this rate with a one-year extension and the SCP-GAFSP with a two-year extension. The RFCIP-II also exhibits a very high absorptive capacity, with 96 per cent of the original IFAD loan and grant being disbursed by project year 6, while the remaining three years are to be covered by additional IFAD financing of US\$9 million (see figures A4 and A5 in annex VII).

146. Project management costs as a proportion of total project cost are higher than the IFAD standard¹²³ but comparable with the West and Central Africa Division's average and with projects approved in the same period by the World Bank. As noted in the RFCIP project completion report, Sierra Leone is a relatively expensive site for project implementation, given that all major capital goods have to be imported and infrastructure (including road infrastructure) is underdeveloped. Under these circumstances, the level of project expenses is generally seen as reasonable. The efficiency of rural finance projects' resource use tends to be above average (see table 10). The RCPRP had the highest management cost, at 24.6 per cent over the life of the project, almost doubling the estimated cost at appraisal. This was due to a change in management structure, the decentralization of the project¹²⁴ and a one-year no-cost extension.¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ SCP-GAFSP supervision report, May 2019.

¹²⁰ All IFAD RCPRP loans and grants were 100 per cent disbursed (additional financing was provided for a second phase).

¹²¹ The SDR 5.95 million IFAD grant for RFCIP was disbursed at 100 per cent, and the supplementary IFAD loan and grant (SDR 0.695 million each) were disbursed at 85 per cent each (project completion report, para. 91).

¹²² This disbursement rate was estimated as at March 2019.

¹²³ The IFAD publication, "Effective project management arrangements for agricultural projects: A synthesis of selected case studies and quantitative analysis (IFAD 2014)" indicates that "IFAD's overall project management costs generally ranged between 8-24 per cent of programme costs." The IOE Annual Report on Results and Impact 2014 included a learning theme on project management and indicated that "project management costs average approximately 10 per cent of total project costs in the projects reviewed."

¹²⁴ The decentralization of project management through the creation of the National Project Coordinating Unit (NPCU) to replace the Joint Programme Portfolio Coordinating Unit (JPPCU) as the lead project coordinator for the district project coordinating units (DPCUs) entailed additional payroll and operating costs.

¹²⁵ The one-year extension meant that an annual payroll of around US\$400,000 for about 40 staff had to be sustained even when there were no ongoing field activities (PPE, 2019).

Table 10

Project management costs at appraisal and completion stages (US\$)

<i>Project</i>	<i>Management costs (appraisal)</i>	<i>As a percentage of appraisal of total costs</i>	<i>Management costs (actual)</i>	<i>As a percentage of actual total costs</i>	<i>Notes</i>
RCPRP overall	6.6 million	13	11.2 million	24.6	Decentralization of the project management, increase in personnel costs and a one-year extension
RFCIP	0.98 million	9.1	1.65 million	13.1	Underdeveloped infrastructure and bad road connections in the project areas
RFCIP-II	5.78 million	15.14	3.66 million ^a	15.9	
SCP-GAFSP	11.58 million	20.5	9.49 million ^b	18.5	One-year suspension due to project management and misprocurement issues, outbreak of Ebola, ^c high staff turnover and a two-year no-cost extension
World Bank/IDA agricultural loans				16 ^d	

^a Estimated as at 31 December 2018 (RFCIP-II supervision report, March 2019, appendix 1).

^b Estimated as at 31 December 2018 (SCP-GAFSP supervision report, March 2019, appendix 1).

^c SCP-GAFSSP supervision report, 2016.

^d This includes five projects approved between 2007 and 2018 for agricultural sector lending. Of these five projects, three are closed, and actual programme management costs were used for the estimation.

Source: Project design documents and completion reports (where available).

147. Financial management. The portfolio has been adversely affected by certain financial management issues, especially in the case of the SCP-GAFSP, but its performance has been improving. Recurring financial management issues observed across almost the entire portfolio were: (i) inter-fund borrowings and other discrepancies in the designated account reconciliation (RCPRP, RFCIP, and RFCIP-II); (ii) misuse of accounting software as timely technical support was not always available due to the geographic distance between the software company and the projects (RCPRP and RFCIP); (iii) a high turnover rate for financial controllers (RCPRP)¹²⁶ and programme managers (SCP-GAFSP);¹²⁷ and (iv) inconsistent management of the first-in-first-out (FIFO) exchange rate, which led to a loss of funds (RCPRP). Despite the above-mentioned flaws, there were no major issues in relation to financial management, and the quality of financial management has been gradually improving, as is reflected in the project status rating for this aspect. The SCP-GAFSP was suspended from 2014 to 2015 in response to the presence of major fiduciary and operational risks.¹²⁸
148. Unit costs of rural infrastructure. Compared to the corresponding unit costs of other donors, the unit cost for feeder road rehabilitation by IFAD projects is low. For a road of the same length and structural characteristics, the unit cost is estimated at Le 42.7 million/km for the RCPRP (without supervision) as against a unit cost of Le 85 million/km for GPC/NaSCA, a project implemented by the Islamic Development Bank, according to a contractor working with both donors.
149. Economic efficiency. Overall, judging from the cost-benefit analyses that were conducted, the closed portfolio had a positive economic return. Nonetheless, net present value (NPV) will be a more indicative measurement of project efficiency, as the economic internal rate of return (EIRR) provides no information regarding project value or size. For example, although the ex-post EIRR for the RCPRP (25 per cent) appears high, the benefit-cost ratio is lower

¹²⁶ The RCPRP had five different financial controllers over the period between effectiveness/entry into force and completion.

¹²⁷ There were a total of four programme managers between the time that the programme entered into force and its completion.

¹²⁸ Irregularities were observed with respect to the procurement and distribution of seeds and other inputs, as well as non-adherence to financial and administrative procedures, including recruitment processes.

(1.08), with an NPV of US\$3 million. This means that, although the pace of the realization of benefits is rapid, the overall benefit is modest. Different indicators are therefore presented and compared.¹²⁹ Overall, the EIRRs, where available, are mostly above the average inflation rates for the years in which the projects were effective and are also above the prevailing fixed-term deposit rate in Sierra Leone.¹³⁰ This indicates that the projects have been sound in terms of their level of efficiency.

Table 11
Economic internal rate of return (EIRR) per project

Project	Comp. EIRR		IOE's recalibration	Inflation, average consumer prices in project period (annual %)	Comp. NPV (US\$ millions)	Comp. benefit-cost ratio	Factors affecting the efficiency level
	Design (%)	(%)					
RCPRP	N/A	25	N/A	9.4	3	1.08	Change of time line
RFCIP		27	Lower	7.9	8.9	2.08	Change of project costs, change of time line
RFCIP-II*	11.3	17	Lower	11.2	14.9		Change of project costs
SCP-GAFSP	14.2**		Lower	10.2			Change of time line, change of recurrent costs, scaling down of project activities

* For RFCIP-II, since the project is still ongoing, the economic and financial analysis reported in the completion column is actually the analysis performed at the mid-term review point.

** The NPV of SCP-GAFSP's net benefit stream, discounted at 12 per cent, is US\$4.2 million (project design report, 2011). Source: Project design reports, completion reports, working files for economic and financial analyses and the International Monetary Fund database, 2018.

150. However, a close review of the economic and financial analysis reveals some discrepancies between the assumptions or models applied in the analysis and the updated M&E project data. Admittedly, estimating EIRRs is challenging, as reliable data on marginal benefits based on a comparison of with- and without-project scenarios are lacking and there are a number of issues around the sustainability of benefits and the attribution of benefits to given projects, especially in the case of rural finance projects.¹³¹

- The production differences between the with- and without-project models were overestimated in, for example, the case of the RCPRP. The without-project scenarios were presented as a static situation, despite the fact that swift changes in the post-conflict situation were certainly a possibility. There was thus an underestimation of people's adaptive capacity.
- The project activities were scaled down during implementation, and the outreach numbers are lower than estimated. For example, the SCP-GAFSP invested in only 52 ABCs rather than the 350 ABCs envisioned at the design stage, and the planned investments in rural infrastructure were not made. In the RFCIP, only 8,570 smallholder farmers out of the much larger number of project participants benefitted from at least one loan cycle. This is due to the fact that the emphasis of the RFCIP was on access to finance, not credit to smallholder farmers (project completion report, 2016).
- The models used in the RFCIP and RFCIP-II are not consistent, making the assessment difficult. For the RFCIP-II's mid-term review, two

¹²⁹ Not all the economic and financial analyses reported the NPV and the cost-benefit ratio.

¹³⁰ This rate ranged from 4.1 to 11.0 per cent during the period from 2006 to 2017.

¹³¹ Benefits stemming from rural finance interventions are usually difficult to appraise or quantify. This is mainly because these projects often use a demand-based approach, so the activities that they finance cannot easily be identified ahead of time. In addition, rural finance interventions generally complement agricultural development and off-farm business activities, and their benefits are thus often indirectly captured within existing production models (IFAD, 2016).

mixed indicators were used: (i) the increase in the revenues of the financial institutions; and (ii) the increase in agricultural income afforded by three crop models. This may have led to the double counting of benefits. Given the fact that the shares of agricultural loans in the CB and FSA portfolios are only 14.6 and 26.1 per cent, respectively, the use of three crop models to estimate the project's benefits is also problematic.

- The key parameters of the analysis (e.g. investment failure rate and agricultural yields) were too optimistic, which led to an overestimation of the benefit streams. For example, in the RFCIP-II, a loan loss provision of 5 per cent was assumed, while, according to the logical framework (SPR, 2018), only 12 per cent of the FSAs and 33 per cent of the CBs have portfolios-at-risk ≥ 30 days below 5 per cent.
151. Based on the available documents, including working Excel files for the economic and financial analyses, the evaluation team has recalibrated the indicators for a number of the projects by correcting some of the assumptions that were made. The difference in the EIRRs calculated at the design stage and at completion and IOE estimates can be roughly categorized on the basis of the following factors:
- Changes in project costs: Increases in project costs could negatively affect the EIRR unless the benefits also increase. This was the case in the RFCIP and RFCIP-II. The RFCIP did not take into account the project costs of the RFCIP-II, which played an instrumental role in maintaining the operational self-sufficiency (OSS) ratio of the RFIs. The RFCIP-II was also in fact capitalized by funding from the SCP-GAFSP.
 - Changes in project time lines: In general, the EIRRs have been negatively affected by the Ebola outbreak, since this had the effect of raising recurrent costs (e.g. the project management unit (PMU), Apex Bank) while the realization of benefits was deferred further into the future.
152. In sum, although the portfolio has been adversely affected by some financial management issues, especially in the case of the SCP-GAFSP, its overall disbursement performance and project management costs have been reasonable. The only exception is the RCPRP, which is nonetheless considered acceptable because it was implemented in a post-conflict, fragile context. The economic efficiencies of different projects were mostly positive, although IOE's recalibration reveals lower-than-reported efficiency levels, especially given the high inflation rates that prevailed. Efficiency is therefore rated as moderately satisfactory (4).

Rural poverty impact

153. This section provides an assessment of the projects' impact on rural poverty in the following specific impact domains: (i) household income and net assets; (ii) human and social capital and empowerment; (iii) food security and agricultural productivity; and (iv) institutions and policies.
154. The main impact pathways envisaged for these projects can be described as follows: (i) improved agricultural quality and quantity and crop diversification through adoption of good agronomic practices (RCPRP, SCP-GAFSP); (ii) improved commercialization through access to agro-services, value chain development (RCPRP, SCP-GAFSP and AVDP) and better road conditions (RCPRP); (iii) additional income generation and diversification of employment through access to finance (RFCIP and RFCIP-II) and promotion of livestock activities (SCP-GAFSP); and (iv) enhanced human and social capital through technology transfer (RCPRP, SCP-GAFSP), ownership of rural finance institutions through shareholding by members (RFCIP and RFCIP-II) and community ownership (RCPRP).
155. The amount of reliable data for use in estimating the magnitude of these project's rural poverty impact is quite limited, and the triangulation of qualitative assessments has therefore been used.

156. Table 12 provides an overview of the various surveys and studies that were conducted by the projects. The last column reflects the shortcomings that hampered a robust estimation of their poverty impact. Some of the common issues were as follows: (i) most of the projects did not conduct a baseline study or, if they did, they did not conduct those studies in a timely manner (RCPRP), which made it difficult to obtain a valid before-and-after comparison; (ii) the effects of widespread economic growth and the influx of donor activities in the country in the wake of the war made it difficult to discern what impact could rightly be attributed to IFAD projects alone; (iii) the validity of the “with-project” and “without-project” comparisons done in various endline or outcome surveys is questionable owing to the lack of valid counterfactual data. A further challenge in this connection was posed by the Ebola outbreak, especially in the case of the RFCIP.¹³² Lastly, since the RFCIP-II still has three years left to run, the impact is yet to be fully realized. To compensate for the data gap, IOE has conducted a rural finance study in an effort to shed some light on the potential impact.

Table 12
Summary of the datasets for impact assessments

<i>Project</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Endline</i>	<i>Other studies</i>	<i>Notes</i>
RCPRP	RCPRP baseline study (2012)	Assessment of outcome indicators in the GEF project (2016) Rice yield study (2016) Project impact evaluation report (2017)	N/A	The RCPRP baseline data for the yields of both rice and cocoa crops were based on farmers' recollections, and the use of such data poses a risk of overestimating project achievements
RFCIP	No baseline	Rapid impact assessment report (2015)	N/A	Due to the absence of baseline data or a control group, the study determined the programme's impact and effect on clients by comparing the situations before and after its implementation
RFCIP-II		Annual outcome survey (AOS)	IOE rural finance study (2017)	The survey employed a mix of purposive sampling and probability sampling methods, which could give rise to a selection bias Selection of non-clients was constrained by a lack of access to comprehensive lists for sampling Only descriptive statistical results were given, while no baseline data were available for use in the assessment
SCP-GAFSP		Adoption survey (2018) FAO evaluation of SCP-GAFSP in Sierra Leone (2019)	N/A	There was no baseline to justify the comparison made between with- and without-project scenarios in the adoption survey

Source: Data elaborated in the CSPE.

157. Household income and assets. Most projects reported increased household income and assets, mainly as a result of greater access to finance and improved farming systems. Loans were expected to support economic opportunities for their recipients, thus creating new on- and off-farm employment opportunities. Additionally, agricultural diversification and intensification were expected to create jobs, especially for rural youth, given the low level of mechanization in rural Sierra Leone.¹³³ The RFCIP's rapid impact assessment shows

¹³² Communities were severely affected by the Ebola outbreak. A sampling methodology had to be improvised for the rapid impact assessment. Two types of questionnaires were drawn up for use in interviewing clients in order to solicit as much data as possible for the survey without spending too much time in the field. Additionally, a United Nations travel ban had the effect of reducing the scale of the field work.

¹³³ According to the FAO assessment, the inclusion of youth who had the ability to make use of this equipment contributed to an increase in productivity and represented an advance in terms of time savings for women. It also opened up an income-earning opportunity for youth.

that 79.2 per cent of the enterprises that have borrowed from RFIs have nearly doubled or tripled their sales, although it should be noted that the sample is small (see table 13). The project completion report further confirmed that the profits of loan recipients were higher than those of persons who were not RFI clients.¹³⁴ As for RFCIP-II, loan recipients also reported an improvement in their housing conditions and in on-farm and off-farm income generation activities which led to an accumulation of assets and higher incomes (annual outcome survey, 2019). In fact, as there were relatively few farmers among the loan recipients, most of this income is likely to have been generated by off-farm businesses. The report does highlight the observation that the RFCIP-II appears to be targeting people in the higher poverty quintiles. Lastly, income levels were also boosted by the road rehabilitation works conducted under the RCPRP, as many young people started up businesses offering passenger transport services via motorcycle.

Table 13

Sales after the award of a CB/FSA loan as compared with sales in the absence of a loan

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Valid percentage</i>
Much less	5	3.0	3.2
About the same	26	15.5	16.5
About twice as much	108	64.3	68.4
About three times as much or more	17	10.1	10.8
Invalid observations	10	6	

Source: RFCIP project completion report, January 2015.

158. In the case of the RCPRP, the increase in household income was mainly driven by the improvements made in farming systems. Increased IVS production capacity and improved cocoa production were particularly notable. The RCPRP's positive effects on incomes and assets were derived from qualitative and quantitative improvements in rice and cocoa production, among others, made possible by the adoption of good agronomic practices. Under the RCPRP, the average monthly income per household for project participants was Le 9,865,501, while that of farmers who were not receiving support from the project was Le 4,727,165. Project-supported households were found to use 42 per cent of their total expenditure on food, while the corresponding percentage for non-project households was 58 per cent. The adoption survey reported an increase of 59.8 per cent in farmers' incomes, compared with an increase of 40.2 per cent for non-project farmers, but no other data were provided to corroborate this finding. As mentioned above, due to the absence of baseline data or a control group, the results need to be interpreted with caution. However, IOE has confirmed the presence of positive impacts on household income through field visits and information triangulation.¹³⁵
159. A variety of interventions under the SCP-GAFSP were intended to boost agricultural productivity, promote commercialization and increase income diversification, but the impact was marginal. Although the FFS was successful in transferring knowledge on rice production techniques, the adoption rates were relatively low and sometimes not suited to the context (FAO, 2019). The implementation of ABCs was not optimal either, as will be discussed further below. The ABCs reached a limited number of farmers, and this resulted in a less

¹³⁴ The project completion report indicated that over 75 per cent of all clients fell into the profitability category of Le 401,000 and above (about US\$43 /month and above), compared with 47 per cent before the project started.

¹³⁵ More specifically, In the IVS, smallholder farmers managed to increase their production, yield and income thanks to the distribution of better-quality rice seed, tools, fertilizers and cash-for-labour. Technical, management and business skills training were provided to service providers, IVSAs and FBOs which promoted the use of better agronomic practices. Some of the IVS farmers were reported to have transitioned from subsistence farming to commercial farming (RCPRP PPE, 2019).

satisfactory impact on the average household incomes of the targeted population. Agricultural diversification into enterprises run by women (e.g. the raising of small ruminants, vegetable production and groundnut cultivation) has helped to boost household income, but the scale of that impact is uncertain (FAO, 2019), and it could not be verified by the CSPE mission.

160. Market access improved slightly, with most of this impact being attributable to road rehabilitation works (RCPRP), but the improvement was not great enough to allow farmers to reach their full income potential. ABCs have been promoted in almost all the projects, but only a limited proportion of farmers have had access to them (RCPRP PPE, 2019). This is mainly due to the fact that the SCP-GAFSP had to scale down the number of ABCs to which it provided support.¹³⁶ For example, the evaluation team found that farmers often still had no choice but to sell their produce on the retail market or to intermediaries at a less favourable price. The cocoa cooperatives supported under the RCPRP reported having a more stable buyer base, and some were further strengthened by the use of fair trade certificates or organic production certificates. Nonetheless, some cooperatives had difficulties because they had single buyers and thus little bargaining power or struggled with the high cost of obtaining certifications. Road rehabilitation improved access to services offered by decentralized institutions and banks. The RCPRP reported a significant drop in transportation costs and travel time, which also reduced post-harvest losses. Overall, various agricultural commercialization initiatives undertaken by both the RCPRP and SCP-GAFSP have been found to have had no more than a very moderate impact.
161. Consistent evidence shows that investment in rural finance has contributed directly and indirectly to increases in both productive and consumption assets. The RFCIP impact survey shows that a significant amount of household assets acquired by the surveyed beneficiaries can be attributed to loans obtained from FSAs/CBs. Many assets were purchased for business purposes, such as mobiles, motor vehicles and livestock, which can be of help in expanding businesses and obtaining higher profits. IOE's rural finance study also shows that RFI borrowers used their loans to acquire a range of assets, including mobile phones, which are perceived as an important asset for training and for finding business opportunities. Overall, RFI clients have a higher rate of ownership of household assets than non-RFI clients (Table 14). However, this also points to the fact that RFI clients are generally wealthier than their non-RFI peers.¹³⁷ Similarly, IOE's rural finance study on the RFCIP-II also shows that RFI clients and persons who were not RFI clients have different asset profiles and that RFI loans were used to build RFI clients' profiles with such assets as housing and production equipment.

¹³⁶ Most of the ABCs that were visited did not have functional production or processing equipment, and their capacity to provide agro-services to their member FBOs is therefore quite limited (FAO, 2019).

¹³⁷ Survey data suggest that beneficiary households are wealthier than non-beneficiary households, with 32.0% of beneficiary households falling into the highest wealth quintile, while barely 8.5% of non-beneficiary households are in that quintile. In addition, more non-beneficiary households than beneficiary households fall into the lower wealth quintiles (annual outcome survey, 2019).

Table 14
Percentages of households owning certain assets

Asset	Beneficiary(A) (%)	Non-beneficiary (B) (%)	Difference (A-B) (%)
Bicycle	30.9	17.8	13.10
Motorbike	38.1	31.8	6.30
Car/lorry/truck	15.7	2.3	13.40
Television	41.9	15.9	26.00
Video/VCR/DVD	55.1	34.6	20.50
Radio	80.1	71.5	8.60
Landline phone	8.1	12.1	-4.00
Mobile phone	88.1	72.0	16.10
Computer	15.3	8.9	6.40
Generator	33.5	8.4	25.10
Electric fan	24.6	9.3	15.30
Refrigerator	23.7	6.1	17.60
Charcoal iron	58.9	37.4	21.50
Electric iron	15.7	7.0	8.70
Watch/clock	57.2	36.0	21.20
Modern/energy efficient "wonder" stove	18.6	10.3	8.30

Source: RFCIP-II annual outcome survey, 2019, table 4.

162. In the cases of the RCPRP and SCP-GAFSP, the impact on household assets was mainly driven by increased income. The 2017 impact assessment¹³⁸ indicates that there was a 17.1 per cent increase in household asset ownership among RCPRP beneficiaries, as against a target of 20 per cent (mainly motorcycles, radios, watches and mobile phones). A similar impact may have been produced under the SCP-GAFSP, although no study or data are as yet available to demonstrate this.
163. Agricultural productivity and food security. Agricultural productivity has improved but has been constrained by insufficient access to inputs, machines and labour. IVS rehabilitation in both the RCPRP and SCP-GAFSP increased production and productivity and led to double and even triple cropping of rice fields. One rice yield study¹³⁹ has shown yields of over 3 tons/ha per crop cycle in project farms compared with around 1 ton/ha in non-project IVS farms.¹⁴⁰ For cocoa, a yield assessment found that, for the RCPRP-supported cocoa growers, the average yield for the three districts was 818.1 kg/ha versus 605.5 kg/ha for farmers that did not receive project support. Average output increased by 38.7 per cent for farmers participating in the RCPRP versus 12.8 per cent for non-participating farmers.¹⁴¹
164. In the SCP-GAFSP, FFSs were successful in transferring knowledge concerning rice production techniques to farmers, including techniques dealing with nursing and planting rice, the application of fertilizers, row planting and determining seed viability. Nevertheless, the adoption rates were low because some of the new

¹³⁸ IFAD, GEF and GASFP, RCPRP and GEF project: IACCAPFS in Sierra Leone. Final project impact evaluation report for RCPRP, October 2017.

¹³⁹ IFAD, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, impact assessment of IVS rehabilitation in Kailahun, Kenema, Kono and Koinadugu districts, November 2014.

¹⁴⁰ All swamps were GPS-surveyed, but measurement accuracy varied and has resulted in discrepancies.

¹⁴¹ IFAD, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Cocoa yield study report, January 2016.

technologies being promoted in a labour-scarce environment were actually labour-intensive and because access to farming inputs was limited.¹⁴² Additionally, in the FAO assessment, FBOs identified limited access to quality seeds and fertilizers as one of the main constraints, as also noted in the section on effectiveness. Despite setbacks, the 2018 crop-cutting survey demonstrated that the average rice yield for project-supported farmers was 3.25 tons/ha versus 1.97 tons/ha for the non-project farmers and versus 1.40 tons/ha at the start of the project. The impact was found to be of a similar magnitude for cocoa production.¹⁴³ These results need to be viewed with a degree of scepticism, however (see para. 166).

165. Since the number of agricultural production loans was limited, the micro-loans' impact on agricultural productivity was far below its potential. The annual outcome survey of the RFCIP-II indicated that the project had had a positive impact on agricultural productivity, as beneficiary households had higher rice yields (upland rice: 7.59 bushels/acre; lowland rice: 10.08 bushels/acre) in 2017 than non-beneficiary households did (upland rice: 5.48 bushels/acre; lowland rice: 7.39 bushels/acre).¹⁴⁴ Since only 20 per cent of the loans were for agricultural purposes, however, and given the flaws in the survey methodology, these impacts may have been overestimated.
166. Food security may have improved due to enhanced farming and income growth, but few activities directly affected the population's nutrition status other than those of the SCP-GAFSP. Based on various food security data sources, the PPE for the RCPRP concluded that it was difficult to tell how the food security situation had actually changed. The SCP-GAFSP reported that the availability of water throughout the year allowed multiple cropping and led to improved food security (SPR, 2018) and that farmers harvested enough and could sell some surplus to buy food condiments (FAO, 2019). Anecdotal evidence from FAO's assessment shows that the adoption of the FFS/FBO/ABC model has contributed to increased productivity and cropping intensification and to greater food security in the districts where the project was operating. Rural finance beneficiaries have reported a significantly better food security status than non-beneficiary households (see figure A7 in annex VII), although the former group's dietary diversity score and food consumption score are only slightly better (see figure A8 in annex VII). As mentioned above, RFI clients are generally wealthier than non-clients, and it is therefore doubtful whether their higher food security status should be attributed to the rural finance intervention.
167. The portfolio's impact on nutritional status was marginal and was transmitted only indirectly through increased incomes and dietary diversity. The portfolio rarely included activities that directly affected nutrition status, with the exception being a few of the many topics covered in the training sessions conducted under the SCP-GAFSP. Some activities may have led to greater dietary diversity, such as double or triple cropping in IVSs in which rice was alternated with vegetables under the RCPRP and SVP-GAFSP and the intercropping of rice and groundnuts under the SCP-GAFSP. There are no data, however, that demonstrate that this led to changed consumption patterns.
168. Although the adoption survey of the SCP-GAFSP pointed to some positive trends as reflected in the Global Acute Malnutrition Index, the reduction in malnutrition was observed for both project and non-project farmers, so it cannot be attributed to the project alone. The livestock component may potentially enhance the population's nutrition status, but it is still too early to assess the impact of this component, as

¹⁴² The technologies for increasing production and productivity transferred through the FFS require specific equipment (such as tractors and power tillers), especially in the inland valley swamps and *boliland* areas. This equipment is not locally available on the market and is too expensive for farmers to own individually.

¹⁴³ A 2018 crop yield study showed yields averaging 0.475 mt/ha for rehabilitated fields compared to 0.341 mt/ha for non-rehabilitated cocoa plantations; this difference was attributed to the use of good agronomic practices.

¹⁴⁴ IFAD and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, RFCIP-II annual outcome survey, January 2019.

the livestock had not yet been fully distributed to the farmers at the time of the CSPE field visits.

169. Human and social capital and empowerment. Overall, there is consistent evidence of the achievement of improvements in human capital through the provision of training on agronomic practices (e.g. FBO and FFS), business management and marketing skills (e.g. ABCs, cooperatives, RFIs) and financial literacy (e.g. RFIs), together with improved access to working capital and equipment. Social capital was also strengthened through ownership of community organizations and group-based lending arrangements.
170. First, the delivery of agronomic training to young people and other participants had a positive impact in terms of human and social capital accumulation. The training of farmers under the RCPRP and SCP-GAFSP in agriculture-related technical topics and group management helped to create a strong human capacity base, especially when it came to agricultural production. RCPRP-supported training of members of youth centres improved their skills in project management and acquisition and enabled them to act as a group to collectively access resources. The support provided for youth centres helped young people to engage in agriculture as a group, but this effect was not very prominent (RCPRP PPE, 2019). In the case of the SCP-GAFSP, despite the slow adoption of the new technologies, farmers indicated that the transfer of knowledge conducted through the FFS had resulted in an intensification of food production (FAO, 2019). The RCPRP's training on group and conflict management helped farmers to act collectively in the sphere of production and (to a lesser extent) in sales, which also led to increased social capital formation.
171. Second, business management skills were strengthened through ABCs and cooperatives, but only to a limited extent. According to FAO's assessment under the SCP-GAFSP, the supported ABCs benefited from various kinds of training delivered by NGOs (e.g. business planning, governance) which helped them to become familiar with the business planning process. However, the extent to which the ABCs reached out to farmers and strengthened their business skills is uncertain. There was evidence that points to a top-down approach in the application of the ABC model and possible elite capture,¹⁴⁵ and the validity of this evidence was confirmed by the CSPE's field visits. Similarly, in the RCPRP, the training provided to cooperatives was useful in helping them to improve their business management abilities, obtain certificates and engage in fair trade and organic production, but this benefited only a small proportion of the farmers.
172. Third, an impact is also visible in terms of the operations, efficiency and productivity of the CBs and FSAs, which displayed acceptable recovery rates and great institutional resilience. Most of the CBs and FSAs were established by the programme in communities where no such locally based financial institution had existed before. Most of the clients were first-time formal-institution savers and borrowers. Therefore, the RFCIP's and RFCIP-II's results in terms of the programme beneficiaries' enhanced knowledge and practices in the areas of banking, finance, investment and basic business management and accounting were significant. Group lending and group guarantees have also led to social capital empowerment as the group-based arrangements are generally reported to be functioning satisfactorily. Various earlier reports, as well as interviews conducted by the evaluation mission, indicate both strong ownership on the part of these communities of their small banks and the evident pride felt by low-income clients, particularly women, of their businesses' advancement as a consequence of the loans that they received and successfully repaid.

¹⁴⁵ The ABCs have a governance structure in place. However, the election process for the leadership positions seems to be weak. In some cases there has been elite capture or entrepreneurial capture of the ABC boards (FAO, 2019).

173. Institutions and policies. The RCPRP helped to build and strengthen various decentralized institutions. The project accomplished this by addressing their most basic needs (e.g. buildings and equipment) and helping them to generate income. Funding to support the effective use of those capacities remains limited, however. Even though the decentralization process is still at an early stage and funding from the central government is limited, ward committee members have already stated that their position has been strengthened and their contribution to decision-making has improved. Being able to gather in a decent venue was found to better enable that process. The cooperatives supported under the RCPRP were achieving some good results, although they were also facing some challenges, but RIPMCO's impact has been quite limited. The project helped to create quite a number of new field-level institutions (e.g. FBOs and IVSAs), and the evaluation team found that those groups were working well and relatively coherently.
174. Rural finance projects have had a strong impact at the micro level, but efforts at the meso and macro levels have been lacking. The 76 newly established community-based rural finance institutions serving around 200,000 rural households are nearly all currently profitable and able to operate without external support. They are expected to stimulate the development of the economies in their local communities and support the financial empowerment of low-income men and women. The results and impact of the Apex Bank have been much more mixed and uncertain. While the capacity-building services provided to the CBs and FSAs are generally appreciated, the Apex Bank's impact as a wholesale banker for the RFI network and as a developer of appropriate lending policies and products has so far been limited. The quality of the Apex Bank's strategy and available financing still fall short of what is generally expected of a "central bank" for an otherwise well-functioning rural banking network. One policy issue that has created dissatisfaction in the RFI network has to do with restrictive regulations that prevent FSAs from intermediating deposits. Most FSAs currently bypass this regulation by taking cash deposits under the heading of "safe-keeping". A more appropriate solution for this problem would have been to transform the bigger, more advanced FSAs into deposit-taking CBs, which is also a solution that the Bank of Sierra Leone favours.
175. Summary – rural poverty impact. The portfolio's impacts are primarily visible in the domains of human and social capital and of institutions and policies, but credible data to support these findings are not available. The impact on incomes appears to have been positive in the case of the RCPRP but less so in that of the SCP-GAFSP. In addition, the achievements in this area, especially for the rural finance portfolio, may have disproportionately benefited some of the better-off farmers. Agricultural productivity has improved, but the realization of the full potential existing in this regard is constrained by insufficient access to inputs, machines and labour and by a limited use of agricultural production loans. Food security has improved but is still relatively low. The portfolio's rural poverty impact is therefore rated as moderately satisfactory (4).

Sustainability of benefits

176. Sustainability indicators are designed to measure the extent to which achieved results and impact will continue after external support has come to an end. Under this heading, the evaluation team looks into the longevity of the groups and associations that have been formed and of the relevant infrastructure and assesses the external factors that may affect their continuity. In this section, the CSPE team has analysed the sustainability of the portfolio's benefits with respect to its key thematic areas.

Productive capacity

177. Most farmers and their organizations are still engaged in project-induced activities, with profits and yields above the pre-project rates. One of the biggest challenges to sustaining these yields and profit levels revolves around the affordability and availability of inputs. The Government has reportedly been unable to set up sufficient seed-growing enterprises, and the quantity of seed produced by SLARI is far too small. The supply of seeds made available by the private sector is insufficient. Consequently, yields have reportedly decreased since the beneficiaries started growing Nerica rice under the RCPRP and are said to still be declining. Under the SCP-GAFSP, farmers' insufficient access to improved seeds and fertilizer, which hampers their efforts to maintain their initially high yields over the long run, was frequently brought up as an issue.
178. Further, under the SCP-GAFSP, only 68 per cent of the rehabilitated sites were still functional after the second year of implementation. Some IVSAs faced challenges regarding the renewal of their land-lease agreements for the IVS sites and were therefore unable to sustain those sites. Under the RCPRP, the evaluation team found that most of the IVSs were still active, even though a number of them were struggling with irrigation works that had collapsed or were no longer functional.
179. The farmers received appropriate training under the RCPRP and SCP-GAFSP in good agronomic practices, and that training is expected to continue to sustain the corresponding benefits. However, these practices are difficult and labour-intensive, and farmers do not yet have sufficient access to labour-saving equipment and agroprocessing machines to achieve a sustainable intensification of production, especially in the case of rice.¹⁴⁶ Where such equipment has been provided, there have often been too many farmers for the limited supply of equipment that has been made available. Moreover, government services such as agricultural extension support have been far less available than had been hoped at the design stage.
180. The loan recovery system used under the RCPRP, whereby farmers repay 40 per cent of the cost of the inputs they receive into the Agricultural Development Fund, has contributed to the sustainability of these benefits, as it allows other farmers to benefit from the same funds to improve their production capacity in the future.

Agricultural marketing

181. The sustainability of the portfolio's activities focusing on agricultural marketing has been limited by the weakness of the links existing among value chain actors. After the RCPRP had ended, most of the contractors who were employed under the project terminated their services as well; only a few of them remained committed. The SCP-GAFSP has thus not managed to set up a strong network of agro-dealers to support the farmers. Many of the IFAD-supported farmers are still finding their own individual solutions for ways to sell their produce and, even though some of them have had access to ABCs and all of them are members of IVSAs or FBOs, many of them have not benefited to a sufficient degree from collective efforts to buy inputs, process food or sell their produce at a better price.
182. Rice farmers used to sell their rice at the farmgate to RIPMCO when the RCPRP was still active, but they have since reported that RIPMCO no longer comes to collect their rice for sale, and RIPMCO has confirmed that it only collects rice at the farmgate from selected FBOs in Kenema. It is therefore unclear how sustainable the benefits from RIPMCO's support will be. Cocoa farmers have found that their improved production techniques are sustainable and have managed to maintain their improved yields, and a number of them have succeeded in selling their produce through cooperatives. A number of palm oil farmers supported by the

¹⁴⁶ FAO, Evaluation of the SCP-GAFSP in Sierra Leone, 2019.

RCPRP reported that they expected no problems in selling their oil at the local level, as they expect demand to remain strong and stable. Nonetheless, they were planning to take charge of their oil production and sales on their own and were not linked to the private sector via the project. The new AVDP will continue many of the activities supported under the SCP-GAFSP and will seek to consolidate its results.

183. The continuation of the benefits derived from the road rehabilitation works is contingent on the availability of scarce resources. The RCPRP tried to set up a system for road maintenance through the establishment of the Road Maintenance Administrative Fund and road maintenance committees. This was a promising effort to ensure sustainability, but it faltered after the project ended due to a lack of funding and limited ownership. In order for this initiative to be operational, the central government would have to channel the appropriate tax revenues from fuel sales back into the Road Maintenance Fund, but this has not happened. Over the last three years, the Fund has not been replenished, and the district councils do not have a sufficient sense of ownership to allocate funds from another source. Consequently, no road maintenance has been done during that period. Road maintenance equipment provided by the project is not sufficiently maintained, repaired or used.

Rural finance

184. Rural finance sustainability indicators are promising, but there is some uncertainty regarding the sustainability of the Apex Bank. The sustainability of the benefits of IFAD-supported rural finance interventions in Sierra Leone can be evaluated at three levels. First, at the client level, while comprehensive field data are not available, there are indirect indications that the benefits from these interventions for most clients will be sustainable. The generally acceptable rate of loan recovery indicates that, for most clients, the loan-funded activities have generated sufficient income to allow for full and timely loan repayments. Even more importantly, almost all clients have continued to borrow in their next cycle and have requested bigger loans to further develop their businesses. This pattern indicates that the clientele of the CBs and FSAs are developing a market culture and business orientation that auger well for the sustainability of the benefits that have been achieved at the grass-roots level.
185. Second, the trend of operational sustainability in the supported CBs and FSAs is very promising. Although there are a few FSAs and CBs that are not yet in the profit zone, 88 per cent of the CBs and 83 per cent of the FSAs already cover all their operating costs out of their own income. In the directly IFAD-financed RFIs, the operational self-sufficiency (OSS) rate is a high 171 per cent. All 76 institutions are expected to reach full operational sustainability well before the RFCIP-II closes. Operating at these high levels of profitability makes the CBs and FSAs well prepared to further develop their operations and impact, particularly in areas such as agricultural lending, loan appraisal, risk management, and management information system and IT-based banking solutions.
186. Third, the sustainability of the Apex Bank is a major concern for the operations of the whole RFI network, however. The Apex Bank has not been able to develop a convincing banking model and strategy for itself and has thus been unable to define how it plans to operate as an effective "central bank" for CBs and FSAs. Such a model should rely on sufficient own-income generation without donor support or the current types of relatively high charges levied on the revenues of CBs and FSAs. Furthermore, a strategy aiming at sustainable operations should predominantly focus on activities close to the core mandates of the Apex Bank, such as wholesale lending and service provision to the CBs and FSAs, rather than on commercial banking ventures such as large-scale direct lending to companies or real estate investments.

187. An important indirect outcome of the RFCIP support was the establishment in March 2019 of the Other Financial Institutions Supervision Division as an independent unit in the Bank of Sierra Leone. This division supervises both CBs and FSAs in a joint arrangement with the Apex Bank. The Division has continued the support of the Bank of Sierra Leone for the development and growth of the rural finance network developed with IFAD support. The Bank of Sierra Leone has also confirmed its support for the model, according to which the better-performing FSAs can gradually transform themselves into CBs and thereby receive a full deposit-taking licence and other functional options that are open to a registered bank but not to an FSA. This institutional growth pattern is an important part of the sustainability and exit strategy for IFAD's rural finance operations in Sierra Leone.

Youth

188. Benefits emanating from activities related to youth facilities established under the portfolio are expected to be sustained, but this is not holding true for the skill sets acquired. RCPRP-supported youth centres were handed over to the district youth councils, which have assumed full responsibility for them. There are indications that the youth centres have become a successful, self-sustaining project investment and that they are able to generate a certain level of revenue.
189. Training and engaging youth contractors under the RCPRP and SCP-GAFSP were meant to involve them in the development of their own community in activities for which they would be paid. In the long run, however, the idea was that they would gain access to employment and income-generating opportunities by using their skills and knowledge and providing their services to non-project farmers and other communities that would pay them for their services. The evaluation team was not able to find any evidence of such continued engagement, however. The youth contractors who were interviewed had not found alternative employment and were no longer being paid by the project; in those instances in which they were engaged in their own communities, they were doing so free of charge. Nonetheless, their improved capacity is assumed to have led to a sustainable increase in production at the community level.
190. Under the SCP-GAFSP, youth were trained as community animal health workers to run the vet input shops/clinics. The evaluation team did not meet with them, and the FAO evaluation reported that medical kits and refrigerator distribution had not been completed; however, this form of engagement has the potential to become sustainable, provided that farmers are willing to pay for these services.

Institutional context

191. Benefits from farmer training are expected to be sustainable for the FBOs and IVSAs. The lack of effective market linkages will hamper the sustainability of increased income levels. Farmers mobilized to form FBOs and IVSAs are now able to act independently and should continue to reap the benefits of training. Some of the non-graduated IVSAs, on the other hand, which were not registered as associations with the appropriate institutions, do not have a legal status and cannot access the support packages for farmers provided by governments and other donors that would have helped them sustain their activities.
192. Most of the FBOs continue to be active and well-organized, but those specialized in tree crops are not yet linked to an ABC, since most of the existing ABCs are focused on rice production. Consequently, the strong linkages that could help tree-crop farmers to access or continue to access better markets for their increased harvests are absent. As for the RCPRP-supported cocoa cooperatives, economic returns were assessed as reasonably sustainable. However, some of the previous buyers did not wish to engage with the cooperatives once the project was no longer supporting them. The cost of the fair trade and organic certificates, which were

meant to provide the cooperatives with more sustainable and better market access, were cited as major impediments by some of them.

193. All the ABCs are also still in operation but may face threats to their longevity if left on their own at this point in time. The non-transformed ABCs are too weak to continue without additional support. The FAO evaluation of the SCP-GAFSP¹⁴⁷ concluded that even the transformed ABCs, although their status has improved, are still in need of policy, technical and financial support from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Furthermore, the lack of linkages to agro-dealers and limited access to credit also threaten the ABCs' sustainability.
194. Government institutions' sustainability continues to be under threat from a lack of central government funding and high staff turnover. Institutional learning and memory are constrained by the fact that core staff are frequently moved to other offices or even out of the system after a short period of time, normally without a proper handover to their successors.¹⁴⁸ District councils and ward committee members regularly change after each election (an election usually takes place every four to five years), without necessarily passing on their acquired skills and knowledge to their successors.
195. Ward buildings and equipment are owned by the ward committees; at the district level, the district councils own all improvements. Nonetheless, in order to benefit on an ongoing basis from the RCPRP's capacity-building support, these local institutions need the funding that ultimately comes from the central government, and they are struggling to do so. Revenue collection by the district councils covers only part of their needs but, in the context of severe funding shortages, this is nonetheless seen as a positive development. The fiscal climate is not yet sufficiently conducive to sustainable income generation through government taxes, however.
196. The RCPRP had also supported SLARI. This organization operates under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and it, too, is hampered by funding shortages. Some of its field offices are seriously understaffed and lack water and electricity and, as a result, some nurseries are no longer being used. SLARI has no funds for new research or for the development of new technologies.
197. The RCPRP did not have an exit strategy, but the SCP-GAFSP just finalized a draft exit strategy based on a stakeholder workshop held in Bo.¹⁴⁹ The strategy is a good first effort, as it provides insights into the status quo and potential continuity solutions. These projects did not make a sufficient effort to formalize arrangements for the continuation of project activities with their partners, however, so it is not clear to what extent the exit strategy can make a difference. In addition, some of the stakeholders use the funding shortage as a justification for this situation.
198. Summary – sustainability. The results of the evaluation of the portfolio's sustainability are mixed. Participating farmers' productive capacity has increased but is threatened by their limited access to inputs. The marketing support that was provided has been found to be less sustainable, since farmers are still not able to rely on a collective approach for marketing their produce. Road construction under the RCPRP improved physical access to markets, but the lack of resources for road maintenance may result in their deterioration. Rural finance activities have been found to be sustainable at the client level and are promising in terms of the operational sustainability of RFIs. The inability of the Apex Bank to develop a convincing banking model and strategy, however, is a threat to the entire RFI network. Youth centres have been active, but the engagement of youth contractors does not seem to have extended beyond the projects' duration to any significant degree. As for grass-roots institutions, many FBOs can act reasonably

¹⁴⁷ FAO, Evaluation of the SCP-GAFSP in Sierra Leone, 2019.

¹⁴⁸ IFAD, Sierra Leone, RCPRP supervision report (10-21 October 2016) and mid-term review, 14 November 2016..

¹⁴⁹ SCP-GAFSP, draft exit strategy.

independently, but the IVSAs will need more support if they are to continue to be successful. The ABCs are still operational but most of them, even the transformed ones, need technical and financial support if they are to continue operating in the long run. Sustainability of government institutions is still uncertain, as they are threatened by a lack of funding and high staff turnover. Sustainability is therefore rated as moderately satisfactory (4).

B. Other performance criteria

Innovation

199. The RCPRP introduced the practice of having young men and women work as service providers in IVS rehabilitation activities, and the SCP-GAFSP continued this practice. Previously, projects worked with the local human resources of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, whose staffing table was already stretched to its limits. Working with local contractors enabled the project to increase the speed and quality of implementation, while at the same time providing young people with employment and helping to build their capacity. Moreover, since the contractors were from the same communities, they would potentially also be available after the project's end. In the case of tree crops, youth contractors were employed to manage decentralized nurseries at the community level. The youth contractors in the IVSs repaired and maintained structures that had been built in the rehabilitated swamps by service providers. The tree crops component was able to create jobs for 540 youths, and a good number of young people were also provided with employment in IVS rehabilitation.
200. Another innovative activity was the RCPRP-supported establishment of property cadastral systems for revenue generation for the district councils. These councils are autonomous but also largely financed by the central government; however, those funds are insufficient and, moreover, are tied. The cadastral system was piloted in three district councils and one city council and proved to be an innovative way for them to independently generate additional funds. Taken together, the four councils have collected US\$204,766 in property tax revenues.¹⁵⁰
201. The FFS approach has been used for quite some time in Sierra Leone and elsewhere, but it had previously been focused primarily on food crops. In view of the successes demonstrated by these FBOs, the process was replicated with tree crops. Under the SCP-GAFSP, 196 FFSs focusing on tree crop production were established. Although attribution cannot be definitively ascertained, this innovation contributed to increases in yields of up to 10 per cent. In terms of access to improved cocoa seeds, the adoption survey conducted in 2018 showed that 82 per cent of the farmers reported having access to those inputs and having adopted the technology for use in their permanent fields.
202. The institutional models and most implementation approaches used in IFAD-supported rural finance projects in Sierra Leone had been developed elsewhere at an earlier point in time, and they therefore cannot be considered innovations as such. For instance, the FSA/CB models have both been introduced in Sierra Leone before, chiefly by the central bank. However, the approach of using the CBs and FSAs strategically (i.e. depending on the size of the communities concerned) was, in fact, an innovation. Thus, CBs were used to serve larger communities while the focus of the FSAs was on smaller ones. In addition, taking the for-profit orientation of all actors/institutions into consideration was also an innovative aspect in the context of Sierra Leone. These innovative approaches are now bearing fruit: it is much easier to develop and re-direct profitable institutions and their networks towards more demanding operations with larger portfolios in agricultural lending than to try to direct ambitious but loss-making and donor-

¹⁵⁰ IFAD/Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, RCPRP, October-November 2015.

dependent microfinance institutions towards more sustainable and profitable rural finance activities.

203. The establishment of a loan recovery system feeding into an agricultural development fund under the Apex Bank for agricultural lending was found to be innovative. At the inception of the project, farmers were used to receiving inputs (seed rice, seedlings, tools and fertilizer) for free. In promoting farming as a business, farmers working in the inland valley swamps, on tree crops and in ABCs were informed that a recovery rate of 40 per cent on whatever support they received from the project was to be introduced. With the introduction of this 40 per cent recovery requirement, farmers were motivated to start keeping track of their farm expenditures and revenues. The project recovered 40 per cent of the cost of the machinery, small tools, seed, fertilizer and labour provided to these farmers. These funds were then made available to farmers in the form of loans from the FSAs and CBs. Not only did this help provide revolving funds for multiple farmers, but it also changed the farmers' perceptions, as they ceased to regard project support as a relief measure and started to adapt their businesses in order to make them more profitable and self-sustaining.
204. Electronic data collection using Open Data Kit (ODK) technology. Data collection forms are programmed into the ODK system and uploaded into android devices. Data are then collected from the field using these devices and uploaded into a cloud service for analysis and report generation. Previously, data were collected using paper-based forms. The use of ODK technology has brought several advantages: (i) data are collected and processed in real time for the attention of Management; (ii) in the past, there were instances where data were lost because backup devices crashed but, with the cloud system, data are now readily available and safe; (iii) with paper-based questionnaires, there was the possibility that data entry clerks might introduce errors, but, with ODK, data are now validated during entry and the turnaround time for generating impact reports and thematic studies is very encouraging; and (iv) with the ODK system, GPS coordinates now accurately record the location of the data collection points.
205. Summary – innovation. A number of innovations were notable in the portfolio. The use of youth service providers was beneficial for youth and helped to lessen the burden on government resources. Furthermore, the establishment of property cadastral systems was entirely new in Sierra Leone. Some pre-existing activities were applied in new ways (e.g. the use of FFSs for tree crop farmers and the use of rural institutional models in a post-conflict situation). Other initiatives worth mentioning include the more strategic use of the FSA/CB models and the ODK system for electronic data collection. Innovation is therefore rated as satisfactory (5).

Scaling up

206. This evaluation criterion concerns the extent to which the project interventions have been or are likely to be scaled up by government authorities, donor organizations, private sector actors and other agencies.
207. A clear-cut example of scaling up is the local youth contractor strategy, which was used in the RCPRP and SCP-GAFSP and which has been adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and used in a number of other projects in Sierra Leone, such as the Diversity Food Production Programme, the Agricultural Sector Rehabilitation Project, the Linking Farmers to Market Project and the SCP-GAFSP.
208. In other cases, there has been more replication than scaling up. For instance, the property cadastral system introduced by the RCPRP was approved for replication in the Kenema District Council and the Kenema City Council. The Pujehun District Council has now been setting up the cadastral system as well. This experience was shared with other councils along with the Local Government

Finance Department of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, and a task force was established to study the system for further replication in the remaining local councils.

209. Financial leveraging of the RFCIP-supported CB/FSA model has already occurred to some extent with the supplementary funding provided under the SCP-GAFSP. This has led to the establishment of an additional seven CBs and 15 FSAs.
210. Some other scaling-up activities are yet to materialize. Although, at the micro level, replication and scaling up may take place without external assistance,¹⁵¹ this has not yet happened on a wider scale. A first step in this direction has been taken, however, in IVS rehabilitation. Although land preparation and establishing IVS rice production systems are expensive, the Government is keenly interested in developing IVSs, potentially on the basis of the results of the RCPRP and SCP-GAFSP, and it has reached out to the Islamic Development Bank, which is now in the process of rehabilitating 400 ha of IVSs.
211. The overall good performance of the 76 IFAD-supported CBs and FSAs has convinced the Bank of Sierra Leone of the appropriateness of the CB/FSA model for increasing financial inclusion in rural communities. The applied model, which relies on community-based and -managed FSAs and CBs, is regarded by the Government as one of the key strategies to be used in efforts to increase financial inclusion in rural areas in Sierra Leone in the future. The Bank of Sierra Leone is exploring the possibility of developing more financial institutions of these types.
212. Summary – scaling up. The most significant example of scaling up is the local youth contractor strategy, which is now being used by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and other agencies. There are also some examples of replication, such as the approval of the property cadastral system for implementation in other districts and the establishment of additional RFIs. Thus, there is a potential for additional replication and scaling up that has not yet materialized. Scaling up is therefore rated as moderately satisfactory (4).

Gender equality and women's empowerment

213. The incorporation of the GALS approach into all the projects helped to strengthen project staff's and participants' understanding of gender-related issues. GALS is a community-led methodology which aims to give women and men more control over their lives in an equitable manner. It was introduced in 2011 into the RCPRP to help identify gender indicators that could steer change in unfair relationships at the household level. In the SCP-GAFSP, GALS was introduced when a gender expert joined the PMU and when this approach figured as part of the training delivered by FAO. The rural finance programme has also invested in the use of GALS in RFIs. At the time of the mid-term review of the RFCIP-II, the methodology had been used in 17 RFIs, directly reaching between 20 and 30 households in each of those institutions. GALS was also used in the SCP-GAFSP throughout its entire duration. Through GALS, project staff were trained along with community facilitators¹⁵² who then trained community members. As part of the Gender Action Plan, over 3,500 project participants were trained. The introduction of GALS was a useful activity that helped to increase inclusiveness and strengthen participants' understanding of gender issues and of how to address them. Also, women were encouraged to participate in paid tasks which had previously been reserved for men.
214. Apart from striving to mainstream a gender perspective under the GALS methodology, the SCP-GAFSP also trained 40 community gender journalists. The training covered such topics as media ethics, gender mainstreaming and news

¹⁵¹ Examples include the work done to set up new cocoa nurseries or to rehabilitate the existing plantations of non-project farmers using techniques learned under the SCP-GAFSP. In addition, some youth contractors have provided services to non-project farmers.

¹⁵² H. Z. Lowe, Report on the introduction of the GALS methodology in Sierra Leone, 8–29 August 2011.

gathering and reporting, especially with regard to activities relevant to project beneficiaries.

215. Many women have taken up managerial positions in community-based institutions, and the greater decision-making power that this has given them, together with equal treatment in loan fund allocation, has helped them engage in new economic opportunities. At least 30 per cent of the members of the boards and committees of all FBOs, IVSAs, ABCs and RFIs must be women. In addition, the RFIs' preference for financing petty trade projects has benefited women, since they are overrepresented in this sector. On the other hand, although the IFAD-supported projects have helped women gain more decision-making power in these grass-roots institutions, their voice is often still not heard in the community or in the household.
216. The practice of setting quotas for the engagement of women in rural finance has been successful. For the key rural finance interventions (RFCIP and RFCIP-II), gender mainstreaming has been a part of the project design, and gender concerns have been integrated into targeting, mobilization, capacity-building and sex-disaggregated M&E. Under the IFAD-supported rural finance operations, the level of participation of women in the client/beneficiary groups of CBs and FSAs has been relatively high. Importantly, the proportion of women borrowers has been as large as the proportion of women depositors and shareholders, which indicates that the CB/FSA managers and boards treat women and men equally when assessing loan applications and deciding on loan approvals and rejections.
217. Both the RCPRP and SCP-GAFSP helped women to increase their incomes from rice, vegetable and tree crops. This has reportedly helped to boost household incomes and improve food security, and a portion of these increased incomes has been spent on the health and education of children. Women have not always shared equally in the benefits that their husbands derive from these projects, whereas they are often required to hand over some portion of their own benefits. In the case of vegetable crops, however, it has been reported that women are able to keep their earnings and make their own decisions concerning expenditures.
218. The projects' quotas for the engagement of women in training have not always reflected the percentage of women in society or the percentage of women participating in agriculture. In training on IVS rehabilitation under the RCPRP, out of 859 farmers trained, only 15 per cent were women.¹⁵³ There were only 10 women out of 40 district council staff trainees in total and 5 out of the 20 DAO staff. In the case of the sustainable land and water management training sessions, only 27 per cent of the trainees was female. A better gender balance in training activities could have helped the projects to have a more gender transformative effect, especially in areas usually dominated by men. Under the SCP-GAFSP, 40 per cent of household members reached by project activities were female, but there are no data on the percentages of women participants in specific training courses.¹⁵⁴
219. The majority of the participants own their dwellings, but women-headed households are less likely to own assets than male-headed households,¹⁵⁵ among other reasons because inheritance mostly goes through the male line. To participate in cocoa farming, the minimum requirement was 1 ha of land, and few women own that much land. Nonetheless, 35 per cent of the 5,000 participants were women (against a target of 30 per cent),¹⁵⁶ which was quite an achievement and one which was empowering for women, especially since cocoa farming is

¹⁵³ IFAD, Sierra Leone, RCPRP supervision report (10-21 October 2016), 14 November 2016.

¹⁵⁴ IFAD, Sierra Leone, supervision report, March 2018.

¹⁵⁵ IFAD, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Impact assessment of IVS rehabilitation in Kailahun, Kenema, Kono and Koinadugu districts, November 2014.

¹⁵⁶ IFAD, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Impact assessment of fair trade certification scheme, June 2015.

mostly a male activity. On the other hand, most of the work needed on cocoa farms is seen as being too heavy for women, and women cocoa farmers therefore rely on their children or others, which can be difficult at times and may threaten the sustainability of the farm. In addition, women's role in cocoa production is only partly acknowledged in the cocoa cooperatives, where women can register only if they are a head of household; otherwise they must register under their husband's name.

220. Many respondents flagged the need to address the fact that there are extremely few female extension workers and service providers; neither the RCPRP nor the SCP-GAFSP managed to contribute to a change in that situation, however. The extension staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the NGOs working in this area are mostly male, and the projects could potentially have addressed this situation through the cooperatives and district associations.¹⁵⁷ Only 25 per cent of the DAO staff trained by the RCPRP were female,¹⁵⁸ and some DAOs have no female extension staff at all. According to DAO management, it is difficult to recruit female extension workers because so few women graduate from agricultural education programmes.
221. Recruiting more female youth contractors could have been part of the solution, but the proportion of female youth contractors was small. In the RCPRP, only 20 per cent of the 702 people who were trained in water management and improved agronomic practices were women, although this exceeded the (very minimal) target of 10 per cent. In the SCP-GAFSP, as per target, 25 per cent of youth contractors were female.¹⁵⁹
222. The projects collected sex-disaggregated data to differing extents. The RCPRP reported sex-disaggregated data for most of the indicators, but in the case of the SCP-GAFSP, the proportions of men and women (and youth) taking part in each of the activities, outputs and outcomes have not always been reported, and even the targets are not always disaggregated. For the most part, the M&E frameworks contain no gender-sensitive questions. None of the projects conducted an in-depth gender analysis at the design stage in an effort to identify and address the opportunities and challenges that are specific to women and to men. The projects engaged women and men in a similar manner, without considering their specific roles in the value chain or tailoring the activities to address their particular constraints.
223. Summary – gender equality and women's empowerment. The interventions contributed to gender equality and mainstreaming to some extent. GALS, once introduced, was mainstreamed in all interventions to strengthen gender awareness. Gender quotas contributed to the equal participation of women in activities and decision-making, but the quotas were very low for training activities. Even though targeting owners of a given amount of land area risks excluding women, the RCPRP nonetheless managed to reach a target group of cocoa plantation owners in which women made up 35 per cent of the total. The IFAD-supported projects did very little to increase the proportion of female extension workers, and gender- and age-disaggregated data were not consistently reported. Gender equality and women's empowerment is therefore rated as moderately satisfactory (4).

Environment and natural resource management

224. The agricultural activities pursued under the country portfolio are considered to be environmentally sound and unlikely to have adverse effects. As a result of unsustainable forms of use and poor governance of resources, Sierra Leone's natural resource base is under stress from population growth, deforestation, coastal development and ecosystem degradation. The most

¹⁵⁷ IFAD, Sierra Leone, RCPRP draft appraisal report, main report, annexes and working papers, September 2003.

¹⁵⁸ IFAD, Sierra Leone, RCPRP project completion report, main report and appendices, 21 April 2017.

¹⁵⁹ IFAD, Sierra Leone, supervision report, February 2019.

important issues include human activities that have led to poor land management practices such as slash-and-burn agriculture, soil erosion, salinization and a loss of vegetation cover. Interventions that address environmental sustainability issues by focusing on environmental and natural resource management and climate change adaptation are therefore highly relevant. Against this backdrop, the good agronomic practices promoted by IFAD-supported projects, such as mulching to conserve soil moisture, intercropping and mixed cropping, have been of significance. However, hard data in this connection are not available, since no environmental baseline or impact assessment was included in the portfolio statement.

225. Natural resource management activities mainly consisted of training for local government staff and farmers based on the FFS approach, which included integrated pest management, and sustainable land and water management practices. The FFS approach facilitated the transfer of knowledge and good agricultural practices relating to rice and tree crop production techniques to help farmers cope with climate change. The approach was positively received by many farmers, who felt it was suitable and fitted well into their schedules, and many of them therefore regularly attended and were able to replicate the learning process. Few of the farmers actually adopted the technology, however, because they found it to be labour-intensive¹⁶⁰ and because, in many cases, they lacked the quality inputs and financial resources they would have needed in order to do so.
226. Training supported by the projects¹⁶¹ equipped farmers with knowledge about water management practices. Although Sierra Leone is endowed with abundant water resources, most of its arable land is not under any form of water management. Many farmers have been shifting from upland to lowland rice cultivation, and the support of IFAD in providing water management infrastructure and knowledge has opened up an opportunity to help farmers deal with increasingly erratic climate patterns and to boost the production and productivity of their rice and vegetable crops through cropping intensification and diversification in the IVSs. The move away from upland rice cultivation has also led to a decrease in slash-and-burn practices. The use of short-duration Nerica rice, which has been promoted in the projects, has made farmers less dependent on the duration of conventional growing seasons and has enabled them engage in double or even triple cropping.
227. IVS water management has contributed to water conservation and water-use efficiency. The design and materials used in water management structures such as dams, head bonds and peripheral bonds have exhibited serious shortcomings and as a result, many of them are no longer operational. Project beneficiaries often do not possess the right kind of knowledge and/or materials to repair them and therefore have to fall back on the practices that they used before they took part in the project. Sustainability in this connection may also be adversely affected by the labour intensity of swamp development work, combined with a lack of access to labour-saving equipment.
228. The lack of improved certified seeds is interfering with efforts to sustain environmentally friendly practices and technologies. The SCP-GAFSP planned to make improved, short-duration vegetable seed varieties available to the FBOs through agro-dealers,¹⁶² but none of these dealers are providing such seeds yet. After the most recent supervision mission,¹⁶³ it was agreed that an effort would be made before the end of September 2019 to determine how to facilitate access to quality vegetable seeds through ABCs, local shops or informal traders in order to

¹⁶⁰ FAO, Evaluation of the SCP-GAFSP in Sierra Leone, 2019.

¹⁶¹ The training has been directed at IFAD and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry staff, service providers, youth contractors and IVSA members

¹⁶² IFAD, SCP-GAFSP supervision mission report, January 2018.

¹⁶³ IFAD, SCP-GAFSP supervision mission aide memoire, February 2019.

meet the needs of IVSAs during the dry season. There is no indication that this had been done, however.

229. Under the RCPRP, an effort was made to introduce fair trade and organic production. The demand for such cocoa was found to be promising, and cocoa cooperatives are able to sell it at a premium. Nevertheless, the cost of obtaining fair trade and organic certification was cited as a major impediment, and the cooperatives were of the view that the only way to overcome this problem would be to significantly increase their output. Under the SCP-GAFSP, support for fair trade and organic cocoa production was not pursued. Natural resource management is therefore rated as moderately satisfactory (4).

Adaptation to climate change

230. Climate variability and change pose significant challenges in terms of the availability and quality of the country's water resources and put two of Sierra Leone's primary yet vulnerable food sources – rice and fish – at risk. The average temperature in Sierra Leone is projected to increase in the coming decades and, since precipitation levels are projected to decrease, the country may see more frequent droughts and longer dry spells. According to a Global Environment Facility (GEF) assessment carried out for the RCPRP, 52 per cent of respondents ascribed prolonged droughts to climate change, while heavy rains and flooding were attributed to climate change by 30 per cent and 14 per cent of the respondents, respectively.¹⁶⁴ Activities supporting climate change adaptation, including those promoted by IFAD, are therefore essential.
231. Under the RCPRP, the planned 20 rainwater harvesting facilities were cancelled, while the design of catchment dams to be financed under the GEF was found to be relevant but ultimately proved unsustainable, as many were dilapidated. The promotion of community forests was an interesting concept in the light of the country's natural resource management needs, since they were intended to serve as a means of income generation and, at the same time, of promoting reforestation, but they have not been successfully managed. The trees that were planted for harvesting such crops as cashew nuts were not yet bearing fruit, and the members of the community showed little interest in this initiative and had not made any plan for maintenance, harvesting or sharing the proceeds. Moreover, wildfires are common and had destroyed up to 60 per cent of the trees, since the plantations had not been protected by a fire break.
232. The inclusion of the GEF in the RCPRP was a laudable effort to introduce a focus on climate change. The cultivation of short-duration, climate-resilient rice that requires less water¹⁶⁵ was promoted for use in the IVSAs. The rice seed was propagated by SLARI, which had also received support from the RCPRP for the rehabilitation of its clonal gardens in Pendembu and in Kenema, Kailahun and Kono districts. Not only is this rice variety climate-resilient, but it can also be double cropped. In addition, the yield was high, at 149 kg per 25 kg, at the outset.¹⁶⁶ (This was confirmed by research and by monitoring yields in the field.) This rice seed variety is still being used by the farmers.
233. At the start of the RCPRP, the farmers generally lacked the necessary knowledge and skills for adapting to extreme weather events. The project introduced a community radio station that has been a popular source of information¹⁶⁷ for awareness-raising on climate change effects. The farmers who were interviewed were able to identify signs of climate change, which they associate with prolonged periods of sunshine, a late start for the rainy season and a shortened rainy season.

¹⁶⁴ IFAD and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Assessment of outcome indicators in the GEF project, December 2016.

¹⁶⁵ Nerica L19 and L20 varieties.

¹⁶⁶ IFAD and GEF, project implementation report, GEF fiscal year 2016 (01 July 2015 -30 June 2016).

¹⁶⁷ IFAD and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Assessment of outcome indicators in the GEF project, December 2016.

They did not, however, display knowledge about how to adapt to climate change or how to help to prevent it.

234. The project was unable to establish a baseline data series or to verify its data on rainfall volumes and distribution patterns at its completion point. This is seen as a lost opportunity for learning lessons about the possible effects of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.
235. Under the RCPRP, GEF had constructed and equipped eight automatic weather stations and 20 rain gauges in high schools for use in data collection and analysis,¹⁶⁸ but those data are not being collected. Staff were trained in Nigeria to operate the system, but many of those staff members have left, and the offices are hardly used. Consequently, data are not submitted to the central office with the necessary regularity. Moreover, the Meteorological Department does not possess the necessary data analysis software. Therefore, the dissemination and analysis of the data have not yet taken place. It is not foreseen that this will occur in the near future either.
236. Summary – adaptation to climate change. Results for climate change adaptation have been mixed. GEF activities were included under the RCPRP to address climate change adaptation, but rainwater harvesting, community forests and weather station initiatives did not take off as expected. The newly introduced short-duration rice seed, on the other hand, is seen as a relevant solution. The other projects have not included a strong component on climate change adaptation. Adaptation to climate change is therefore rated as moderately unsatisfactory (3).

Overall portfolio achievement

237. Five projects have been evaluated (one only for relevance), of which two are complete, two ongoing and one has only recently started. Overall, the lending portfolio's performance has been moderately satisfactory in terms of all the evaluated criteria. The portfolio's themes and activities have been highly relevant to the fragile situation existing in the country at all points in time; one of the underlying reasons for this is that the portfolio has been agile enough to evolve as needed. In terms of thematic areas, good results have been achieved in the realms of production, roads and grass-roots institutions. Results have been mixed in the case of rural finance, as primary producers have not been able to partake of the benefits of this intervention. The results have been below expectations in the case of the market-focused interventions. The economic efficiencies of most of the projects have been generally positive. Poverty targeting has been satisfactory, but the lack of specific strategies for helping women and youth reap the full benefits of IFAD's interventions has been a glaring flaw. The rating for overall portfolio achievement is moderately satisfactory (4).

¹⁶⁸ The results were meant to be shared with farmers and other stakeholders, including government ministries.

IV. Non-lending activities

A. Knowledge management

238. The 2003 COSOP did not identify actions related to knowledge management (KM), but such actions were discussed in the 2010 COSOP. The 2003 COSOP's failure to identify KM-related actions is understandable given the modest level of implementation during this period and the fact that IFAD's Strategy for Knowledge Management¹⁶⁹ and its Innovation Strategy¹⁷⁰ were not issued until 2007. IFAD's 2010 COSOP identifies a number of activities that were intended to generate knowledge. The COSOP further states that this approach to knowledge management reflects IFAD's 2007 Strategy for Knowledge Management and its 2007 Innovation Strategy (as above).
239. The actions and focus identified in the 2010 COSOP set out an implicit strategy for knowledge management. The 2010 COSOP identifies a number of KM-related actions, including: the evaluation of data on the outcome of COSOP interventions, specialized and thematic networks, portfolio reviews, yearly consultative district meetings, participation by all stakeholders in national and regional conferences, and exchange visits to sister projects in the region and successful projects of other donors.
240. In terms of knowledge use, the intention was for best practices and proven concepts to be fed into the Sierra Leone Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and IFAD knowledge management systems. To enable KM outreach, actions related to dissemination and to the use of staff resources and time were also outlined. Thus, for instance, a country programme website was to be designed for Sierra Leone and contributions made to the FIDAFRIQUE (www.fidafrique.org) and other relevant websites and publications. It was also planned that the country team would draw relevant concepts and models for adaptation in Sierra Leone from these sources. The communication specialist employed by the NPCU was to design a knowledge-sharing and communication strategy to promote knowledge dissemination, scouting for innovations and cross-learning to enhance portfolio performance and operational efficiency.
241. The 2017-2018 country strategy note does not directly discuss IFAD's KM strategy in Sierra Leone but does refer to it indirectly in the discussion of internal programme risks, where it is noted that weak M&E and a lack of data are likely to hinder evidence-based policy dialogue. The proposed risk mitigation strategy called for the provision of implementation support based on a combination of national, regional and international expertise to be delivered through South-South cooperation, exchange visits and other means.
242. The programme currently includes KM investments and has a KM-focused strategy for one of the two current projects. A communications strategy for the RCPRP/RFCIP-II was developed in 2012 and one for the SCP/GAFSP was reviewed in 2016. In both instances, the process was led by an external consultant. In response to a recommendation from a 2017 IFAD supervision mission, the RFCIP-II communication strategy's scope was expanded to cover KM by the NPCU as well. The implication is that KM is viewed as primarily a within-project endeavour.
243. The portfolio also has an established communications and KM unit staffed by a communications and KM officer. It is headed by the programme coordinator and the head of M&E and KM. In 2016, the head of M&E and KM attended a KM training programme in the United Kingdom, and the KM officer has attended various workshops in Ghana, Italy and the Netherlands organized by the Technical Centre

¹⁶⁹ <https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/90/docs/EB-2007-90-R-4.pdf>

¹⁷⁰ <https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/91/docs/EB-2007-91-R-3-Rev-1.pdf>

for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation (CTA), which is running a project aimed at codifying relevant knowledge with the help of funding from IFAD.

244. A review of the KM activities carried out since 2010 suggests that they have mainly focused on strengthening programme implementation; this is in keeping with the focus of the communication and KM strategies. The limited evidence available suggests, however, that there has been less investment in KM for either programme development or policy dialogue purposes. As indicated in table A1 in annex VII, actions have chiefly been focused on enhancing the effectiveness of programme implementation, while portfolio reviews were to be used to strengthen programme development. Activities intended to use KM to enhance country-level policy dialogue – the third intended purpose of a country-level KM strategy identified in IFAD’s 2007 policy – have been carried out on a more ad hoc basis. This is in line with the priorities set out in the 2017 communication and KM strategy, whose main objectives are to ensure the visibility of the NPCU and the RFIs (CBs and FSAs) in the country and to share experiences gained in the implementation of the programme.
245. In contrast to what would be expected of a country-level KM strategy, the evidence suggests that the 2010 results-based COSOP framework was not used to mainstream learning or KM. Relevant indicators were not set or monitored. IFAD’s 2007 KM strategy says that: “Learning and knowledge-sharing will be improved by mainstreaming knowledge management at the country level using the revised framework for results-based COSOPs. Reporting on knowledge management activities will be part of the COSOP review exercise.” A review of the COSOP results framework shows that KM indicators were not included in it. The mid-term review of the RFCIP-II held in March 2017 noted that there was only modest evidence of learning and recommended that this issue be addressed by adjusting various indicators to cover communication and KM. It was also noted, however, that this would be challenging to implement in the absence of sufficient funding to cover the cost of establishing suitable baselines.
246. There is limited evidence (from one grant) that the 17 IFAD-supported grants – of which 15 have been approved since 2010 – were the source of knowledge that was directly used within IFAD’s wider country programme in Sierra Leone. Across the 17 grants, the grant recipient was a national partner of the IFAD country programme in only three cases, while a further two grants went to international agencies that the programme partnered with on a regular basis. In the cases of the other 12 grants, the recipients were organizations based outside Sierra Leone, and these grant recipients were under no obligation to even inform the CPM of their activities, to seek out synergies that could be gained by working with the broader programme or to attempt to identify knowledge gaps in the main country programme that they could fill. In such cases, the CPM/CPO only learned of the grant either by accident or when the grantee requested support from the IFAD country programme. CPMs could proactively check IFAD’s internal system periodically to identify global grants working in their country, but this would not solve the problem of fostering greater engagement since, by the time a grant was identified, it would probably be too late to make changes in order to achieve a better alignment or greater synergies with the wider country programme.
247. The one grant that has contributed knowledge that could then be used by others is the one that has been provided for the preparation of a synthesis of experiences in establishing CBs, which draws on experiences from the RFCIP project supported under the CTA Capitalising on Experiences for Greater Impact in Rural Development Project. The approach used in this initiative has now been mainstreamed into the programme’s overall KM approach.
248. The focus of the KM approach implemented in Sierra Leone has been on the communication of knowledge, but this has not been supported by the

documentation of credible, reliable evidence by IFAD, and supervision missions have noted that it has not been assigned a sufficiently high priority. The risk is that significant tacit knowledge that could be used in programme development or policy dialogue has been lost every time there has been a change in the CPM or CPO. The 2017 supervision mission assessed the situation as follows: “Communication needs to be more focused and linked within the responsibilities of the M&E Unit for this project. There are a number of issues relating to staffing as well as the absence of a dedicated Communication Strategy for RFCIP-II, which means that both communication and KM product development are not captured systematically... the role of Communication and Knowledge Management (KM) although vital has been somewhat overlooked in terms of its importance in gathering evidence and stories, case studies and examples of the intervention as a whole and in its various parts.”

249. An assessment against expectations in this respect indicates that the extent to which local knowledge and experience have been used in IFAD’s country-level policy dialogue or programme development work is modest. Interviews and a review of the relevant documentation suggest that a much greater contribution has been made by the experience gained elsewhere by the short-term consultants contracted by IFAD to lead in such areas. The country programme issues sheets highlight KM results focused on the communication of project results to project beneficiaries and the wider Sierra Leone public. The efficacy of these activities is covered in the discussion on the results of lending activities.
250. A review of the IFAD documentation points up the absence of a discussion of the use of local knowledge and experience in IFAD’s country-level policy dialogue or programme development work. Yet this is the main objective of IFAD’s 2007 KM policy. To some extent, this may simply be a reflection of persistent shortcomings in the quality and robustness of the projects’ M&E systems and in the scarcity of the available evidence. However, some interviewees also noted that short-term consultants contracted for IFAD’s country-level policy dialogue or programme development work appeared to rely on their broad previous experience and knowledge when conducting assessments and making recommendations rather than starting from an analysis of the specific Sierra Leonean context.
251. Summary – knowledge management. Since 2010, the programme has invested in the development of a communication strategy and, since 2016, in the formulation of a KM strategy, which, to date, has mainly focused on enhancing project implementation, while the other two key aims of IFAD’s 2017 KM policy – programme development and policy dialogue – have been neglected. Progress has been made in putting systems in place to allow KM to support enhanced project implementation, but they have not been given sufficient priority or properly resourced, and the evidence of added value is modest. Consequently, knowledge management is rated as moderately unsatisfactory (3) as, although the programme has made progress, it still has some way to go before the expected amount of progress towards the established objectives, results and impacts can be realized.

B. Partnership-building

252. Partnership objectives are identified in the 2003 and 2010 COSOPs. The purpose of the portfolio’s partnership-building efforts can be seen to have evolved between the two COSOPs at both the national and the field levels. Partnerships are not extensively discussed in the 2003 COSOP, possibly because the focus was on supporting recovery in the post-conflict context. At that point, the main purpose of partnership-building, which was confined to the national level, was to avoid having individual development partners sending conflicting messages to the Government of Sierra Leone that might lead to confusion, the development of incoherent sectoral strategies and a waste of resources due to duplication. The

recently established Development Partnership Committee (DEPAC) has been identified as a forum for this purpose, but the implication is that partnerships would mainly be focused on the sharing of information concerning intentions and plans. At the field level, partnership intentions have reflected IFAD's previous experience with its North-Central Agricultural Development Project, which focused on partnering with NGOs in the implementation of operations based in rural communities and involving them in the implementation process. These partnerships were managed on a contractual basis.

253. Partnerships reflecting the evolving context in Sierra Leone and lessons learned by IFAD have been identified at both the national and the field levels. Both the number of potential partners and the purpose of these partnerships have shifted/expanded. At the national level, partnerships are seen as contributing in three ways: by improving programme management; by enhancing policy dialogue (mainly by helping to establish a viable rural banking sector and to bring about the required changes in government policy and in the regulatory and legal framework); and by fostering the replication of investments. At the field level, partnerships with both civil society and the private sector have been identified.
254. The 2003 and 2010 COSOPs pre-date the publication of IFAD's 2012 Partnership Strategy, and the partners identified in the COSOPs do not entirely conform to the definition of partnerships set out in that strategy. The COSOPs have diverged from this understanding of partnerships mainly in terms of the number of partners identified at the field level in which the relationships were to be managed through contractual arrangements and/or on a basis that did not involve the sharing of risks, responsibilities, resources and benefits.
255. IFAD's 2012 Partnership Strategy defines partnerships as "Collaborative relationships between institutional actors that combine their complementary strengths and resources and work together in a transparent, equitable and mutually beneficial way to achieve a common goal or undertake specific tasks. Partners share the risks, responsibilities, resources and benefits of that collaboration and learn from it through regular monitoring and review." The Strategy goes on to point out that the definition makes it clear that partnerships are a very specific sort of institutional relationship, even though they may range from formal, structured arrangements (e.g. an association) to informal ones (e.g. a working group). Many institutional relationships are not genuine partnerships. For example, a contractual relationship is different from a partnership in that a contractor and the contracted party do not share responsibility for the development and delivery of a project; instead, the latter is expected to deliver services or provide goods defined by the former. The COSOPs have diverged from this understanding of partnerships as noted in the preceding paragraph.
256. Partnerships at the national level have, in practice, consistently focused on the exchange of information concerning intentions. This is in line with the practice of the other major development partners in Sierra Leone. Possibly as a result of the limited extent of implementation that occurred during the period covered by the 2003 COSOP, evidence on strategic partnerships between 2003 and 2010 is lacking. Interviews with both present and past CPMs and CPOs confirm that limited capacity and the prioritization of other tasks were the reasons why IFAD's investment in developing strategic partnerships with other development partners in Sierra Leone was modest during this period. Interviews with both the Government and key development partner informants consistently indicate that the focus of donor interaction was mainly on information-sharing in order to reduce the risks of needless duplication rather than on an explicit search for complementarities and synergy. However, even though the number of donors is not large, the fact that, in at least two instances, projects have recruited staff to work full-time on monitoring the plans and intentions of development partners in particular sectors

indicates the extent of the challenge faced by IFAD given its in-country staffing levels.

257. Strategic partnerships of this type have not contributed to the delivery of cofinancing or leverage in IFAD's country programme in Sierra Leone. The RCPRP was cofinanced by the GEF (US\$3 million). The AVDP also includes US\$9.3 million from the Adaptation Fund. However, such cofinancing is not delivered through partnerships at the country level but instead through work at the headquarters level. A number of instances of cofinancing agreed upon at the country level in areas relevant to IFAD's mandate (mainly by DFID with the World Bank) have been identified in Sierra Leone over the past five years, but none has involved IFAD.
258. IFAD defines scaling up in terms of IFAD interventions focusing on how successful local initiatives will sustainably leverage policy changes, additional resources and learning to bring the results to scale. The evidence on successful scaling up across the portfolio is mixed, as discussed in the section on lending results. The scaling up of the RFCIP-supported CB/FSA model – a form of scaling up beyond the initial IFAD investments – has already occurred to some extent with the supplementary funding provided under GAFSP. According to the Bank of Sierra Leone, the applied model, which relies on community-based and community-managed FSAs and CBs, is regarded by the Government as one of the key strategies to be used in efforts to increase financial inclusion in rural areas in Sierra Leone in the future. The RFCIP approach, whose implementation proved to be feasible in a demanding post-conflict situation, is also likely to be of interest to some other African countries. Its replication elsewhere would be more likely to happen if the knowledge management efforts of the RFCIP and Apex Bank are stepped up to a significant degree in the remaining three years of RFCIP-II implementation
259. IFAD did not use the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process in 2014 as an opportunity to explore further potential partnerships and joint programming opportunities with other United Nations agencies. This probably reflects fact that the amount of time required to engage effectively in these processes outstrips IFAD's limited capacity. IFAD engaged more actively in the 2019 process, and this has allowed it to identify opportunities for working with some other United Nations agencies as implementing partners in the recently approved AVDP. IFAD did not engage in the 2014 UNDAF process and its presence is not reflected in the UNDAF results framework. This simply reflects the fact that the CPM was not based in Sierra Leone, which made engagement difficult. On the other hand, IFAD's presence will be reflected in the 2019 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework,¹⁷¹ and the IFAD CPO participated in the process extensively enough to ensure that IFAD's possible contribution was included in the results framework. The CPO also engaged in discussions with other United Nations agencies concerning the possibility of their involvement as implementation agents in the AVDP. However, engagement did not result in the identification of genuine partnerships or the leveraging of additional resources.
260. Grants were not used to develop either strategic or field-level partnerships. There is no evidence that grants were used to help to strengthen or enhance the effectiveness of either strategic or field-level partnerships.
261. At the strategic level, the 2010 COSOP identified three ways in which partnerships would contribute to the achievement of IFAD's strategic objectives: improving programme management, enhancing policy dialogue and fostering the replication of investments. There is no evidence that national-level partnerships made a significant contribution in any of these

¹⁷¹ UNSDCF has replaced UNDAF and is part of the wider Delivering as One reform agenda. See <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2966>.

areas. Evidence cited in IFAD's 2012 Partnership Strategy suggests that the capital-based processes of donor coordination involve regular and lengthy meetings to support policy dialogue. It is argued that, if the benefits of partnerships are to be realized, IFAD staff will need to engage more consistently and effectively in networking and engagement with donor groups and that more support will need to be provided to CPMs to enable them to engage more effectively. Evidence from Sierra Leone suggests that, despite the appointment of a full-time CPO in 2014 and the relocation of the CPM to the Abidjan hub in 2018, the CPMs still felt that they did not have sufficient time to engage in extensive networking and engagement with other development partners.

262. Partnerships with the Government have been mainly focused on the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, as the implementing line ministry, and the Ministry of Finance, as the representative of the borrower/recipient. Over the years, IFAD has engaged extensively with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and is seen as its partner of choice in the agricultural sector. IFAD has engaged to a minor or even negligible degree with ministries working in such areas as gender, youth, the environment, trade (marketing) and others, although the nature of IFAD's interventions would appear to make a certain level of coordination and consultation with these line ministries advisable.
263. At the field level, partnerships with both civil society and the private sector, as well as other development partners, were identified as needs in the 2010 COSOP. The main focus, in practice, has been on developing partnerships with the private sector. Partnerships with private sector agents are being established under a value chain financing approach in response to recommendations made by successive supervision missions. Such partnerships can be used to mitigate the risk associated with lending to farmers through the delivery of technical support to the farmers and secured access to markets, contract farming arrangements or outgrower schemes and offtaker contracts.
264. Summary – partnerships. Partnership objectives are identified in both the 2003 and 2010 COSOPs. The purpose of the portfolio's partnership-building efforts can be seen to have evolved between the two COSOPs both at the national and the field levels. The evidence suggests that IFAD's engagement in developing partnerships has in the main been very limited but also that this has not had a significantly adverse effect on the achievement of individual projects' outcome objectives. Overall, the rating for partnership-building is moderately unsatisfactory (3).

C. Country-level policy engagement

265. Two key policy areas of concern to IFAD – rural finance and decentralization – were identified across both COSOPs, but the 2010 COSOP also identified a third area: land tenure. The 2010 COSOP results framework sets out the reasons why addressing these areas is of key importance to the effectiveness and sustainability of the results of lending operations. A fourth important policy area – rice production – was further identified in the 2017-2018 country strategy note. The focus on rice production in the country strategy note reflected the Government's concern about rice imports, domestic rice production and its related trade policy.

266. The policy areas identified in the COSOPs were all relevant to the achievement of IFAD's strategic objectives in those COSOPs. The COSOPs and country strategy note provide detailed explanations as to why these policy areas were important, and the evaluation team did not find any evidence that suggests that the rationale given in these documents was flawed. The 2017-2018 country strategy note states that: "the current policy environment with regard to land tenure, rice imports, decentralization, and rural finance has not been conducive. This compromises the sustainability of project impact." Despite some progress in the policy dialogue between IFAD and the Government, this statement remains valid today. Interviewees have indicated that IFAD has not engaged to a sufficient extent in policy dialogues with either other development partners or Government agencies in the areas of rice production and land tenure. Nor has it systematically monitored the policy dialogue between the Government and other development partners as part of its risk management approach at the country-programme level in these two areas. For instance, the policy of maintaining low or zero tariffs on rice imports continues to be an issue of concern to local rice producers, including beneficiaries of IFAD-supported and supervised projects, who are unable to compete with the price of imported rice.
268. IFAD has engaged in a direct dialogue with the Government in two of the four policy areas identified in the COSOPs – rural finance and decentralization – rather than channelling this dialogue through the relevant sectoral working groups or ongoing policy processes. Evidence provided by the evaluation of lending operations and interviews indicates that, when engaging with the Government on rural finance and decentralization, IFAD has done so directly. There is no evidence that it has sought to use development partner coordination mechanisms to foster this type of engagement.
269. IFAD has not systematically drawn upon project lessons or experience that could have been used in the development of policy in the two areas – rural finance and decentralization - in which it did engage substantively with the Government. Where experience gained and lessons learned have been used in policy dialogue, this has been done by the technical experts concerned, rather than being based on evidence from the projects. The COSOPs and the country strategy note include lessons learned, but the evaluation team did not find any documented analysis of the evidence upon which these lessons are based, such as an analysis of issues identified across the supervision mission reports. The exception was in the area of rural finance, where an analysis was carried out by a technical expert.
270. IFAD's engagement in policy dialogue in the area of rural finance has focused on the development of a new agricultural finance policy and strategy for the rural finance network in Sierra Leone. Instead of following the relatively narrow and simplistic approach proposed in the RFCIP-II design, the Apex Bank, with the support of an international consultant, has recently developed an agricultural finance policy and strategy for the rural finance network in Sierra Leone. This useful policy document is in step with the best practices of the sector. It provides practical guidance on how to organize agro-lending at the CB and FSA levels and how to connect these operations to the Apex Bank's planned direct lending operations with the lead companies in the value chains when synergies so require. However, it is too early to know whether this policy will be implemented. In hindsight, IFAD should have deployed expertise to address the problems in the development of the Apex Bank that are discussed in the section on lessons learned.
271. Policy engagement is constrained by the limited nature of the resources available to the Country Office. Effective policy engagement requires regular dialogue and interaction with governments and development partners. IFAD CPMs have a crucial role to play in bringing proven project successes to governments' attention and in advocating their scaling up through national policies and

programmes in discussions with government policymakers. Although IFAD has decentralized its offices in order to strengthen its engagement with national partners, the fact that the CPM is not located in the country and that the single-person Country Office is required to handle two countries simultaneously has resulted in an evident gap in effective policy engagement.

272. Summary – policy engagement. Policy engagement is rated as moderately satisfactory (4). The 2010 COSOP agenda rightly attributed due importance to policy engagement. The Country Office established in the interim has helped to make some progress in this regard, and effective engagement has occurred on a bilateral basis with some actors within the Government of Sierra Leone. However, the resources that have been provided are limited, and no clear mechanisms for actually taking policy work forward to a new level have been defined. There is little evidence that IFAD has engaged effectively within donor coordination mechanisms to advance its policy engagement. However, policy engagement has occurred around the lending operations. The most notable contribution has been IFAD’s influence in the area of rural finance.

D. Grants

273. Overall, 33 IFAD-funded and/or IFAD-managed grants have been implemented in Sierra Leone.¹⁷² Following an initial analysis by the CSPE team, 15 grants totalling US\$44.8 million were selected for evaluation. Of these 15 grants, 12 were committed under the regional window and 3 under the global window. A full overview of these grants can be found in annex IV. As Sierra Leone receives assistance under IFAD's debt sustainability framework, it is not eligible for country-specific grants.¹⁷³
274. The 15 grants selected for this evaluation meet the following criteria: (i) they have an approval date between 2007 and 2018; (ii) Sierra Leone is one of their focus countries;¹⁷⁴ (iii) disbursement (not only an advance payment) has begun; (iv) they are currently not suspended or on hold; (v) they cover CSPE thematic areas and/or knowledge management and policy dialogue elements; and (vi) they have linkages with the investment portfolio. Grants that are officially part of investment projects and those that are being used to help finance investment projects were not included.

Table 15

A snapshot of IFAD-supported grants dealing with Sierra Leone

<i>Selection for the CSPE</i>	<i>Value (US\$)</i>
IFAD grant financing	18.9 million
Grant financing through supplementary funding or other financiers	25.9 million
Total	44.8 million

Source: IFAD Financial Management Database, 2018.

275. As shown in table 15, IFAD provided a total of US\$18.9 million of financing via these 15 grants. Five grants were cofinanced, while four were financed with supplementary funds. The vast majority of grant recipients were research centres, not-for-profit organizations and NGOs, all of which were located outside Sierra Leone. One grant was provided to FAO. The largest non-IFAD financiers have been the European Commission, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA).

¹⁷² Information retrieved from IFAD's Financial Management Dashboard (2019). Top-ups to an existing grant are not counted individually.

¹⁷³ Sierra Leone is eligible for loan-component grants, which are treated in previous chapters.

¹⁷⁴ It implies that grants having the recipient based in Sierra Leone but not being implemented in the country were not taken into account.

Relevance

276. None of the 15 grants was planned as part of any of the three country strategies and none of them refers to ongoing grants.¹⁷⁵ Although the two COSOPs and the country strategy note do not provide specific guidance with regard to these grants, the selection of grants was quite coherent and appropriate for the context. They all revolve around key thematic areas within the Sierra Leone portfolio and are relevant to the country's strategic objectives, even though they are not identified as such. The main thematic areas funded by the grants are outlined in table 16 below.

Table 16

Main thematic areas addressed by the grants

<i>Technical assistance / productive capacity</i>	<i>Value chains (mainly agricultural marketing, strengthening FOs and governance)</i>	<i>Rural youth</i>	<i>Knowledge management / results-based management</i>	<i>Climate change</i>
2	5	3	2	3

Source: IOE.

277. For example, the section of the 2003 COSOP entitled "Main opportunities for innovation and project interventions" refers to the critical need to provide basic agricultural packages (including seeds). The 2007 regional grant to the Africa Rice Centre that focused on the development of comprehensive packages of Nerica varieties, which are essential in order to increase productivity, fits in with this thematic area, albeit indirectly. The grants that focused on rural youth, knowledge management and value chains can be matched up with the 2010 COSOP under either "opportunities for innovation" or as cross-cutting issues to be addressed under strategic objective 1.
278. In the case of the grant for the adaption of small-scale irrigation works to cope with climate change, Sierra Leone was only part of the regional stock-taking phase and was not included in the subsequent phase, under which famers in four countries were assisted in climate-proofing small-scale irrigation schemes.¹⁷⁶ The 2018 stock-taking assessment rated Sierra Leone's relevance for irrigation as low and its climate risk as medium. Interestingly, the two newest grants (2018) both aim to improve the resilience of smallholder farmers in the face of various effects of climate change. However, they focus on more relevant areas, such as: (i) improving agricultural resilience to salinity; and (ii) stimulating the submission of innovative and transformative ideas for mobilizing climate investment to benefit smallholders. The 2017-2018 country strategy note supports the mainstreaming of climate change resilience throughout the country programme¹⁷⁷ but does not make reference to grants.
279. Linkages with IFAD-supported country projects. Although the (potential) links between grants and loans are alluded to in some of the grant documents, it is difficult to detect tangible linkages on the ground or in the loan-project documents. In fact, the CSPE team found little evidence that the previous and current Sierra Leone country programme management teams or its implementation unit were aware of the IFAD global/regional grants that cover Sierra Leone or knew whether these grants had any significant linkages to the Sierra Leone country programme. Some of the grant activities were recognized by members of the management or implementation teams once they were described, but this was mainly due to their

¹⁷⁵ The 2003 COSOP does make reference to previous grants in the section entitled "Lessons from IFAD's experience in the country".

¹⁷⁶ This final phase was intended to serve a maximum of four out of the eight assessed countries.

¹⁷⁷ 2017-2018 country strategy note, p. 6.

resemblance with loan project activities and/or target groups, rather than to their recognition as specific grant activities.

280. These connections are therefore more suppositions than clearly established facts. For example, the documents on the two grants to the Africa Rice Centre for enhancing access to Nerica varieties and rice value chains refer to collaboration with the Njala University and SLARI, both of which also worked with the RCPRP for the same purpose. The grant for strengthening smallholders' access to markets for certified sustainable products (SAMCERT) identified opportunities to build on organizational development and certification-related support to a cocoa export company that was also supported by the RCPRP project. In other words, while the RCPRP had its own outputs relating to fair trade certification and Nerica varieties, the ICO and PMU were not able to link the respective grant activities to those of the RCPRP. The loan project documents do not refer to the grant activities either.
281. The management team for the grant for the Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) of the African Agriculture Fund made an effort to develop an agreement with the ICO to link the grant with the RCPRP in financing the replanting of at least 50 ha as a sub-activity of the Smallholder Oil Palm Support Project and to rehabilitate feeder roads to sustainably increase the income of smallholder farmers within a 40-km radius of the Goldtree oil palm processing mill in Daru. However, the ICO decided not to go ahead with this agreement in view of a number of disagreements that arose with Goldtree.¹⁷⁸
282. The grant that succeeded in benefiting from the country portfolio was the global grant for capitalizing on experiences for greater impacts in rural development. This grant, as already explained in the section on knowledge management, provided a synthesis of experiences in establishing CBs by drawing on know-how from the RFCIP project.
283. Discussions with the CPM team revealed that the limited nature of tangible synergies is mainly attributable to: (i) the team's heavy workload as it strives to implement the loan projects within tight time frames; and (ii) the absence of a handover procedure whereby the CPM team would be apprised of all ongoing and approved grants. As a result of the team's unawareness of the grant activities and their potential tie-ins with the country programme, together with its heavy workload, the grants are a low priority, and any partnership-building and knowledge management efforts are therefore left to the sponsoring divisions.

Effectiveness

284. Overall, the majority of these grants were effective. Two grants were interrupted by force majeure. The grant for the establishment of a country forum for agricultural advisory services with various local, international, NGO and governmental players was interrupted by the Ebola outbreak, and the grant for supporting farmers' organizations in Africa (SFOAP) was disrupted by the Ebola outbreak, natural hazards, land disputes and the absence of farm guidance devices. Selected grants in each thematic area will be discussed in the following paragraphs. The grants dealing with climate change will not be discussed further because they are not yet effective.
285. Technical assistance / productive capacity. The first grant to the Africa Rice Centre facilitated the dissemination of Nerica seed varieties and grain production techniques through a well-monitored set of activities related to participatory varietal selection, seed production and the dissemination of knowledge concerning productivity-enhancing technologies (via radio packages and video modules). This project also supported capacity-building for scientists and technicians in adaptive

¹⁷⁸ These disagreements concerned profitability issues and a number of other differences of opinion regarding Goldtree's proposed price for seedlings, the operation/location of the seedling nurseries, the maximum size of plots per farmer and the feasibility of using the FSA/CB structures to provide funding.

rice research and production. Capacity-building activities were also provided for farmers and seed producers. In Sierra Leone, over 250 farmers, 50 per cent of whom were women, participated in the selection of varieties. According to the completion report, this improved rice technology requires additional capacity-building efforts to ensure sustained growth and a positive impact on farmers' livelihoods.

286. The second grant to Africa Rice Centre focused on the seed production and rice value chains. An innovation platform has been established in Bo to facilitate the creation of synergies between producers and other actors in the value chain. In total, some 277 tons of rice seeds were produced by 18 producer associations and distributed to producers. The activities undertaken in collaboration with the producers also made it possible to determine that the ROK24 variety is tolerant to iron toxicity. Rice bales have been introduced and used as a technique for reducing iron toxicity in interior valleys. In terms of capacity-building, training was provided to 200 actors along the value chain, and rotary weeders have been accepted by 80 per cent of the producers. The implementation unit confirmed that these rice varieties and techniques are still being used today. The innovation platform, on the other hand, did not continue to function after grant completion.
287. Rural youth. IFAD, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), UN-Women, FAO, UNDP and Oxfam, in collaboration with the Songhai Centre, organized a four-day workshop fair in Benin in 2012 with the theme "Women and Youth as Catalysts for Agribusiness Development and Growth in Western Africa". Representatives of the Government of Sierra Leone and young entrepreneurs were among the participants. The event started with a trade fair showcasing agribusiness produce and processing machinery and concluded with a consultative forum that explored strategies for attracting more women and youth to agribusiness as a credible job and wealth creation option for the subregion.
288. Moreover, through a grant to Songhai, an agribusiness initiative centre was established in Newton with a 15-person team whose members had previously taken part in a three-month training course on agricultural business development in Benin based on the Songhai model. Interviews in the field confirmed, however, that the centre has not been very functional since the grant came to an end. An additional consideration is that it is not being used by IFAD-supported beneficiaries, as the centre focuses on poultry, fish and vegetable businesses, while IFAD projects mainly focus on cocoa, oil palm and rice.
289. Value chains. The first certified sustainable products (SAMCERT) grant, implemented by the Sustainable Commodity Initiative (SCI), worked with the cocoa export company Kayeigorma, which was founded in 2010 with an investment of working capital from the World Bank. The SAMCERT grant project has been a pioneering initiative in many ways, especially in view of the increasing concentration of sustainability certifications. It completed the fair trade certification process initiated by the World Bank and introduced an organic certification process, which was new to the farmers. The three cooperatives achieved fair trade certification in 2012 and received training in 2013 in quality management and in techniques for supporting and monitoring the entire certification process for both fair trade and organic certifications. The training helped the farmers to upgrade the quality of their product and to garner more market power. Over the course of the project, SCI developed good working relations with a number of private sector companies operating in Sierra Leone and, in late 2014, with international buyers. Not all letters of agreement survived the Ebola crisis and related challenges having to do with production volumes, but good trade relations have been maintained with a Japanese and Dutch cocoa trading company up to the present day. Interviews with Kayeigorma revealed that, while the grant activities were relevant and effective, it is a challenge to maintain the sustainability of the entire process. Without working capital and linkages to CBs (issues which have already been

discussed in other sections of this report), it is difficult to deliver the necessary quantities while meeting the stipulated quality standards on a regular basis. They still engage in export activity, but last year they sold only to local buyers.

290. Currently, the Rainforest Alliance¹⁷⁹ is implementing another SAMCERT grant that aims to build a sustainable cocoa production and marketing model that will contribute to forest conservation and the improvement of the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in the Gola forest. Although considerable progress has been made in a short period of time in terms of gender-related efforts under the cocoa programme and the establishment of functioning producer groups, and while the quality of cocoa output has been raised to meet the requirements of buyers, the volumes purchased are as yet below the target levels. The 2018 progress report attributes this, among other factors, to problems with committee meetings, association membership, payments to cooperative members and low yields caused by irregular weather patterns. In addition, the late disbursement of prefinancing, combined with the fact that other local traders were quick to start buying, meant that a large share of the farmers' early-season cocoa was sold elsewhere. Information about the Kayeigorma cocoa company was obtained from the previous SAMCERT manager, but full documentation of the achievements of the previous grant activities was not received. The latest progress report states that it remains difficult to establish systematic contact with the IFAD Country Office.¹⁸⁰
291. KM and results-based management. The three-year global grant for the self-assessment of in-country M&E systems and capacities in the agriculture sector through the lens of the Sustainable Development Goals under the Advancing Knowledge for Agricultural Impact (AVANTI) initiative aims to help government ministries and project implementation units to understand challenges and solutions relating to results-based management and to promote engagement in implementing concrete and resourced action plans to improve measurement, analysis, management and communication of Sustainable Development Goal results in the agricultural sector. This grant is considered to be innovative because it will: (i) focus on cross-international learning through its global programme; and (ii) be a government-owned process that is not directed by donors but instead facilitated by consultants.
292. As a first step, IFAD and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry held a rural self-assessment workshop and action-oriented planning meeting in Freetown in 2019. The corresponding action plan, which is currently being prepared, is expected to incorporate a consensus-based approach that will enable AVANTI to make an optimum contribution to improvements in results-based management processes in Sierra Leone going forward. One of the AVANTI consultants stressed the importance of timely follow-up and of the provision of additional resources, as the design did not provide for the funding for action planning and for improvements beyond the workshop. Moreover, the AVANTI consultant emphasized that: (i) the Government will require long-term support in developing and implementing results-based management procedures; and (ii) engaging with stakeholders in a context like AVANTI's, which is about influencing government behaviour, requires a strong field presence and systematic support from the ICO. To harness this momentum, the CPM is currently discussing options for financing some of the action points through the AVDP project.
293. Summary – grants. It can be concluded that the majority of assessed global and regional grants revolved around important themes that are relevant to the different country strategies. The grants introduced new techniques or practices and supported efforts to promote collaboration with local and international partners and public-private partnerships, but the sustainability of project benefits since grant

¹⁷⁹ In collaboration with Twin, an NGO based in the United Kingdom, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

¹⁸⁰ Progress report for year 1, p. 23, and progress report for year 2, p. 20.

completion has been relatively poor. The main difficulties in this regard have to do with the synergies among the different grants and between them and IFAD-supported loan projects and the lack of systematic learning and information-sharing regarding these grants with all the various institutional and in-country stakeholders.

V. Performance of partners

A. IFAD

294. IFAD has been continually engaged in Sierra Leone for the past 40 years, with the exception of the period during the civil war when active operations had to be suspended. It has invested US\$80 million in highly concessional loans and DSF grants to support rural poverty reduction and agricultural development in the country. IFAD is a significant player in the country and a trusted broker of partnerships between the Government and other stakeholders (e.g. rural communities, producers' organizations and the private sector). The Fund's projects are seen by the Government as some of the best-performing initiatives in the agricultural sector. In recognition of IFAD's experience and its long-standing partnership, the Government entrusted the Fund with the implementation and supervision of the US\$50 million SCP-GAFSP.
295. IFAD's strategic intent and approach. IFAD has successfully used its comparative advantage to improve production and productivity in Sierra Leone and to build the capacities of smallholder producers. It has also successfully brought its global experience to bear in the development of RFIs in the country while introducing new approaches and products for the delivery of financial services in rural areas. Given the fragile situation existing in the country, its overall strategy has focused on the revival and consolidation of the rural economy and the development of democratic local institutions and grass-roots organizations. However, while it has put its comparative advantage to good use, it has fallen short in terms of its collaboration with other development partners that have complementary areas of expertise that go beyond its comparative advantage. Such collaboration would enhance its ability to achieve its objectives and bring broader benefits to the people whom its projects serve.
296. IFAD has also taken a temporally programmatic view of its projects in Sierra Leone, especially in the area of rural finance, where the RFCIP and RFCIP-II have been implemented sequentially so that the latter could build on the work of the former. The RFCIP and RCPRP were both implemented by the NPCU and were designed to complement each other's activities. That said, the RFCIP's focus throughout was largely on establishing individual grass-roots institutions rather than integrating the institutions into a network at the micro, meso and macro levels.
297. Project designs. The design of these projects has mainly followed a thematic approach, with the portfolio comprising agricultural production projects (driven by a few key commodities) and rural finance projects, some aspects of which have been interlinked. This has been a correct approach, as it has avoided the complexity that can hinder implementation, especially in a fragile context. Sensible scaling up has also been achieved, especially in the area of rural finance. The designs have also been agile enough to incorporate course correction. For instance, in the case of the RCPRP, the findings of the mid-term review prompted a simplification of the design, with the number of components being reduced from four to two, and the introduction of a stronger focus in project activities.
298. On the other hand, IFAD has focused so much on production that it has not done enough to support agricultural marketing – an area in which it also has a global comparative advantage. It has failed to conduct sufficient feasibility studies or value chain analyses to guide its support for ABCs and the selection of rice as a target crop. In the area of rural finance, three ways stand out in which more senior expertise from IFAD's pool of banking experts could have been usefully employed to provide solutions for the problems encountered in the development of the Apex Bank: (a) the development of a longer-term strategic plan for the bank; (b) the design of a modern refinancing window for the bank using IFAD's global expertise in this area; and (c) the design of options for appropriate capitalization of the Apex

bank, CBs and FSAs that cover both equity/shareholding investments and debt/refinancing-based capital injections.

299. Project supervision and implementation support. Up to 2008, IFAD's approach in all member countries, including Sierra Leone, was to rely on development partners to implement its projects. However, this posed serious challenges in implementation. For instance, the RCPRP was approved by IFAD's Executive Board in 2003 but made no noteworthy progress until 2009 (its mid-term review point). One reason for this was poor communication between the African Development Bank (AfDB), IFAD and the Joint Programme Portfolio Coordinating Unit (JPPCU), which was established to coordinate the activities of the AfDB-funded Agricultural Sector Rehabilitation Project (ASREP) and the RCPRP. This resulted in long delays in the issuance of approvals and no-objection clearances.
300. IFAD has been quite active in supporting these projects' implementation; its engagement in the country was ongoing even when there was no in-country office in Sierra Leone. This is illustrated in table 17, which presents data on IFAD's supervision and implementation support missions. On average, IFAD has conducted more than one mission per year (over two in the case of the RCPRP) to support its projects.

Table 17

Average number of missions per year undertaken by IFAD in Sierra Leone

	<i>Project years (a)</i>	<i>Total no. of missions (b)</i>	<i>Avg. no. of missions per year (a/b)</i>
RCPRP	12	26	2.2
RFCIP	8	15	1.9
SCP-GAFSP	8	13	1.6
RFCIP-II	6	9	1.5

Source: ORMS (accessed in September 2019).

301. A review of the supervision mission reports shows that they provided constructive feedback. For example, various adaptations were made in the RCPRP's design and strategy which were either initiated by supervision missions or supported by the CPM in a flexible and timely manner. The mid-term reviews provided an honest and transparent view of the prevailing situations and proposed large-scale changes in design, which, in hindsight, can be seen to have been wisely chosen. It is also true, however, that the use of different consultants in successive missions resulted in some conflicting messages. In addition, in some cases mission recommendations could not be followed because of their budget implications. During the Ebola crisis, although IFAD had to suspend its supervision activities, implementation carried on, albeit on a small scale, and the Fund rightly provided no-cost project extension services to reactivate project activities that could not be implemented during that crisis.
302. As part of its implementation support, IFAD also facilitated the inflow of additional funds for the RFCIP-II, including supplementary financing from GAFSP (for the horizontal expansion of the CB/FSA network) and from the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (funding for technical assistance services from the Kenyan service provider K-REP before the establishment of the TAA). Later, IFAD also took a strong stand against the use of the FSA/CB network for subsidized lending and, in the case of the Smallholder Commercialization and Agribusiness Development Project, successfully blocked plans for CB/FSA involvement. Furthermore, IFAD played a proactive role in mobilizing an additional US\$9 million package to fill the financing gap left in RFCIP-II finances when external financing failed to materialize. That additional financing was then used to capitalize the rural finance network and strengthen the Agricultural Finance Facility. It is noted in the

- RFCIP project completion report that the focus of successive supervision missions remained largely on ad hoc issues and did not take a sufficiently longitudinal view.
303. Given the dearth of local capacity and expertise, IFAD has engaged international and national consultants to assist with design and implementation in various missions (e.g. supervision, mid-term reviews, implementation support, project completion reports). For instance, an international gender expert was engaged to help to introduce the GALS methodology in the RCPRP, and rural finance experts have been contracted as consultants to assist with the introduction of a variety of changes in the RFCIP-II.
 304. Client survey. An analysis of the results of the 2017 and 2019 client surveys carried out by IFAD globally indicates that, in the view of IFAD's clients in the country (other United Nations organizations, NGOs, international financial institutions and ministries), the Fund's performance, as measured by most of the indicators included in the survey, has been improving. Its performance in Sierra Leone is thus seen as being on a portfolio at risk with – or even superior to – its performance in other countries in West Africa in which IFAD is active.
 305. Partnerships and policy dialogue. As discussed in a previous section of this document, IFAD's partnerships at the national level have consistently focused on the exchange of information concerning its intentions and activities in the country. This is in line with the practices of other major development partners in Sierra Leone. Like its partners in the country, the aim of IFAD's focus on information-sharing is to reduce the risk of needless duplication rather than on an explicit search for complementarities and synergy. IFAD's limited in-country capacity and its prioritization of other tasks have been the reasons why its investment in developing strategic partnerships with other development partners in Sierra Leone has been rather modest. At the ministerial level, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has been the lead implementation agency for all IFAD projects. Although IFAD's interventions are relevant to many different ministries – the Ministry of Works, Housing and Infrastructure; the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs; the Ministry of Youth Affairs; the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development; etc. – its engagement with them has primarily been indirect.
 306. In terms of policy dialogue, the 2010 COSOP agenda was ambitious, yet, while the establishment of the Country Office and successful engagement on a bilateral basis with some government agencies were positive steps, limited resources were provided during that period and no clear mechanisms were defined for taking policy work forward to a new level. In addition, there is little evidence that IFAD engaged effectively with donor coordination mechanisms during that period to advance policy engagement. Most policy engagement occurred around lending operations, and the results of those efforts have been hindered by slow policy approval processes.
 307. IFAD's presence in the country. IFAD set up its Country Office (ICO) in Freetown in September 2013, and it is currently staffed with a country programme officer. As part of the Fund's decentralization, the country programme manager (CPM) has been based in Cote d'Ivoire since 2018. The Country Office handles two countries (Sierra Leone and Liberia). The overall effectiveness of the ICO continues to be constrained by its limited staff and financial resources. Currently, most of the staff time is spent on implementation and coordination issues. There is insufficient time left over for partnership-building and policy engagement. Participation in donor coordination and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework meetings has so far been limited.
 308. Summary – IFAD performance. IFAD has, in general, invested adequate resources and time in design, supervision and implementation support for the portfolio and has demonstrated its willingness to support implementation issues. It has been proactive in making adjustments where they are called for, usually with

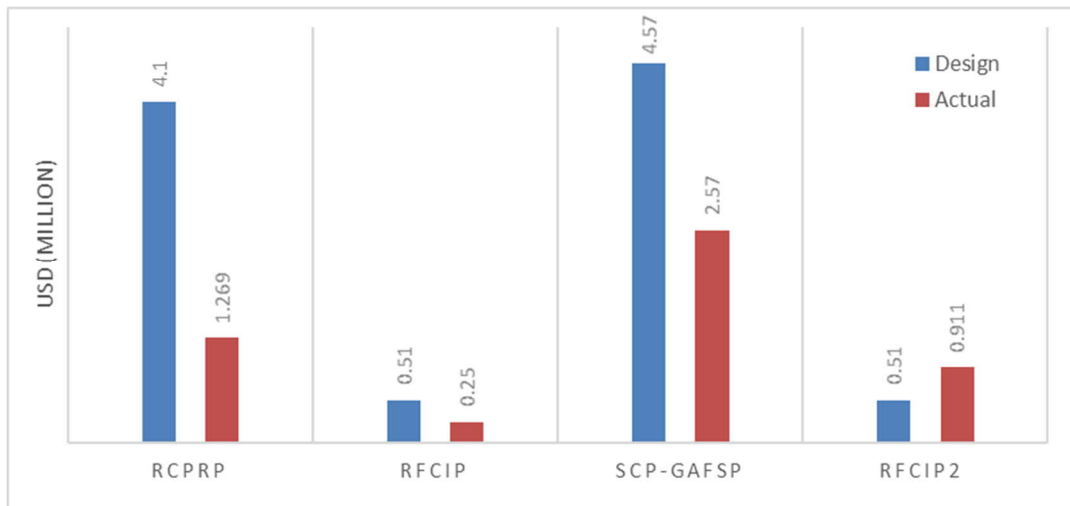
good results. It has leveraged its comparative advantage to drive results on most counts, but it has not brought its global experience fully to bear in effectively helping farmers to connect with their potential markets. It has not worked closely enough with other development partners (e.g. cofinanciers) in the areas of design and implementation support. Its limited country capacity has constrained IFAD from meaningfully engaging in non-lending activities. The rating for IFAD's performance is moderately satisfactory (4).

B. Government

309. IFAD's government counterpart has been the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has been the lead implementation agency for all the projects.
310. Ownership and funding. The Government views IFAD as one of its most important development partners in the agricultural sector and has consequently played an active role in the conception and implementation of lending operations. While the Government has been fully committed to, and supportive of, IFAD's development objectives, data collected from the NPCU and PMU indicate that its actual contributions have been lower than had been projected at the design stage for all of the projects. This fact is illustrated in figure 2, which tracks counterpart (government) funding and depicts the gap between the funding level projected at the design stage and actual funding.¹⁸¹

Figure 2

Design-stage and actual counterpart funding across the Sierra Leone portfolio



Source: ORMS (accessed in September 2019) and the project management unit of the National Programme Coordination Unit (NPCU/PMU).

311. Project management, oversight and coordination. The decision to replace the Joint Programme Portfolio Coordination Unit (JPPCU) with the National Programme Coordination Unit (NPCU), which then implemented two of the IFAD projects in Sierra Leone (RCPRP and RFCIP) was a good one. The two projects had run into problems related to implementation delays, and the centralized structure of the project unit made no provision for district coordinating units to play a role in ensuring that project management would be effective and properly coordinated at the national and district levels. The NPCU was helpful in heightening the efficiency of decision-making and served as a platform for an exchange of ideas and discussion. Routine management meetings at both the district and NPCU levels provided opportunities for cross-learning and teamwork.

¹⁸¹ According to the project units, counterpart funding for the projects was meant to be partly in kind (tax and duty waivers) and partly in cash. At the project level, the fact that the in-kind contributions were not fully captured during the early stages of implementation are the reason for the low level of government contributions.

312. The decision in 2009 to decentralize some of the project management staff to the district level so that they could be in closer touch with project activities was a step in the right direction. This decentralization effort has since been taken further; beginning in July 2019, the entire NPCU has been moved to Bo District, bringing it closer to IFAD's areas of intervention. This will help to reduce the turnaround time for decision-making related to the implementation of activities.
313. The evaluation team met with key staff of the NPCU and found that the project coordinator and all the subject-matter specialist staff appear to be competent and knowledgeable about rural development issues. Having one NPCU for all IFAD-funded projects (RCPRP, RFCIP, RFCIP-II) has also helped project staff to gain more experience in working with IFAD-related processes and requirements. The staff in the field also appear to be knowledgeable and to have experience in dealing with topics relevant to the various projects. Little effort has been made, however, to recruit women at the NPCU, the PMU or in the field. Especially in the field, where women's empowerment is such an important issue and where GALS has been mainstreamed, the lack of female project staff is a serious shortcoming. In addition, the project units lack a strong marketing expert with a background in working with the private sector.
314. The national steering committee (NSC) for the RCPRP was augmented with the addition of a representative from the Bank of Sierra Leone to serve the RFCIP. This presumably provided efficiency gains for the programme. The NSC has furnished guidance and approved the annual workplan and budget, defined and helped to achieve project outcomes and prioritized project activities.
315. The management of the SCP-GAFSP has been entrusted to the PMU, which is separate from the NPCU and is in charge of managing this single initiative. As per the programme's mid-term review, the deployment of the PMU became operational only in August 2012. Before then, the NPCU had been in charge of its implementation. The fact that the transfer of responsibility from the NPCU to the PMU was not managed in an organized or effective manner gave rise to financial management issues. There has also been a great deal of turnover in project coordinators, with the programme having had four different coordinators thus far.
316. With regard to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and, more specifically, the Government's Post-Ebola Recovery Fund and the Smallholder Commercialization and Agribusiness Development Project, the question of subsidized interest rates has become an issue. In both instances the issue was raised by the Government's request to provide these loans through the CB/FSA network to borrowers at an interest rate of 10 per cent, which is well below the standard lending rate used in the RFI network. It was correctly concluded that using two sets of interest rates could confuse borrowers and dilute the market-oriented approach applied in lending operations in the IFAD-supported network. These incidents raise a more general issue in regard to the appropriate roles of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Finance and the Bank of Sierra Leone in the management and coordination of financial-sector programmes such as the RFCIP and RFCIP-II.
317. On the other hand, as a representative of the Government, the Bank of Sierra Leone has been an active partner in the rural finance programme throughout its implementation. It has rightly seen the CBs and FSAs as integral parts of the financial sector and has driven the implementers from the outset to achieve sustainability and financial stability as soon as possible. Its reluctance to change the relevant regulation in order to allow the FSAs to take deposits should be viewed from the perspective of its key mandate, which is to ensure the financial sector's stability, as the safety of savings is one of the cornerstones of that stability. Recently, the positive attitude of the Bank of Sierra Leone towards the IFAD-supported RFIs has been reflected in its strong support for the plans of mature FSAs to transform themselves into deposit-taking CBs.

318. Monitoring and evaluation. Until 2009, the M&E function was practically non-existent and only became effective from 2010 onward when a new M&E officer was recruited and the baseline study for the RCPRP and RFCIP was conducted. However, thereafter, important strides have been made in terms of this function, with regular reporting under the Results and Impact Management System (RIMS) and several assessment studies having been undertaken. However, a number of the monitoring indicators were not SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound), particularly in terms of their measurability in many cases, and were prone to misinterpretation. The RCPRP project completion report points out that the first- and second-level RIMS monitoring indicators were reported to be at an impressive, if unrealistic, total of over 80. This raised valid questions regarding the indicators' specific relevance to the anticipated results, apart from the fact that this placed an excessive demand on project management. In the case of the RFCIP, the PCRV found M&E to be weak throughout programme implementation in terms of project outcomes.
319. The M&E manual for the SCP-GAFPS was prepared during the interim set-up period and included a project results tracking sheet based on RIMs indicators. Until less than two years from completion, i.e. the end of 2017, the PMU's M&E activities were largely confined to tracking inputs and outputs, with little progress being made in assessing outcomes. There was no annual M&E plan to focus and guide the M&E operations in an organized manner or to ensure the availability of the necessary human and material resources. The process involved in preparing the baseline survey was not completed until the time of the mid-term review. Even in the case of the RFCIP-II, it was noted in the mid-term review that the focus was mainly on tracking outputs rather than outcomes. The project's M&E system was not designed to track the utilization of its rural financial services and products, which makes it rather difficult to measure the outcomes in terms of the impact of those services and products. An M&E plan was put in place in 2019, although it should be noted that this was four years after the project became operational.
320. A number of communication products, such as brochures and videos, highlighting the projects' achievements have been disseminated. The focus has been more on communication as opposed to knowledge management, however, which involves creating, sharing, using and managing the knowledge and information garnered from projects for strategic and operational purposes.
321. Fiduciary responsibilities. As mentioned earlier, the Government has not complied with the corresponding loan agreements, as there has consistently been a shortfall in counterpart funding. The evaluation team analysed the project status report (PSR) ratings for three key financial management indicators: quality of financial management, quality and timeliness of audits, and compliance with loan covenants (see table 18). For all three indicators, the average ratings for the four projects were 4, or moderately satisfactory. In the case of the RCPRP, quality of financial management had a rating of 3, or moderately unsatisfactory. One reason for the low rating was the continuous turnover of financial directors, which interfered with the smooth discharge of financial responsibilities.

Table 18

Average PSR ratings for selected indicators (average over project implementation years)

	<i>Quality of financial management</i>	<i>Quality and timeliness of audits</i>	<i>Compliance with loan covenants</i>
RCPRP	3	4	4
RFCIP	4	4	4
SCP-GAFSP	4	4	4
RFCIP-II	4	4	4

Source: ORMS (accessed in September 2019).

322. Procurement. Procurement processes have been handled effectively for the most part and have followed the proper procedures for the issuance of bidding documents, receipt of bids, evaluation, award and signature. Procurement practices have been in keeping with the IFAD Procurement Guidelines, the IFAD Procurement Handbook and - as applicable - the legal procurement framework for Sierra Leone (the relevant law, regulations and manual) and the World Bank Procurement Guidelines (used for international competitive bidding). After the merger of the NPCU and PMU (SCP-GAFSP), the three IFAD-funded or -supervised projects (RCPRP, RFCIP-II and SCP-GAFSP) were managed by a single procurement unit, which increased the efficiency of the process by facilitating the sharing of knowledge and lessons learned among the staff and promoting the exchange of expertise and information.
323. Summary. The Government of Sierra Leone has been a close partner of IFAD and has provided active support in the design and implementation of its projects. The decision to have a dedicated NPCU to coordinate all IFAD-supported projects contributed to the successful implementation of projects under its charge. It has discharged its fiduciary responsibilities reasonably well. On the other hand, the Government has consistently provided less than its share of the funding that was planned at the project design stage. M&E systems have been functional, but weak in terms of data quality and consistency, especially in regard to the collection of data on outcomes. In addition, insufficient use has been made of the available data for decision-making and learning purposes, and the focus has been on communication rather than on knowledge management. The quality of the M&E function has thus been less than desired. The rating for government performance is moderately satisfactory (4).

VI. Synthesis of the country programme strategy performance

324. This chapter assesses the relevance and effectiveness of the evolving country strategy pursued in Sierra Leone by IFAD and the Government since 2003. The assessment draws on the analyses presented in chapter III on portfolio performance, in chapter IV on the assessment of non-lending activities and in chapter V on the performance of partners.
325. The 2017-2018 country strategy note, which followed the 2010 COSOP, made no significant change in IFAD's overall country strategy. The decision to prepare a country strategy note was based on the conclusion that the development of a new COSOP should be delayed until after national elections were held in 2018 so that it could reflect the policies and priorities of the incoming administration. Findings for 2017-2018 are therefore subsumed under the following discussion of the 2010 COSOP rather than being treated separately.

A. Relevance

326. Strategic alignment. The 2003 COSOP clearly had a strategic focus on development-oriented recovery assistance in Sierra Leone. In the short run, the strategic thrust for IFAD was to provide rapid assistance to the country's communities as part of the reintegration and regeneration process, and the aim was to restore basic services and revive economic activities. The 2010 COSOP was aligned with the shift in the Government's focus away from reconstruction and the rehabilitation of the war-torn agricultural sector and towards economic development. In addition, the 2010 COSOP was intended to expand the geographic coverage of new projects from 2 of the then 14 districts in Sierra Leone to 4; the existing strategic objective for the original two districts was to be maintained alongside the introduction of nationwide objectives. However, before expanding to other areas, the strategic intent was for ongoing activities to be scaled up and consolidated in the two districts focused on under the 2003 COSOP. Each COSOP identified three strategic objectives and the principles that should inform their lending and non-lending portfolios and activities.
327. The change in strategic focus made between the first and second COSOP was justified given the evolving context in Sierra Leone. Overall, IFAD's strategic intent in Sierra Leone over the past 15 years has kept pace with the evolving context. The aim of enhancing productive potential and strengthening rural finance has been a constant in the project portfolio. The shift towards a greater emphasis on creating market linkages and from community development towards local (institutional) development has reflected the wider shift from recovery and rehabilitation to development and empowerment.
328. The 2010 COSOP envisaged a continued focus on the two districts most severely affected by the civil war (out of the 14 districts that existed in Sierra Leone at that point in time). In practice, IFAD first expanded its support to cover four rather than two districts and then moved to nationwide coverage in the current portfolio. This expansion in coverage was highly appropriate, as it has allowed IFAD to help to address more of the many challenges that Sierra Leone faces, including the long-lasting consequences of the civil war, its chronic fragility and the fact that the country's institutions and human capital are in acute need of support and strengthening. It did, however, also entail a degree of risk and, as discussed below, raises some issues as to IFAD's ability to effectively deliver against these opportunities.
329. The strategy is aligned with government policies. The 2003 COSOP, and more particularly the 2010 COSOP, and the evolving portfolio have all been aligned with the key development and sectoral policies of the Government and have offered an opportunity to implement some of those policies by creating institutional capacity

and generating ground-validated knowledge about what works best in terms of achieving the established goals. As mentioned earlier, the objectives set out in the two COSOPs are broadly the same. Table 19 presents the strategic objectives in a manner that reflects their overall strategic intent and their relevance to national policies.

Table 19
Strategic intent of the COSOPs and their alignment with government policies

<i>Strategic intent</i>	<i>Alignment with specific government policies</i>
Community development	During the period covered by the 2003 COSOP, when the country was emerging from a civil war, local government budgets and human resource capacity were limited, so the focus on community rather than government capacity-building was well-reasoned and in line with the Government's focus on reconstruction. The lending portfolio was then progressively aligned with the need to support the implementation of the 2004 Decentralization Act. The design of the SCP-GAFSP, in particular, responded to the decentralization strategies of the Government of Sierra Leone by focusing on building the capacity of FBOs to contribute to the local economy and supporting the decentralized structure of agribusiness centres.
Support for rural finance	<p>The rural finance support approach of IFAD in Sierra Leone is clearly aligned with relevant government policies. IFAD's rural finance support has covered the two phases (projects) of the RFCIP, with supplementary funding being provided under the SCP-GAFSP. The RFCIP interventions have been designed in full alignment with the Government's post-conflict development priorities, which formed the three pillars of the Poverty Reduction Strategy for 2005-2007.¹⁸²</p> <p>For the RFCIP-II, project interventions have been aligned with the key rural and agricultural development policies of the Government, particularly the National Sustainable Agriculture Development Plan (NSADP) and the PRSPs, and have included access to appropriate financial services as a prominent and critical component of poverty reduction efforts. The RFCIP-II is also aligned with the objectives of the 2009 Financial Sector Development Plan of the Bank of Sierra Leone concerning increased financial inclusion and enhanced outreach on the part of community-based RFI in rural areas.</p>
Support for agriculture	<p>Agriculture has been recognized as a priority for the economy across PRSP I, II and III. For instance, the Agenda for Change (PRSP II: 2008-2012), states that: "economic development and poverty reduction in Sierra Leone will only be sustained with developments in the agricultural sector." Under the framework of the Agenda for Change, the country's second-generation PRSP, the 2010-2030 NSADP was launched as Sierra Leone's Country Compact under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme.</p> <p>The Agenda for Prosperity (PRSP III: 2013-2017) reaffirmed the Government's focus on agriculture and rural development. The SCP-GAFSP, supervised by IFAD, is at the heart of the NSDAP. In addition, the National Agricultural Investment Plan for the implementation of the SCP-GAFSP in the years 2010-2014 served as the basis for the alignment of all ongoing and future government- and donor-funded projects and programmes in the smallholder agricultural sector.</p>

Source: Data compiled for the CSPE.

330. Given the context described in chapter II of this report, the target groups identified in the two COSOPs were appropriate. The 2003 COSOP, in line with the situation in the country at the time that it was formulated, correctly targeted its activities at the community level as the best way of reaching the most vulnerable groups (women and woman-headed households, youth, demobilized soldiers and returnees) in the two districts that had been most severely affected by the civil war. At that time, the Government's ability to deliver services was minimal, while rehabilitation needs were urgent. Reflecting the evolving context, the 2010 COSOP identified smallholder farmers as its target population but placed priority on meeting the needs of the more vulnerable groups, such as woman-headed households, landless young people and local microentrepreneurs and small-scale

¹⁸² These pillars are: (1) good governance, security and peacebuilding; (2) pro-poor sustainable growth for food security and job creation; and (3) human development through microfinance, specifically the use of community banks and microfinance institutions as effective vehicles for the implementation of the national microfinance policy.

business operators. Actions related to lending and non-lending intentions were identified in both COSOPs, but IFAD's third main instrument, its grants programme, was not discussed explicitly in either. However, while this was not specifically discussed in the COSOPs, the actual selection of grants appears to have been quite coherent and appropriate for the context of the COSOPs. Moreover, the grants have been relevant to the country's strategic objectives, even though they do not refer to those objectives explicitly.

331. Synergies in the mix of instruments deployed during the COSOP implementation periods have not been optimal. While the lending portfolio was well-conceived, the synergies existing between lending and non-lending activities could have been stronger. This is first, and largely, due to a weaker performance in terms of policy engagement and knowledge management. Second, discussions with CPMs indicate that IFAD's grants systems do not lend themselves to being managed in a way that would enhance their coherence with the broader in-country support programme.
332. Given the appropriateness of the COSOPs' strategic focus, their alignment with government policy and their credible targeting strategy, on the one hand, and, on the other, the fact that insufficient attention has been paid to enhancing synergies between the various instruments provided for in IFAD's strategy documents, the rating for COSOP relevance is moderately satisfactory (4).

B. Effectiveness

333. The three strategic objectives (SOs) of the 2010 COSOP dealt with agriculture (SO1); rural finance (SO2); and local development (SO3). While the wording of these strategic objectives differs from the three found in the 2003 COSOP, the strategic objectives were substantively the same for both COSOPs. The theory of change set out in the CSPE approach paper (see annex IX of this report) describes how each of the SOs of the 2003 and 2010 COSOPs were to be achieved at each stage in the process, through programme outputs to outcomes and impact, i.e. the results of lending and non-lending operations as measured against the COSOP objectives. The evaluation team has identified four impact pathways through which the SOs were to be achieved: production/productive capacity, market access, rural finance and institutional capacity for fostering development.
334. The pathways for production capacity and market access were used with partial success to boost incomes. Production was increased with the introduction of double or even triple cropping of rice, but because effective market linkages were lacking, the farmers were price-takers and thus unable to realize their full income potential.
335. The success of the pathway for rural finance was moderate in the case of IFAD's main beneficiaries (farmers). While IFAD's interventions led to a spurt in loan-taking, farmers were unable to access those loans and hence were unable to use them for productive purposes that would have raised their incomes.
336. The pathway for institutional capacity was also moderately successful, as it contributed to some degree to the empowerment of beneficiaries and institutions, but serious concerns regarding the sustainability of these outcomes remain and, if those concerns are to be borne out, the benefits of these increased capacities could be reversed.
337. The effectiveness of the 2003 COSOP in attaining its objectives mainly needs to be assessed in the light of what was delivered under the 2010 COSOP. Progress in project and programme implementation and in disbursement was very slow between 2004 and 2008. Implementation in any significant sense did not begin until early 2009, when a shift to direct supervision by IFAD facilitated the restructuring and implementation of the entire portfolio to better respond to the needs of beneficiaries.

338. When assessing achievements as measured against the SOs from 2009 onward, it is important to bear in mind that IFAD is operating in a chronically fragile context and that the challenges faced by the country have been exacerbated by external factors such as the 2014-2015 Ebola outbreak and severe rains in 2017. In 2014-2015, Sierra Leone was hit by the Ebola virus disease epidemic, which lasted for 18 months and had a strong impact on the implementation of the RCPRP and SCP-GAFSP. The Ebola epidemic slowed down the implementation of the SCP-GAFSP from August 2014 to September 2015 and interfered with the operationality and functionality of ABCs. Many RCPRP-supported cocoa farmers had plantations in Ebola-affected areas, and their sales suffered as buyers did not dare to engage with the cooperatives and travel bans were imposed in certain locations. In addition to the Ebola crisis, severe rains in 2017 also had an impact on beneficiaries.
339. The effectiveness of IFAD's work in Sierra Leone since 2009 cannot be credibly measured against the indicators in the two COSOPs' results frameworks. As noted above, since the substantive implementation of the 2003 COSOP only started in 2009, reporting against indicators in the 2003 COSOP results framework is not relevant. In addition, the results framework has only one indicator for measuring progress towards all the COSOP objectives, and even that one indicator is not a SMART one.¹⁸³ Furthermore, the fact that no baseline data were collected for this indicator makes measuring progress even more challenging.
340. Since 2010, support has focused on strengthening reporting against outcomes in the individual projects. The limitations in terms of the quality of impact data used by programme management have been discussed earlier in this report. Although outcome indicators were formulated more successfully in the 2010 COSOP results framework, an examination of the annual progress reports contained in the country programme issues sheets and the advances noted in the 2010 COSOP completion report indicates that the programme has never reported results against the SO-level indicators. The focus has been almost exclusively on development and oversight of the individual lending projects rather than on the management of the programme as a coherent whole.
341. The achievements relating to SO1 are rated as moderate, but there are serious risks with respect to their sustainability. In terms of increasing production and productivity, three main areas for intervention were identified with a view to contributing to the achievement of SO1 by putting in place the following elements: (i) better production techniques, including techniques for enhancing climate resilience; (ii) better access to farm inputs; and (iii) rehabilitated production infrastructure. Evidence from impact studies, supervision missions and interviews in the field confirms that the IFAD project portfolio has contributed to increases in productive capacity and production and has been effective to some degree in reaching women, but not youth. The model for supporting grass-roots production-based groups has generally proved effective. Interventions aimed at enhancing access to farm inputs and rehabilitating production infrastructure have been less successful. On the other hand, while most farmers and their organizations are still engaged in project-induced activities, with both profits and yields being above their pre-project levels, one of the greatest challenges to be met in order to sustain these advances will be to ensure the future affordability and availability of inputs.
342. In terms of enhancing market access, five intervention areas were identified: (i) building producer capacity for obtaining better market access; (ii) improving agroprocessing capacity; (iii) strengthening marketing cooperatives and agribusiness centres; (iv) establishing linkages with the private sector; and

¹⁸³ Percentage of the population in targeted rural areas that has adopted integrated approaches to management of agricultural and natural resources within a strengthened institutional framework at the local, district and provincial levels.

(v) improving feeder roads. The available evidence clearly indicates that IFAD-supported interventions (including non-lending activities) were most successful and effective in the area of feeder road improvement. It also suggests that effectiveness was at best modest across the other four intervention areas and was not actively pursued. Lastly, the sustainability of the portfolio's activities focusing on agricultural marketing has been limited owing to the weakness of the connections existing among value chain actors.

343. The achievements relating to SO2 are rated as moderate. Three main areas of intervention were identified for the effort to enhance rural finance: (i) the ability of the rural poor, including farmers, to avail themselves of financial services provided through different delivery modes (individuals, groups, ABCs); (ii) FSAs/CBs capacitated to deliver products to suit diverse client needs; and (iii) increased outreach on the part of FSAs/CBs. Rural finance projects have had a strong impact at the micro level, but efforts at the meso and macro levels have been lacking. Evidence of the degree to which the rural poor, including farmers, now avail themselves of the financial services developed through different delivery modes is scant but suggests that, while FSAs and CBs are supposed to serve the entire community, tailored efforts – such as special campaigns focusing on mobilizing the poor – have added more low-income farmers to the clientele of the CBs and FSAs than has so far been the case with regard to the RFCIP-supported RFIs.
344. Against a backdrop of war and fragility, the CBs and FSAs have proved to be successful in coping with the demanding operational environment existing in rural Sierra Leone, and it has been determined that the initially low level of agricultural lending is attributable to conservative strategies and a lack of specialized, focused training in agro-lending. However, although these constraints have been addressed, many CB/FSAs still focus on simple agro-marketing loans having short loan periods and fast turnovers, while others operate with genuine production loans having appropriate grace periods that take into consideration the time required to harvest crops and effectively market the resulting produce. The sustainability indicators in the area of rural finance are promising, but there is some uncertainty regarding the sustainability of the Apex Bank.
345. The achievements relating to SO3 are rated as moderate, but there are serious risks with respect to their sustainability. The intent was to enhance community capacity through work in three intervention areas: (i) building human capacity in decentralized government structures and entities to deliver services to the rural poor; (ii) improving physical facilities/amenities; and (iii) improving revenue collection systems. The expected support for government institutions did not materialize, but this had less to do with the projects themselves and more to do with the deeper structural issues associated with a poor and fragile context. Modest progress was made in terms of increasing revenue collection systems at the local level, but evidence is lacking on whether such gains will be sustained. Again, modest results were found in terms of better physical facilities/amenities, but their sustainability is questionable given the lack of central government funding, the limited capacity for raising adequate funding at the local government level and the high staff turnover rate.

Table 20

Evaluation of strategic objectives under COSOP 2010

<i>Strategic objective</i>	<i>Major achievements under the COSOP</i>	<i>Level of achievement</i>
Strategic objective 1: Support for agriculture – smallholder farmers' access to irrigation, technical skills and markets is improved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the SCP-GAFSP and RCPRP, training in better cultivation techniques, the provision of tools, equipment and improved seeds and support in rehabilitating tree gardens and IVSs led to improvements in production • Under the RCPRP and SCP-GAFSP, 9,000 ha and 6,200 ha, respectively, of tree crops were rehabilitated. The RCPRP rehabilitated 2,960 ha of IVSs and thus came close to achieving its target, but the SCP-GAFSP's target was halved to 2,000, and 1,991 ha were actually rehabilitated. • Support for irrigation was less successful. The planned improvements in rice paddy irrigation systems were not pursued actively enough, with interventions being few and far between. A considerable part of the GEF-funded structures are no longer functioning. 	Moderate
Strategic objective 2: Support for rural finance – the rural poor have access to reliable and sustainable financial services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for rural finance was delivered as per the target to 17 CBs and 59 FSAs, all of which are still operational and are serving over 193,000 rural households. The RFIs have not yet paid dividends, however, and the FSAs cannot offer savings accounts. • In all, 41 per cent of the shareholders and borrowers are women and 40 per cent are young people. • Rural finance institutions were successfully set up and reached quite a number of community members, but the share of agricultural activities funded through the RFIs was limited (26 per cent for FSAs, 15 per cent for CBs) and there were almost no products that were tailored to the needs of agricultural borrowers. • Only 12 per cent of CBs and 33 per cent of FSAs reached the target of a portfolio-at risk (PAR) of below 5 per cent. 	Moderate
Strategic objective 3: Support for local development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for decentralization, local councils and development plans was provided only by the RCPRP. This project helped to build the capacity of district councils and ward committees, but the success of these bodies continued to be limited by budget shortages. Beneficiaries managed to communicate their needs to higher levels of the administration through the ward councils, but those needs were often not addressed. • Supported ward offices in general worked well, with 60 per cent of households in the project communities knowing about the councils' annual budget, as compared with about 23 per cent of households in other communities. • The RCPRP introduced an innovative cadastral system for the collection of taxes, and that system is slowly gaining ground. This is helping district governments to obtain revenues that are instrumental in addressing the needs of the members of their communities, including farmers. 	Moderate

Source: Data compiled for the CSPE.

346. COSOP policy areas. A generic factor limiting the overall effectiveness of IFAD's support for the achievement of the SOs set out in the COSOP results frameworks was the limited integration of IFAD's project-level experience with either the country-level policy dialogue or its programme development work. Overall, knowledge management has been found to be unsatisfactory, with the focus continuing to be on enhancing delivery in ongoing projects despite the fact that the 2010 COSOP flagged the need for practices and proven concepts to be fed into the Government's and IFAD's knowledge management systems. The 2010 COSOP and the 2017-2018 country strategy note identify a number of policy and regulatory issues that are detracting from the overall effectiveness of efforts to achieve the COSOP SOs. Policy engagement under SO1 has been lacking and has been limited under SO3 (focused on addressing the need for funding for the maintenance of rural feeder roads but not the other key policy/regulatory constraints that have

been identified). The main focus of policy engagement has been SO2, with support for the development of a new agricultural finance policy and strategy for the rural finance network in Sierra Leone. It is too early to tell whether this will be effective, but the support has been delivered too late to enhance the effectiveness of the lending portfolio to date. With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that IFAD should have deployed expertise to address the problems encountered in the development of the Apex Bank.

347. Overall, based on the information available, effectiveness is rated as moderately satisfactory (4).

Key points

- Overall, the activities proposed in both COSOPs were highly relevant to the policies of the Government of Sierra Leone. The portfolio has kept pace and evolved in alignment with the changing political and economic situation of the country.
- The picture with regard to the COSOPs' alignment with IFAD policies is more mixed; this is particularly true of their alignment with IFAD policies concerning the non-lending aspects of the programme.
- The theories of change associated with the three SOs have been found to be valid. The evaluation team found no evidence that the diagnosis of what was needed or the identification of the major areas in which the Fund should intervene were inaccurate in any significant sense.
- Effectiveness in contributing to the achievement of the three SOs has been constrained by the limited contribution of the non-lending side of the programme in addressing key constraints within the lending portfolio and the no more than modest level of investment in feeding lessons learned from the lending portfolio into government policy development.
- IFAD's focus has been almost exclusively on the development and oversight of individual projects rather than on the management of the country programme as a coherent whole.
- The evaluation team found evidence of effectiveness in contributing to the achievement of the SOs but also of shortcomings in the COSOPs' M&E systems that make it difficult to measure achievements against the outcome indicators.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

348. IFAD has managed to maintain the relevance of its portfolio in Sierra Leone by responding to the priorities that are typically associated with a fragile context. The lending portfolio of IFAD in Sierra Leone has closely supported the Government's priorities in moving the rural economy from revival to growth. Immediately after the civil war, the portfolio provided support for the building of productive assets and infrastructure and then, over the years, was gradually shifted towards enhancing growth in production, rural finance and the road network. The situation in the country has remained fragile, and the interventions undertaken in IFAD's portfolio have been carefully selected and implemented in line with that situation. Thus, the support for decentralization, the strengthening of the Government's limited capacity to support the nation's farmers in enhancing production and the focus on youth employment have all been particularly suitable components of the portfolio. Similarly, the rehabilitation of roads has been an especially significant type of intervention in a country with limited resources.
349. The overall focus on poverty has been successful, and IFAD support has reached an even larger target group than had been planned. With IFAD's support, vast areas of lands that had not previously been used effectively for primary production activities have been converted into productive assets, thereby helping to raise the incomes of a large number of farmers who now grow crops on that land. The projects' reliance on self-selection processes for poverty targeting has worked out well in practice. All the projects have also been successful in setting up, supporting and capacitating rural grass-roots groups and rural financial institutions. This has not only contributed to their empowerment but has also helped to make the various activities more effective.
350. The portfolio's success in the area of rural finance has been driven by a well-conceived focus on expanding its reach, but it has fallen short of achieving true financial inclusion because it has left out some of the potential beneficiaries. Overall, the approach based on selected CBs and FSAs has proved to be appropriate for the demanding operational environment existing in rural Sierra Leone; these local institutions are sustainable, and the network currently serves some 200,000 rural households. However, while support for rural finance has been successful in the context of rural development, farmers have constituted only a small proportion of the clientele. It would have been more realistic to assume that small financial institutions that draw their funds from share capital would not lend to the agricultural sector without special support in client selection and appraisal and without risk management and recovery strategies. Thus, the current strategies and approaches for widening the scope of outreach and deepening the impact of the RFI network, particularly in relation to the Apex Bank's role, and for developing the scale and modalities of rural lending need to be revisited.
351. The sequential approach has helped to build on the accomplishments of past projects, but inter-project synergy has been less successful. The thematic designs of IFAD projects have been very similar (the RCPRP and SCP-GAFSP for agricultural growth and the RFCIP and RFCIP-II for finance), and this has been helpful in applying lessons learned from predecessor projects to successor projects. On the other hand, because of delays in the implementation of predecessor projects, there has on occasion been insufficient time to learn lessons fully before attempting to apply them. Furthermore, some of the assumptions made when linking projects (such as having FBOs avail themselves of loans from RFIs) have been questionable.

352. The portfolio's focus on youth inclusion is noteworthy, but a more strategic approach to mainstreaming young men and women, who make up such a large part of the population of Sierra Leone, should be adopted. All projects were designed to include women and youth in the target group, but none of these design components was based on the results of a youth analysis. The RCPRP was the only project to have made an effort to structure the work, but its Youth Action Plan was delayed and was introduced only towards the end of the project, which may have resulted in the use of an ad hoc approach. As a result, youth mainstreaming did not take place. The numbers of young beneficiaries were reported but this was done in the absence of a specifically structured approach. Thus, there was some benefit, but it was often short-lived.
353. The country's resource-poor and fragile situation is likely to pose a threat to the sustainability of benefits, infrastructure and institutions. The lack of access to good-quality seeds, fertilizers, equipment and other inputs is putting downward pressure on the productivity levels achieved by rice farmers during the projects' implementation. The projects have capacitated far too few private sector input suppliers to reach all the farmers. Furthermore, mechanized farm equipment is in limited supply in the country, and its cost is also a constraint. There is a risk that the lack of sufficient government resources will result in a reversal of the benefits afforded by the available infrastructure (roads) and by government institutions (IFAD's implementing partners), government departments (for extension services) and decentralized government bodies (tasked with prioritizing and meeting community needs).
354. To attain the portfolio's development goal, the creation of market linkages should have been mainstreamed in the portfolio rather than treated as an ancillary objective. The 2010 COSOP placed emphasis on the need to create marketing linkages for beneficiaries, and this was reflected in the lending portfolio. However, insufficient effort was devoted to this line of action. For instance, the ABCs have primarily focused on supporting their members in processing their produce; they do not offer a service to help farmers operate as a group and to buy inputs and sell their produce collectively. The rice cooperative created by the RCPRP has failed to perform as a buyer. Therefore, even though farmers have succeeded in increasing their output, they have ended up being price-takers, which makes it hard for them to realize the full income potential of that increase.
355. The singular focus on increasing food production has come at the cost of diversification and nutrition. The portfolio's focus has primarily been on crop production (mainly rice, cocoa and palm oil and, to a lesser extent, vegetables). There was a small-scale component on livestock under the SCP-GAFSP, but livestock-related components have, for the most part, been absent. While boosting food production was critical in the initial stages, as part of the natural evolution of its portfolio IFAD should have more actively pursued diversification into non-food crops and cash crops such as vegetables and livestock as a way of increasing beneficiaries' resilience to economic and climatic shocks. Equally importantly, in doing so it would have mainstreamed nutrition as one of its development objectives.
356. The effectiveness of the lending portfolio has been diminished by the fact that IFAD has not prioritized or had the capacity to address constraints identified in the course of its non-lending work. Although the Government of Sierra Leone considers IFAD to be its partner of choice in driving the agenda on rural development forward, the Fund has not been able to fully leverage its potential in this regard. One of the reasons for this is that priority has not been placed on efforts to feed lessons about what has worked at the project level and challenges from the field level into the broader in-country discourse regarding ways of becoming more effective, thus limiting the potential overall contribution of IFAD to development in Sierra Leone. A related aspect is that the challenge of working in

a chronically fragile context and the implications of this for how IFAD should go about its work have not been explicitly addressed. Another reason is the insufficient number of staff available to manage the country programme. This is clearly illustrated by the fact that, in 2015, there were four projects being implemented simultaneously but only a single staff member (the CPO) in the Country Office.

B. Recommendations

357. Recommendation 1: Deepen the developmental impact of agricultural growth by focusing more on strengthening linkages along the value chain. Horizontal and vertical linkages should be strengthened all along the value chain in order to facilitate sustainable pro-poor development in a fragile context. In this regard, the new COSOP should focus on improving relationships among the stakeholders, including buyers, sellers, service providers and regulatory institutions. Multi-stakeholder forums should be established that will bring together value chain actors in order to foster dialogue, improved communication and mutual trust. Knowledge and information about prices and other market conditions should be provided to poor producers and their groups. The focus of future projects should also be on developing systematic partnerships with private sector actors and creating incentives for their participation, including risk- and cost-sharing mechanisms. A rigorous technical analysis of value chain viability must be undertaken early on in the project design stage, and the findings should be shared with all stakeholders. At the policy and regulatory level, IFAD must assist the Government in creating an enabling environment for private sector participation and for public-private partnerships, ideally in collaboration with other development partners.
358. Recommendation 2: Pursue diversification more vigorously as a strategy for improving nutrition and building economic resilience. The focus of the portfolio has primarily been on crop production. This has meant that beneficiaries' incomes remain exposed to climate- and market/price-related shocks. Furthermore, while nutrition has been emphasized in the COSOP, the assumption has been that increases in income (which depend on crops alone) will drive improvements in nutrition. The new COSOP should put the spotlight on resilience and nutrition based on a more emphatic approach to diversification. Thus, the scope of future projects should be expanded to include not only crop production but also other subsectors (e.g. livestock) as a pathway to increased economic benefits, improved resilience and better nutrition. Livestock is also a thrust area of the Government's development plan and has a proven potential in rural development. As women traditionally tend smaller animals, activities should be specifically targeted in that direction.
359. Recommendation 3: Elevate the level of engagement in rural finance by building on existing structures and on the increased awareness of rural finance in the country. IFAD should continue to engage with rural finance in Sierra Leone but should pay greater attention to the underserved farming community. Apart from the achievements of its rural finance projects and the structures that they have helped to create, future interventions will also benefit from the increased awareness in rural communities of financial products and their potential. IFAD should focus on making the Apex Bank a competent, profitable and professionally managed umbrella organization capable of serving the CB/FSA network through the design of an appropriate, comprehensive strategy and business plan. The design of a system for implementing a modern, flexible agricultural lending policy for CBs and FSAs needs to be finalized. IFAD must support the development of CB/FSA outreach and impact through the introduction of new services and policies on deposits, loans and dividends using IT-based solutions and linkages with other financial institutions where appropriate. The Fund should explore the possibility of opening a flexible refinancing window for the Apex

Bank to attract incremental funding from multiple sources with a view to substantially expanding the rural portfolios in the CB/FSA network and beyond.

360. Recommendation 4: Rebalance the Fund's approach by moving away from an almost exclusive focus on development and oversight of individual projects and towards the management of the country programme as a coherent whole. This should involve mainstreaming non-lending and grants programme instruments as part of a coherent strategy in the next COSOP. The following actions in this regard are recommended:
- (i) A well-designed knowledge management strategy should be adopted that facilitates improved M&E systems at the project level (that also feed into national donor-based M&E systems), promotes a deeper understanding of impact pathways in a fragile context and sets out indicators for measuring progress in knowledge management.
 - (ii) IFAD should participate more actively in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and the coordination groups for agricultural and rural sector donors. In order to shape its policy engagement with the Government of Sierra Leone, IFAD should cease to rely solely on the experience gained through its own projects and should instead provide a platform for a broader group of stakeholders, including research organizations, NGOs and private sector agencies that are involved in, or are a part of, the rural landscape. This platform could be created by inviting these stakeholders to donor and development partner coordination meetings. Greater efforts should be made to work with other Rome-based agencies on such issues as food security, gender equality and resilience. To achieve a greater impact, IFAD should also increase the scope of its engagement with the Government by working more closely with all ministries involved in rural development.
 - (iii) Increased engagement should be supported by the provision of adequate financial and human resources. Equipping the ICO with additional capacity and relevant technical skills will leave the CPM and the CPO with more time to pursue non-lending activities. Increased proximity will also facilitate a deeper understanding of the fragility of the situation.
361. Recommendation 5: Strengthen the targeting focus of the country portfolio by mainstreaming youth into the portfolio through a country-specific youth strategy. A needs assessment based on a vulnerability analysis must be conducted to identify the needs of the young population in Sierra Leone and to determine which of those needs can best be addressed by IFAD-supported projects. A youth strategy should then be developed on this basis which will help unlock the potential of the nation's youth in the agricultural sector. The strategy should also include suggested activities, linkages to other development partners and suggested responsibilities. The youth strategy and related activities need to be implemented in a structural manner, and the targeting capacity of the NPCU should be strengthened with the addition of dedicated staff who possess youth expertise. Youth participation must be closely monitored, not only in terms of the numbers of young people reached but also in terms of how effectively they are able to participate. Activities should be designed in such a way that there is a considerable likelihood that the young people concerned can sustain those activities without external support.

Definition of the evaluation criteria used by IOE

Criteria	Definition *	Mandatory	To be rated
Rural poverty impact	Impact is defined as the changes that have occurred or are expected to occur in the lives of the rural poor (whether positive or negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended) as a result of development interventions.	X	Yes
	<i>Four impact domains:</i>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Household income and net assets: Household income provides a means of assessing the flow of economic benefits accruing to an individual or group, whereas assets relate to a stock of accumulated items of economic value. The analysis must include an assessment of trends in equality over time. 		No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human and social capital and empowerment: Human and social capital and empowerment include an assessment of the changes that have occurred in the empowerment of individuals, the quality of grass-roots organizations and institutions, the individual and collective capacity of the poor, and, in particular, the extent to which specific groups such as youth are included or excluded from the development process. 		No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food security and agricultural productivity: Changes in food security relate to availability, stability, affordability and access to food and stability of access, whereas changes in agricultural productivity are measured in terms of yields; nutrition relates to the nutritional value of food and child malnutrition. 		No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutions and policies: The criterion relating to institutions and policies is designed to assess changes in the quality and performance of institutions, policies and the regulatory framework that influence the lives of the poor. 		No
Project performance	Project performance is an average of the ratings for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of benefits.	X	Yes
Relevance	The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, institutional priorities and partner and donor policies. It also entails an assessment of project design and coherence in achieving its objectives. An assessment should also be made of whether objectives and design address inequality, for example, by assessing the relevance of the targeting strategies adopted.	X	Yes
Effectiveness	The extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.	X	Yes
Efficiency	A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results.	X	Yes
Sustainability of benefits	The likely continuation of net benefits from a development intervention beyond the phase of external funding support. It also includes an assessment of the likelihood that actual and anticipated results will be resilient to risks beyond the project's life.	X	Yes
Other performance criteria			
Gender equality and women's empowerment	The extent to which IFAD interventions have contributed to better gender equality and women's empowerment, for example, in terms of women's access to and ownership of assets, resources and services; participation in decision-making; workload balance; and impact on women's incomes, nutrition and livelihoods.	X	Yes
Innovation	The extent to which IFAD development interventions have introduced innovative approaches to rural poverty reduction.	X	Yes
Scaling up	The extent to which IFAD development interventions have been (or are likely to be) scaled up by government authorities, donor organizations, the private sector and other agencies.	X	Yes
Environment and natural resource management	The extent to which IFAD development interventions contribute to resilient livelihoods and ecosystems. The focus is on the use and management of the natural environment, including natural resources defined as raw materials used for socio-economic and cultural purposes, and ecosystems and biodiversity – along with the goods and services they provide.	X	Yes

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Definition</i> [*]	<i>Mandatory</i>	<i>To be rated</i>
Adaptation to climate change	The contribution of the project to reducing the negative impacts of climate change through dedicated adaptation or risk reduction measures.	X	Yes
Overall project achievement	This provides an overarching assessment of the intervention, drawing upon the analysis and ratings for rural poverty impact, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability of benefits, gender equality and women's empowerment, innovation, scaling up, environment and natural resource management, and adaptation to climate change.	X	Yes
Performance of partners			
• IFAD	This criterion assesses the contribution of partners to project design, execution, monitoring and reporting, supervision and implementation support, and evaluation. The performance of each partner will be assessed on an individual basis with a view to the partner's expected role and responsibility in the project life cycle.	X	Yes
• Government		X	Yes

* These definitions build on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management; the Methodological Framework for Project Evaluation agreed with the Evaluation Committee in September 2003; the first edition of the Evaluation Manual discussed with the Evaluation Committee in December 2008; and further discussions with the Evaluation Committee in November 2010 on IOE's evaluation criteria and key questions.

Ratings of the IFAD lending portfolio in Sierra Leone

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>RCPRP</i>	<i>RFCIP</i>	<i>RFCIP-II</i>	<i>SCP-GAFSP</i>	<i>AVDP</i>	<i>Overall portfolio</i>
Rural poverty impact	5	5	4	4	n.a.	4
Project performance						
Relevance	5	5	4	4	4	4
Effectiveness	5	4	5	3	n.a.	4
Efficiency	3	4	4	3	n.a.	4
Sustainability of benefits	4	4	4	3	n.a.	4
Project performance^b	4.25	4.25	4.5	3.25		4
Other performance criteria						
Gender equality and women's empowerment	4	5	5	4	n.a.	4
Innovation	5	5	4	3	n.a.	5
Scaling up	5	5	4	4	n.a.	4
Environment and natural resource management	4	4	n.a.	3	n.a.	4
Adaptation to climate change	4	3	n.a.	3	n.a.	3
Portfolio performance and results^c	5	5	4	3	n.a.	4

^a Rating scale: 1 = highly unsatisfactory; 2 = unsatisfactory; 3 = moderately unsatisfactory; 4 = moderately satisfactory; 5 = satisfactory; 6 = highly satisfactory; n.p. = not provided; n.a. = not applicable.

^b Arithmetic average of ratings for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of benefits.

^c This is not an average of ratings of individual evaluation criteria but an overarching assessment of the project, drawing upon the ratings for rural poverty impact, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability of benefits, gender, innovation, scaling up, environment and natural resource management and adaptation to climate change.

Final ratings of the country strategy and programme in Sierra Leone

	<i>Rating</i>
Project portfolio performance and results^a	4
Non-lending activities^b	
Country-level policy engagement	4
Knowledge management	3
Partnership-building	3
Overall non-lending activities	3
Performance of partners	
IFAD	4
Government	4
Country strategy and programme performance (overall)^d	
Relevance	4
Effectiveness	4

^a Not an arithmetic average of individual project ratings.

^b Not an arithmetic average of the ratings for knowledge management, partnership-building and country-level policy engagement.

^c Not an arithmetic average of individual project ratings. The rating for partners' performance is not a component of the overall assessment ratings.

^d This is not an arithmetic average of the ratings for relevance and effectiveness of the country and strategy programme and performance. The ratings for relevance and effectiveness take into account the assessment and ratings of portfolio results, non-lending activities and performance of partners but they are not an arithmetic average.

IFAD-financed operations and grants in Sierra Leone

List of IFAD-supported operations in Sierra Leone since 1979

Project ID	Project name	Project type	Total cost* (US\$ millions)	IFAD financing (US\$ millions)	Cofinancing (US\$ millions)	Government funding (US\$ millions)	Other domestic funding** (US\$ millions)	Co-financier	Board approval	Loan effectiveness	Project completion	Current status
1100000021	Magbosi Integrated Agricultural Development Project	Rural development	13.2	10.9	-	2.3	-	-	18/09/1979	12/03/1980	30/06/1986 (was 1984, 1 ext.)	Closed
1100000064	Northern Integrated Agricultural Development Project-II (NIADP-II)	Rural development	23.7	2.0	19.0	2.7	-	AfDB, IDA, UNDP	22/04/1981	23/09/1981	30/09/1987 (was 1986, 1 ext.)	Closed
1100000152	Agricultural Sector Support Project	Agricultural development	28.2	4.7	21.5	2.0	-	IDA	11/09/1984	10/12/1984	30/06/1996	Closed
1100000308	North-Central Agricultural Development Project	Agricultural development	22.5	14.7	5.5	1.9	0.4	WFP, UNDP	09/09/1992	06/09/1993	30/09/2003 (was 2000, 1 ext.)	Closed

List of projects evaluated

Project ID	Project name	Project type	Total cost* (US\$ millions)	IFAD financing (US\$ millions)	Cofinancing (US\$ millions)	Government funding (US\$ millions)	Other domestic funding** (US\$ millions)	Co-financier	Board approval	Loan effectiveness	Project completion	Current status
1100001054	Rehabilitation and Community-based Poverty Reduction Project (RCPRP)	Rural development	52.8	43.0	2.6	3.6	3.6	GEF	18/12/2003	02/03/2006	31/03/2017 (was 2011, 2 ext.)	Closed
1100001310	Rural Finance and Community Improvement Programme (RFCIP)	Credit and financial services	13	12.0	-	0.5	0.5	-	18/04/2007	30/05/2008	30/06/2014	Closed

Project ID	Project name	Project type	Total cost* (US\$ millions)	IFAD financing (US\$ millions)	Cofinancing (US\$ millions)	Government funding (US\$ millions)	Other domestic funding** (US\$ millions)	Co-financier	Board approval	Loan effectiveness	Project completion	Current status
1100001599	Smallholder Commercialization Programme (SCP)	Agricultural development	56.4	-	50.0	4.5	1.9	GAFSP	11/05/2011	29/07/2011	30/09/2019 (was 2016, 2 ext.)	Ongoing
1100001710	Rural Finance and Community Improvement Programme II (RFCIP-II)	Credit and financial services	47.2	31.3	1.0	4.5	10.4	IFC	03/04/2013	26/06/2013	30/06/2022	Ongoing
2000001544	Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (AVDP)	Agricultural development	31.8 (72.6 with TU)	11.8 (40.8 TU DSF/LN planned Sept 2019)	9.2	8.0	2.8	AF	13/12/2018	-	-	Approved

* Any discrepancies between the entries under Total cost and the sum total of the entries under IFAD financing, Cofinancing, Government funding and Other domestic funding are due to rounding.

** Includes beneficiary contributions and domestic financial and private institutions.

Source: IFAD Grants and Investment Project System (GRIPS), 2018.

List of IFAD-supported grants (selection for CSPE)

No.	ID	Acronym	Name	Beneficiary	Grant type and focus	Approval	(Expected) completion	IFAD grant cost at approval (US\$)	Other financing at approval (US\$)
1	2000000474	Climate cha	Adapting Small-Scale Irrigation to Climate Change In WCA	FAO	Regional: Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Liberia, Mauritania, the Niger, Sierra Leone	13 Sep 2014	30 Sep 2019	1,200,000.	310,000
			WCA: Adriane Del Torto						

No.	ID	Acronym	Name	Beneficiary	Grant type and focus	Approval	(Expected) completion	IFAD grant cost at approval (US\$)	Other financing at approval (US\$)
2	2000001663	Self-assess	Development of Self-Assessment Tools for In-Country Results-based Management Capacity in Agriculture	Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation	Country-specific	07 Nov 2017	30 Sep 2021	3,200,000	252,000
		OPR: Raphael Seiwald							
3	2000002007	Improving A	Improving Agricultural Resilience to Salinity through Development of Pro-Poor Technologies Programme	International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (UAE)	Regional: Botswana, the Gambia, Liberia, Mozambique Namibia, Sierra Leone, Togo	08 Dec 2018	31 Dec 2022	3,500,000	4200,000
		SKD: Viviane Filippi							
4	1000004486	SFOAP EC Co	PTA: Support to Farmers' Organizations in Africa Programme (SFOAP) Main Phase (ROPPA)	Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producer Organisations of West Africa	Regional: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia Mali, the Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo	12 Dec 2012	21 Dec 2018	Supplementary fund grants (EC+SDC) US\$500,000	4,049,885
	1000004389	SFOAP Roppa				30 Nov 2012	21 Dec 2018	Supplementary fund grants (EC+SDC)	No additional funds
	1000004491	SFOAP EC Co	SFOAP – Top-up			12 Dec 2012	21 Dec 2018	Supplementary fund grants (EC)	1,042,776
	2000002239	PAOPA-ROPPA	SFOAP Afd Top-up contribution to Roppa			12 Dec 2012	21 Dec 2018	Supplementary fund grants (AFD)	187,681
	2000000861	AFD – SFOAP				18 Apr 2018	21 Dec 2018		166,884
		PMI: Laura Sollazzo				20 Dec 2013			

No.	ID	Acronym	Name	Beneficiary	Grant type and focus	Approval	(Expected) completion	IFAD grant cost at approval (US\$)	Other financing at approval (US\$)
5	1000003967	RURAL YOUTH	Rural Youth and Agricultural Business Development in West and Central Africa	Songhai Centre	Regional: Benin, Sierra Leone, Togo	05 Dec 2010	31 Mar 2014	1,404,247	No additional funds
		WCA: Adriane Del Torto							
6	1000004347	AGRICULTURAL	Strengthening Country-level Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS)	African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS)	Regional: Burkina Faso, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Uganda	28 Sep 2012	31 Dec 2014	1,000,000	2,022,609
		PMI: Laura Sollazzo							
7	1000004412	Rice value	Strengthening Rice Value Chains in West and Central Africa	Africa Rice Center	Regional: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Senegal, Sierra Leone	15 Dec 2012	31 Mar 2016	1,470,000	296,000
		WCA: Adriane Del Torto							
8	1000004109	STRENGTH	Strengthening Smallholders' Access to Markets for Certified Sustainable Products (ICEA) Lgs 1324	Ethical and Environmental Certification Institute	Guinea Regional: Liberia, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone	23 Oct 2011	31 Mar 2015	800,000	No additional funds
		PMI: Laura Sollazzo							
9	2000001091		The Story Behind the Numbers, Knowledge from the Field	Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-Operation ACP-EU (Netherlands)	Regional: Bhutan, Brazil, Costa Rica, Fiji, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nepal, the Niger, the Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Thailand, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Viet Nam	04 Dec 2015	31 Mar 2019	1,500,000	No additional funds
		SKD: Sandra Reyes							
		The story behind							
10	2000002432	Sust Agric	The Sustainable Agriculture Lab for Smallholders	Climate Policy Initiative	Regional: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo	31 Aug 2018	31 Dec 2019	Supplementary fund grants (CPI+ASAP2)	860,000
		ECG: Sene Amath							

No.	ID	Acronym	Name	Beneficiary	Grant type and focus	Approval	(Expected) completion	IFAD grant cost at approval (US\$)	Other financing at approval (US\$)
11	1000004055 PMI: Laura Sollazzo	TAF for Afr	The Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) of the African Agriculture Fund (AAF)	TECHNOSERVE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, INC	Regional: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa Zambia, Zimbabwe	19 Aug 2011	31 May 2018	Supplementary fund grants (EC)	EUR 9,706,000
12	2000000239 WCA: Adriane Del Torto	Capacity bu	Upgrading Project Leadership and Results-based Management Skills in WCA	International Institute for Water and Environmental Engineering (2IE)	Regional: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, the Gambia, Guinea, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Nigeria Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo	09 Dec 2013	30 Sep 2018	1,600,000	No additional funds
13	2000001347 WCA: Adriane Del Torto	SAMCERT	Using the Tools of Certification to Integrate Smallholder Farmers into Value Added Supply Chains	Rainforest Alliance	Regional: Brazil, Indonesia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, United Kingdom	13 Dec 2016	31 Mar 2020	1,000,000	No additional funds
14	2000000482 SKD: Viviane Filippi	Ecosystems	Water, Land and Ecosystems in Africa	International Water Management Institute	Regional: Burundi, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda., Senegal, Sierra Leone, United Republic of Tanzania	28 Jan 2014	30 Jun 2017	Supplementary fund grants (CGIAR)	2,800,000

No.	ID	Acronym	Name	Beneficiary	Grant type and focus	Approval	(Expected) completion	IFAD grant cost at approval (US\$)	Other financing at approval (US\$)
15	2000000844	EBOLA	West Africa Emergency Response: Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone	World Food Programme	Regional: Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone	08 Nov 2014	30 Jun 2015	2,837,422	No additional funds
			WCA: Adriane Del Torto						
16	1000003879	YOUTH AS CA	Youth as Catalysts for Agrobusiness Development and Growth in WCA	United Nations Industrial Development Organization	Regional: Benin, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone Togo	04 Nov 2010	31 Aug 2013	237,515	No additional funds
			WCA: Adriane Del Torto						
17	2000001855	Supporting	PTA: Supporting Africa-wide Agricultural Extension Week (AEW)	African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services	Regional: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe	18 Sep 2017	31 Dec 2018	350,000	No additional funds
			PMI: Laura Sollazzo						

No.	ID	Acronym	Name	Beneficiary	Grant type and focus	Approval	(Expected) completion	IFAD grant cost at approval (US\$)	Other financing at approval (US\$)
18	1000002919 (976)	Pro For Enhancing Access To	Pro For Enhancing Access To Nerica for Poverty Alleviation	Africa Rice Center	Regional: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Sierra Leone	12 Sep 2007	31 Mrt 2012	1,479,503	No additional funds

Source: IFAD Financial Management Dashboard (FMDB), 2019.

List of key people met¹

Government

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security

Joseph Jonathan Ndanema, Minister
Samking Koihinah Braima, Deputy Minister
Fatmata S. Mustapha, Permanent Secretary
Patrick Sundifu, Deputy Secretary
Joseph D. Ganda, Senior Agricultural Officer
Ishmail F. Tarawalie, Assistant Deputy Director, Agricultural Engineering Division
Steven Fofonah, Assistant Director, Engineering Division
Sahr Gborie, Livestock and Veterinary Services Division
Abdul C. Jalloh, Assistant Director, Livestock and Veterinary Services Division
Mohamed Alpha Bah, Deputy Director, Livestock and Veterinary Services Division
J E D Terry, Consultant, Livestock and Veterinary Services Division
Amara Leno, Veterinary Officer
Alimani Kargbo, M&E Officer

Ministry of Finance

Sahr L. Jusu, Financial Secretary
Mohamed Samboh, Senior Economist
Issa Mbriwa, Disbursement Officer
Isha Kamara, Senior Assistant Secretary

Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development

Melrose A. Kargbo, Deputy Minister

Ministry of Planning and Economic Development

Nabeel F. Tunis, former Minister
Robert Chakanda, Deputy Minister
Peter Sam-Kpakra, Development Secretary
Umaru A. Conteh, Deputy Development Secretary

Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs

Baindu Dassama, Minister
David Banya, Permanent Secretary
Charles Vandj, Director of Gender
Joseph S. Sinnah, Chief Social Services Officer

Ministry of Trade and Industry

Newton Marlin, Registrar
Alfred Moseray, Deputy Registrar of Cooperation
Salu S. Conteh, Deputy Registrar

Ministry of Works, Housing and Infrastructure

Peter B. Konteh, Minister
Hon. Philip Tondoneh, Deputy Minister of Works and Public Assets
Paul S.H. Bokarie, Civil Engineer
Abdul S.D. Shaw, Chief Engineer

¹ Including key people met during the CSPE preparatory mission and the main RCPRP mission in March 2019.

Ministry of Youth Affairs

Lucian Kallon, Deputy Minister
Andrew L. Sorie, Permanent Secretary
Alusine A. Konteh, Senior Human Resource Officer
Sia Comfort Nyumeh, Gender Officer
Jamestina Bull, Administrative Officer, Youth in Agriculture Project
Philip Y. Maheyeni, Deputy Director of Youth Affairs
Salbata Janeh Egbenda, Administrative and Finance Officer, Youth in Fisheries
Hassan Dumbuya, Senior Accountant
Victor L.K. Mnane, Director, LSC
Ahmed A Mansaray, Manager, LSC

Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute

Mathew Gboku, Managing Director

Sierra Leone Meteorological Department

Gabriel Kpaka, Deputy Director General
Patrick Musa, Head of Climatology
Saiku Bah, Accountant
Manbu Koromo, Assistant Accountant

Sierra Leone Roads Authority

Amara Kanneh, Director General
Shyllon Tesslima, Engineer

Projects and programmes

National Project Coordination Unit (RCPCP, RFCIP, RFCIP-II)

Mohamed Kella, Programme Coordinator
Brima Kamara, Head, M&E/Knowledge Management
Emmanuel S. Gbakie, Communications and Knowledge Management Officer
Lionel Shanu-Wilson, M&E Assistant
Sallay Sheriff, Technical Assistant, Civil Works
Michael Turay, Financial Controller
Lionel Bickersteth, Climate Change Assistant
John Lahai, Tree Crops Consultant
Patrick Dumbuya, Head of Community Bank Operations, Apex Bank
Vandi Abu, Head of FSA Operations, Apex Bank
Augustine Beckley, Director of Inspection, Apex Bank
Sahr Noah-Kaitombor, Refinance Officer, Apex Bank

Programme Management Unit, SCP-GAFSP

Peter Kaindaneh, Programme Manager
Patrick Komba, Youth Officer
Henry Kamara, Tree Crops Officer
Alfred Morgan, Works Supervisor Engineer
Monica Kwame-Greene, Financial Controller
Borteh Y. P. Massaquoi, Gender and Targeting Officer
Ahmed Sheriff, Water Management Officer
Wilson Bob Margai, Water Management Officer
George M. Barba, Water Management Officer
Andrew Kutubu, Head, Commercial Agriculture

International and donor institutions

BRAC

Victor Kamara, Acting Country Representative
Mohamed S. Haque, Programme Manager

Delegation of the European Union to Sierra Leone

Thomas Opperer, Team Leader, Rural development and Infrastructure
John Christian Abu Kpawoh, Project Cooperation Manager

German Agency for International Cooperation

Ralf Zimmermann, Programme Coordinator, Employment Promotion Programme

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Nyabenyi Tipo, FAO Representative
Joseph Brima, Assistant FAO Representative, Programmes
Samuel Mabikke, Land Tenure Officer

International Finance Corporation

Giima Laval, Country Coordinator
William Conteh, Consultant, FCS Africa Program

International Fund for Agricultural Development

Jakob Tuborg, Country Director
Patrick Bao, Sierra Leone Country Programme Officer
Hubert Boirard, Country Director (former Sierra Leone Country Programme Manager)
Ndaya Beltchika, Lead Technical Specialist - Gender and Social Inclusion (former Sierra Leone Country Programme Manager)
Mariatu Kamara, Programme Officer, Nigeria (former Sierra Leone Country Programme Officer)
Paul Picot, rural finance expert, IFAD supervision mission member, RFCIP-II
Dela Selormey, IFAD supervision mission head, RFCIP-II

United Kingdom Department for International Development

Chris Pearce, Economist

United Nations Development Programme

Tanzila Sankoh, Team Leader, Sustainable Growth Cluster
Milton Korseh Hindowa, National Economics Specialist

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Shaukat H. Malik, Chief Technical Adviser

World Bank

Kadir Gyasi, Senior Agricultural Economist

World Food Programme

Housainou Taal, Representative and Country Director
Yasuhiro Tsumura, Deputy Country Director and Head of Programme

Private sector

Apex Bank

Nelson Salia Konneh, Director of Banking
Patrick Dumbuya, Head of Community Banks and Operations
Alimamy Conteh, Director, Internal Audits

Bank of Sierra Leone

Ralph Ansumana, Other Financial Institution Supervision Development
Alfred Gbekie, Senior Manager

Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company

Henry Kamara, Managing Director

Other resource people

Michael Marx, rural finance expert

Methodological note on country strategy and programme evaluations

1. A country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) conducted by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) has two main objectives: assess the performance and impact of IFAD-financed operations in the country; and generate a series of findings and recommendations that will inform the next results-based country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP). It is conducted in accordance with the directives of IFAD's Evaluation Policy and follows the core methodology and processes for CSPEs outlined in IOE's Evaluation Manual.¹ This note describes the key elements of the methodology.
2. Focus. A CSPE focuses on three mutually reinforcing pillars in the IFAD-government partnership: (i) project portfolio; (ii) non-lending activities; and (iii) the COSOP(s). Based on these building blocks, the CSPE makes an overall assessment of the country programme achievements.
3. With regard to assessing the performance of the project portfolio (first pillar), the CSPE applies a standard evaluation methodology for each project using the internationally recognized evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and rural poverty impact - including the impact on household income and assets, human and social capital, food security and agricultural productivity, natural resources and the environment (including climate change), and institutions and policies. The other performance criteria include sustainability, innovation and scaling up, and gender equality and women's empowerment. The performance of partners (IFAD and the government) is also assessed by examining their specific contribution to the design, execution, supervision, implementation support, and monitoring and evaluation of the specific projects and programmes.
4. The assessment of non-lending activities (second pillar) is based on an analysis of the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the combined efforts of IFAD and the government to promote policy dialogue, knowledge management and partnership-building. It also reviews global, regional and country-specific grants along with achievements and synergy with the lending portfolio.
5. The assessment of the performance of the COSOP (third pillar) entails a further, more aggregated, level of analysis that covers the relevance and effectiveness of the COSOP. While, in the portfolio assessment, the analysis is project-based, in this latter section the evaluation deals with the overall objectives of the programme. The assessment of relevance covers the alignment and coherence of the strategic objectives – including the geographic and subsector focus, partners selected, targeting and synergies with other rural development interventions – and the provisions for country programme management and COSOP management. The assessment of effectiveness determines the extent to which the overall strategic objectives of the COSOP were achieved. The CSPE ultimately generates an assessment of the overall achievements of the programme.
6. Approach. In line with international evaluation practices, the CSPE evaluation combines: (i) a desk review of existing documentation (existing literature, previous IOE evaluations, informational material generated by the projects, and data and other materials made available by the government or IFAD, including self-evaluation data and reports); (ii) interviews with relevant stakeholders in IFAD and in the country; and (iii) direct observation of activities in the field.
7. For the work done in the field, a combination of data collection methods is generally used: (i) focus group discussions with a set of questions designed for project user and comparison groups; (ii) government stakeholder meetings attended by national, regional and local stakeholders, including project staff; (iii)

¹ http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/process_methodology/doc/manual.pdf.

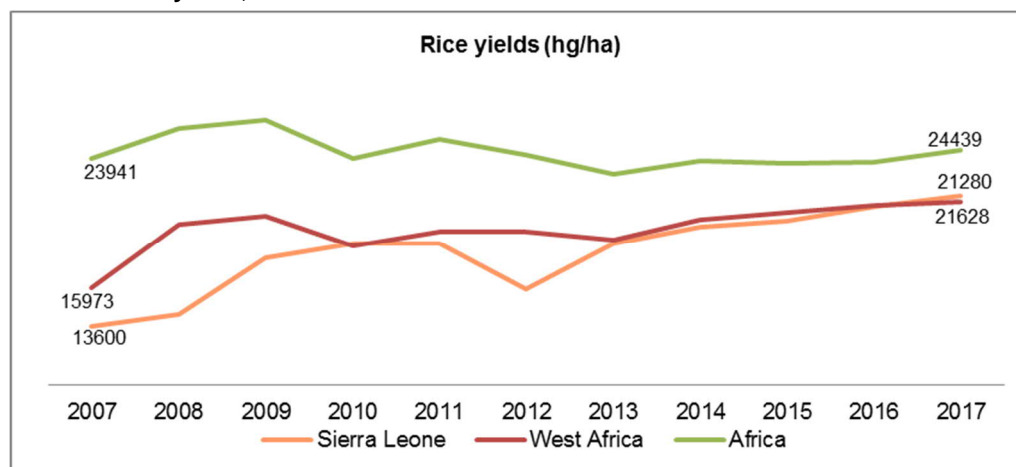
sample household visits using a pre-agreed set of questions for household members designed to obtain indications of levels of project participation and impact; and (iv) key non-governmental stakeholder meetings with representatives of civil society, the private sector and others.

8. The findings presented in the evaluation are based on the triangulation of evidence collected from different sources.
9. Rating scale. The performance in respect of each of the three pillars described above and overall achievements are rated on a scale of 1 to 6 (with 1 being the lowest score and 6 the highest); these scores fall into two broad categories: satisfactory (4, 5, and 6) and unsatisfactory (1, 2 and 3). Ratings are provided for individual projects/programmes and, on that basis, for the performance of the overall project portfolio. Ratings are also provided for the performance of partners, non-lending activities, the COSOP's relevance and effectiveness, and the overall achievements of the programme.
10. In line with the standard practices of international financial institutions, the rating scale, in particular when it is used for assessing the expected results and impact of an operation, can be defined as follows (taking due account of the approximations inherent in such definitions):
 - Highly satisfactory (6). The intervention (project, programme, non-lending component, etc.) achieved strong progress – with respect to a specific criterion or in overall terms –towards all main objectives/impacts and had best-practice achievements in connection with one or more of them.
 - Satisfactory (5). The intervention achieved acceptable progress towards all main objectives/impacts and strong progress on some of them.
 - Moderately satisfactory (4). The intervention achieved acceptable (although not strong) progress towards the majority of its main objectives/impacts.
 - Moderately unsatisfactory (3). The intervention achieved acceptable progress in relation to only some (not most) of its objectives/impacts.
 - Unsatisfactory (2). The intervention's progress was weak in relation to all objectives/ impacts.
 - Highly unsatisfactory (1). The intervention did not make progress in relation to any of its objectives/impacts.
11. It is recognized that differences may exist in the understanding and interpretation of ratings between evaluators (inter-evaluation variability). In order to minimize that variability, IOE provides systematic training for its staff and consultants and conducts thorough peer reviews.
12. Evaluation process. A CSPE is conducted prior to the preparation of a new cooperation strategy for a given country. This type of evaluation involves three main phases: (i) design and desk review; (ii) country work; and (iii) report-writing, comments and communication of results.
13. The design and desk review phase entails the preparation of a CSPE approach paper. This paper specifies the evaluation objectives, methodology, process, time lines and key questions. It is followed by a preparatory mission to the country to discuss the draft paper with key partners. During this stage, a desk review is conducted in order to examine the available documentation. Project review notes and a consolidated desk review report are prepared and shared with the corresponding regional division of IFAD and the government. The main objective of the desk review report is to identify preliminary hypotheses and issues to be analysed during the main CSPE mission. During this stage, both IFAD and the government conduct a self-assessment at the portfolio, non-lending and COSOP levels.

14. The country work phase entails convening a multidisciplinary team of consultants to visit the country, holding meetings in the capital city with the government and other partners and traveling to different regions of the country to review the activities of IFAD-funded projects on the ground and discuss them with beneficiaries, public authorities, project management staff, NGOs and other partners. A brief summary note is presented at the end of the mission to the government and other key partners.
15. During the report-writing, comments and communication of results phase, IOE prepares the draft CSPE report, which is then shared with the corresponding regional division of IFAD, the government and other partners for review and comments. The draft is subject to a peer review process within IOE in which IOE staff and an independent external senior adviser participate. IOE then distributes the CSPE report to partners to disseminate the results of the CSPE. IOE and the government organize a learning-focused national round-table workshop that provides multiple stakeholders with the opportunity to discuss the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation. The report is made public.
16. A core learning partnership (CLP) formed by the main users of the evaluation provides guidance to IOE at critical stages in the evaluation process; in particular, its members review and comment on the draft approach paper, the desk review report and the draft CSPE report, and they participate in the CSPE national workshop.
17. Each CSPE evaluation is concluded with an agreement at completion point (ACP). The ACP is a short document which captures the main findings of the evaluation together with the recommendations made in the CSPE report that IFAD and the government agree to adopt and implement within a specific time frame.

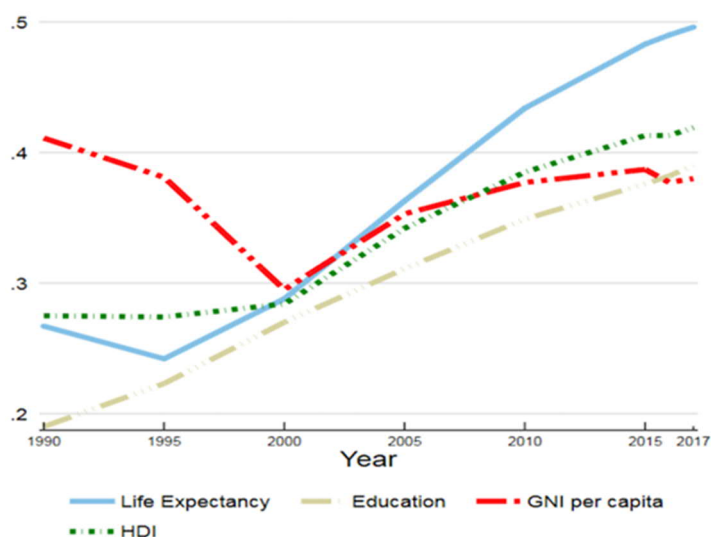
Supplementary tables and figures for sections II, III and IV

Figure A1
Trends in rice yields, 2007-2017



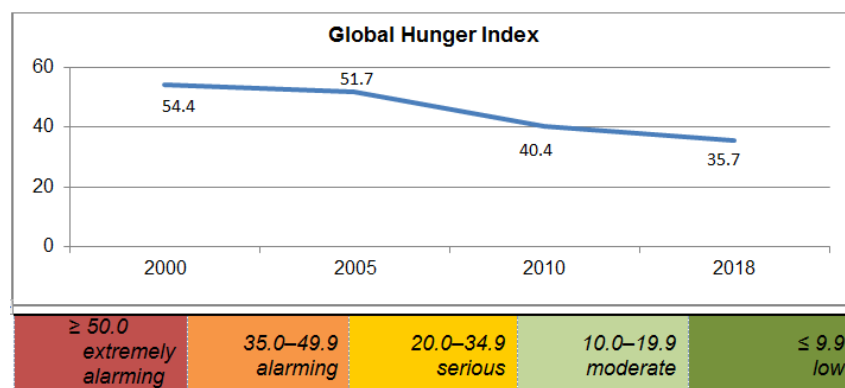
Source: FAOSTAT, 2018.

Figure A2
Trends in Sierra Leone's HDI component indicators, 1990-2017



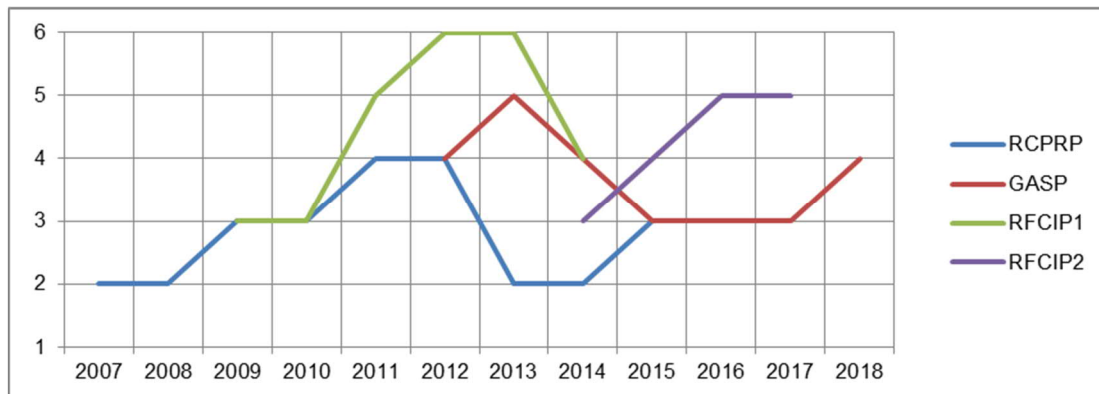
Source: UNDP, 2018.

Figure A3
Trend in Global Hunger Index scores for Sierra Leone, 2000-2018



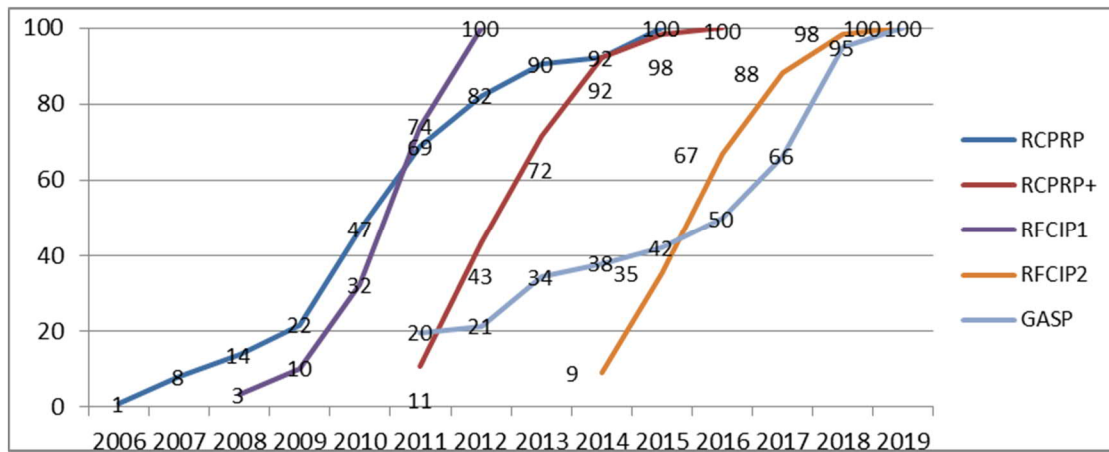
Source: Global Hunger Index, 2018.

Figure A4
Rating (1-6) on disbursement performance*



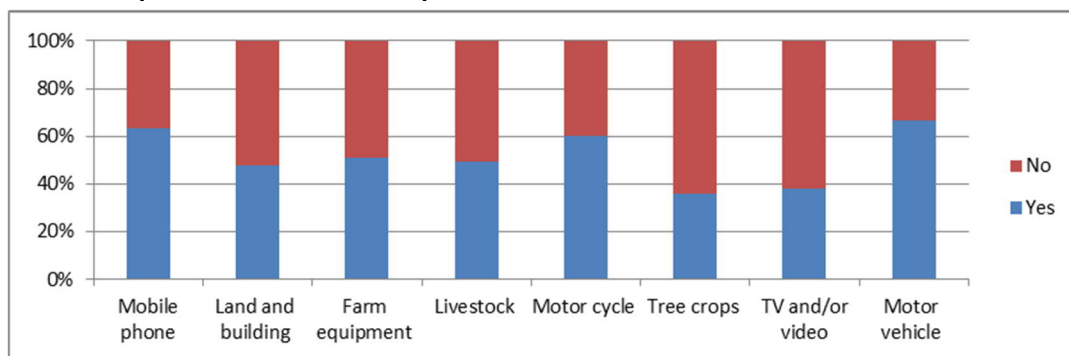
Source: IFAD, Project Status Report Database, 2018. *AVDP has not yet started disbursement.

Figure A5
Disbursement rates for individual IFAD loans, 2006-2019



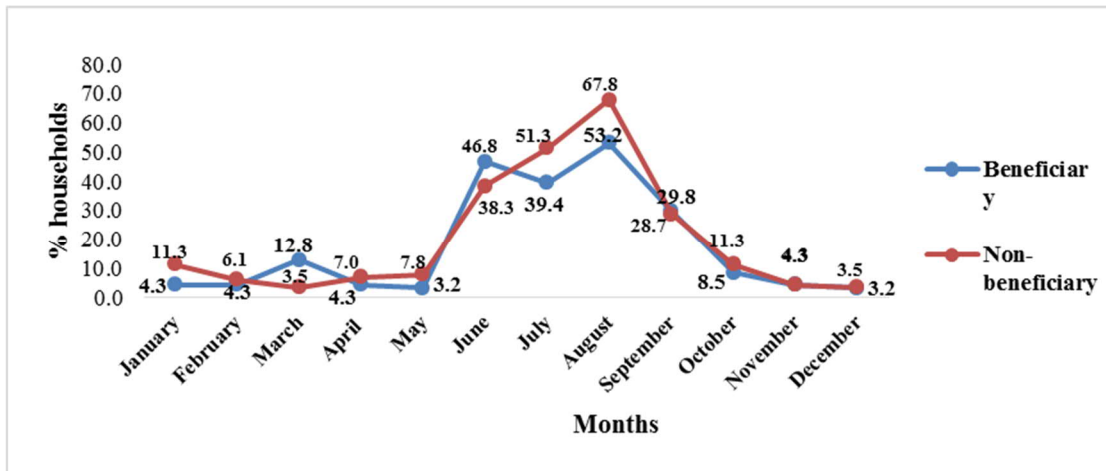
Source: IFAD Flexcube, 2018.

Figure A6
Assets acquired with loans or loan proceeds from FSAs/CBs



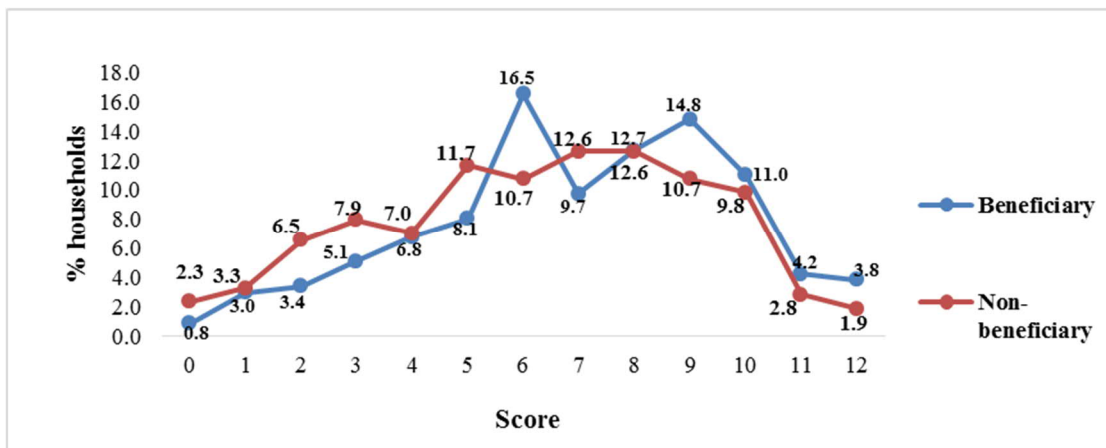
Source: RFCIP rapid impact assessment.

Figure A7
Households reporting an inadequate food supply (RFCIP-II)



Source: RFCIP-II annual outcome survey, 2019.

Figure A8
Household dietary diversity score (RFCIP-II)



Source: RFCIP-II annual outcome survey, 2019.

Table A1
Post-2010 KM activities across the programme

<i>Type of KM activity</i>	<i>KM activities carried out</i>
Programme implementation	
Capacity development workshops and seminars	Locally the KM unit has organized experience capitalization ¹ workshops with staff of the NPCU, SCP-GAFSP, Apex Bank and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to develop knowledge products on the basis of the RCPRP, RFCIP and SCP-GAFSP. Training has been provided to a community gender journalist on information gathering, processing and sharing at the community level. Several project staff members have also attended capacity-building workshops in other countries.
Yearly consultative district meetings with all stakeholders	These consultative meetings are regularly held in various components of the projects at the district level.
Joint planning workshops with stakeholders	For the preparation of the annual workplan and budget (AWP/B), project staff and Apex Bank staff meet twice annually in a retreat. The presentation of the AWP/B to the National Steering Committee (NSC) is also a major annual stakeholder activity. The objective is to allow NSC members to contribute to the planning and approval of AWP/Bs. The M&E/KM Unit meets occasionally with the planning division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to finalize workplans and budgets for each project. Quarterly project review meetings are held by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to ensure synergy in donor operations and alignment of project activities with the Ministry's objectives.
Exchange visits to sister projects in the region and successful projects of other donors	In 2012 the programme coordinator and the communication officer participated in an experience/knowledge-sharing visit to El Salvador and Guatemala. Teams working in the areas of tree crops, roads and procurement have all been to Liberia to provide support to the Liberian team. The Liberian team has also been to Sierra Leone on several occasions to interact and exchange views on field operations in the areas of tree crops, rural finance, roads, etc. A learning route on gender was organized in Kenema, Eastern Province, in 2012. Several project staff from WCA attended the learning route.
Other	Since 2010, the projects have been producing newsletters, brochures and other materials on project activities. The teams also host weekly radio discussion panels in which specialists, farmers and community gender journalists provide information on the projects' implementation status and beneficiaries talk about their experiences. Video documentaries, jingles and songs are also developed and aired on national radio and television channels. Selected journalists were taken on a tour of project communities to interview people and develop first-hand news updates on project accomplishments. Knowledge products have been prepared that deal with community banks, tree crops, IVSs, etc.
Programme development work	
Portfolio reviews	These reviews, during which project teams provide information on key portfolio performance indicators, are normally conducted during IFAD supervision missions.
Policy dialogue	

¹ Experience capitalization is an approach designed to encourage stakeholders to systematically analyse and codify their experiences with implementation and to identify lessons that can be learned. It is promoted by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation, which benefited from an IFAD regional grant (The Story Behind the Numbers - Knowledge from the Field) between 2015 and 2019.

<i>Type of KM activity</i>	<i>KM activities carried out</i>
	Done on an ad hoc basis.
Other	<p>RCPRP feeder road work played a part in the establishment of the Road Maintenance Fund Administration (RMFA). In addition, the project-supported decentralization forum changed the payment of salaries to district council staff from a quarterly to a monthly schedule.</p> <p>The RCPRP supported the preparation of a policy document on rice production and importation. This document was submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and to the Bank of Sierra Leone. However, the Government has still not taken action on the policy options proposed in the paper.</p> <p>The RCPRP has successfully supported farmers with production inputs based on a 40 per cent recovery system. This system has now been adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in all projects that it supervises.</p>

Source: Developed by the IOE evaluation team based on desk reviews and stakeholder interviews.

Evaluation framework

A. Lending portfolio – evaluation questions

<i>Evaluation criteria</i>	<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Indicators and markers¹</i>	<i>How they will be assessed</i>
Relevance of project designs	<p>1: Policy alignment</p> <p>1.1 How well did the programme design align with IFAD's and Sierra Leone's policies (on agriculture, decentralization, youth, gender, etc.) and strategies?</p> <p>1.2 Were the Government's priorities in relation to beneficiaries adequately reflected in the portfolio (e.g. rural finance, youth, persons with disabilities, women, local institutions, political structures)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which IFAD analysed projects and aligned them with national policies in design and strategy documents and incorporated new policies through supervision documents • Alignment of project goals and objectives with Sierra Leone's sectoral policies at design • Modification of project goals and objectives in line with contemporary changes in sectoral policies 	<p>Review of project performance evaluation (PPE), project design documents, working papers</p> <p>Policy documents (IFAD and government)</p> <p>Validation in the field</p>
	<p>2: Targeting</p> <p>2.1 Were the needs, constraints and opportunities of different target groups (men, women, youth and persons with disabilities) taken into account, especially in the context of fragility?</p> <p>2.2 Were there differentiated strategies for reaching them? Were these clear?</p> <p>2.3 Considering the livelihood strategies of the beneficiaries, did the portfolio miss out on certain key areas (e.g. livestock)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which the projects assessed needs and constraints by beneficiary type through commissioned studies, based on past experience, through participatory methods, etc. 	<p>Desk review</p> <p>Key informant interviews</p> <p>Focus group discussions</p>

¹ The list of indicators is comprehensive; the final selection will be made during the main mission.

<i>Evaluation criteria</i>	<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Indicators and markers¹</i>	<i>How they will be assessed</i>
	<p>3. Implementation set-up</p> <p>3.1 Were the implementation arrangements appropriate, given the government structure (decentralization)?</p> <p>3.2 Were the choice and range of partners included in project implementation and their capacities appropriate?</p> <p>3.3 Was the private sector sufficiently engaged (and how)?</p> <p>3.4 To what extent were participatory and bottom-up approaches integrated into project designs? Was what was expected of project beneficiaries made clear to them?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison of NPCU structure and functioning with decentralized processes • Analysis of funding contributions, experience, etc. • Investment from the private sector, extent of collaboration • Extent of involvement of beneficiaries (different types) in project activity formulation, implementation and monitoring 	<p>Design and supervision reports</p> <p>Interviews in the field</p>
	<p>4: Programme coherence</p> <p>4.1 How coherent was the project design strategy (logframe coherence, linkages between the components, financial allocations, management structures) in supporting the activities?</p> <p>4.2 How coherent was the choice of subsectors/themes in supporting the overall strategic (COSOP) goal?</p> <p>4.3 Did the portfolio evolve sufficiently and in a timely manner in response to major changes in the rural context, i.e. were interventions in line with the evolving context?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financing ratios of project components and of themes to strategy • Assessment of project logframes at design and subsequent changes and their alignment with the COSOP • Major changes in the political, social and/or economic environments and the suitability of adjusted activities, if modified (decentralization, Ebola virus disease outbreak, etc.). 	<p>Design and completion reports</p>
	<p>5. Miscellaneous</p> <p>5.1 Were project designs complex in terms of types and number of interventions? Were they overly ambitious, given the fragile context?</p> <p>5.2 Did projects capture lessons and experiences from their predecessors?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitability of the length of project duration (given its complexity) • Assessment of available human and institutional capacities in the country • Similar activities not repeated; activities done differently 	
	6: Thematic issues (relevance)		

<i>Evaluation criteria</i>	<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Indicators and markers¹</i>	<i>How they will be assessed</i>
	<p>Productive sector</p> <p>6.1 To what extent were production intervention(s) implementing specific sectoral policies and strategies and were there synergies or overlap with interventions of other development partners?</p> <p>6.2 To what extent were the production interventions relevant to the needs of the primary target group?</p> <p>6.3 To what extent and how well were the production activities connected with other project components, i.e. were there synergies?</p> <p>Were the choice and range of partners included in project implementation and their capacities appropriate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment of activities and intended outcomes with agricultural policy and national strategy (including choice of target commodities, inputs, etc.) 	<p>Assessment of design documents, interviews with relevant stakeholders</p> <p>Review of project documents</p> <p>Review of relevant national policies</p> <p>Analysis of survey results</p>
	<p>Agricultural marketing</p> <p>To what extent were production intervention(s) implementing specific national policies and strategies?</p> <p>Did the interventions increase the potential for better private sector involvement? Market-led development?</p> <p>How coherent was the design for marketing with interventions related to other actors/development partners?</p> <p>Was there a diagnostic of the value chain?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment of activities and intended outcomes with agricultural policy and national strategy (including in relation to cooperatives, private sector, roads, etc.) 	<p>Assessment of design documents, interviews with relevant stakeholders</p> <p>Review of project documents</p> <p>Review of relevant national policies</p> <p>Analysis of survey results</p>
	<p>Rural finance</p> <p>How well were projects aligned with IFAD's 2009 Rural Finance Policy and the respective national country policy/policies or strategies and regulatory frameworks?</p> <p>Were the interventions designed to promote a wide range of rural finance products and services for agriculture?</p> <p>What technical expertise was mobilized in the design and implementation of rural finance approaches and activities?</p> <p>How has the rural finance strategy evolved in the portfolio? What were key points in time when the application of certain approaches was interrupted and why?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of project elements against IFAD policy and national sectoral studies Measures of inclusivity 	<p>Review of IFAD policy documents, national strategies, project design documents</p>

<i>Evaluation criteria</i>	<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Indicators and markers¹</i>	<i>How they will be assessed</i>
	<p>Youth</p> <p>To what extent were intervention(s) implementing specific national policies and strategies?</p> <p>Were the needs, constraints and opportunities of youth in agriculture taken into account (e.g. through a needs assessment) and if so, how well?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of project elements against IFAD policy and national sectoral studies • Youth-specific interventions • Focus on short-term vs long-term benefits 	<p>Review of PPE (RCPRP) and design documents of other projects</p> <p>Review of government strategy documents on relevant topics, including youth (Youth Action Plan)</p>
	<p>Institutional context</p> <p>To what extent did the designs take into account the country's decentralized structures?</p> <p>Were the implementation arrangements appropriate and in line with the country's decentralization processes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of project elements against IFAD policy and national sectoral studies 	<p>Review of PPE (RCPRP), design documents of other projects</p> <p>Review of government strategy documents on relevant topics, including decentralization</p>
Effectiveness of projects	<p>Did the project produce results for the intended target group?</p> <p>Were outreach targets met? How effective were the targeting mechanisms used?</p> <p>Did exogenous changes (such as the Ebola outbreak, elections) affect achievements?</p> <p>For each thematic area, the following questions are to be answered:</p> <p>What were the main (intended and unintended) results that were achieved?</p> <p>Did the project produce results for the intended target group?</p> <p>What were the main factors affecting effectiveness?</p> <p>(Also refer to the CSPE theory of change)</p> <p>Thematic issues (effectiveness)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of results against targets 	<p>Review of PPE</p> <p>Project documents, progress reports, supervision reports, RIMS reports, key informal interviews, focus group discussions, impact assessment reports and field validation</p>
	<p>Productive sector</p> <p>Actual outreach against targets for all activities related to increasing production and productivity</p> <p>What were the reasons for high or low uptake of improved production practices?</p> <p>How effective were farmers' groups (production groups)? Why?</p> <p>How many women's groups were supported? How effective were they?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers trained in improved practices • Adoption rates • Quality of training provided • Extension services • Mentoring and refresher courses • Input availability • Proportion of farmers' groups still active • Proportion of produce sold by a farmer as part of a group and as an individual 	<p>Review of PPE (RCPRP), design and completion documents of other projects</p>

<i>Evaluation criteria</i>	<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Indicators and markers¹</i>	<i>How they will be assessed</i>
	<p>Agricultural marketing</p> <p>Were marketing links established by the projects effective in commercializing production (intermediaries, cooperatives, agribusinesses, etc.)?</p> <p>How effective were rehabilitated roads in linking beneficiaries to markets? Were there other positive and negative (spillover) effects?</p> <p>Did the projects help change the power relations that existed in the value chain (marketing) before project implementation? (bargaining power of farmers, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved and stabilized prices • Regularity of supply • Quality of training (business planning, market scouting, group formation, etc.) • Strength of linkages with cooperatives, agribusinesses, etc. • Savings in time and costs of transporting produce • Facilitation of connectivity with schools, clinics, RFIs, decentralized government offices (wards, councils), etc. • Prices received by farmers as compared to before project implementation • Terms of marketing with traders, buyers (including contract farming/outgrower schemes, etc.) 	<p>Review of PPE (RCPRP), design and completion documents of other projects</p>
	<p>Rural finance</p> <p>How effective were the financial products in supporting agriculture?</p> <p>How viable are the institutions set up or supported by the projects?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of loans for agricultural purposes (if available, breakdown by primary, processing and trading activities) • Frequency of repeat loans taken out by farmers • Proportion of loans to individuals, groups, SMEs • Analysis of results for rural finance indicators (profitability, operational self-sufficiency) 	<p>Project documents and ratings, interviews with relevant stakeholders, data from implementers and service providers</p> <p>Field assessment</p>
	<p>Youth</p> <p>Were youth-focused interventions effective in providing young people with meaningful remuneration?</p> <p>How effective were the interventions in mainstreaming youth in agriculture?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment provided by projects • Level of skills required for the tasks assigned under the projects (basic, moderate, advanced, etc.) • Youth centres assisting in providing employment/income thanks to improved facilities • Loans taken out by young people for agricultural purposes (by themselves or through youth centres) • Agriculture becomes the primary activity after project implementation 	<p>Review of PPE (RCPRP), design and completion documents of other projects.</p>

<i>Evaluation criteria</i>	<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Indicators and markers¹</i>	<i>How they will be assessed</i>
	<p>Institutional context</p> <p>How successful were institution-building efforts in setting up various forms of grass-roots/farmers' organizations?</p> <p>Which types of organizations worked better and under what conditions and which did not?</p> <p>How inclusive are they?</p> <p>Note any specific activities or implementation mechanisms aimed at including people living with disabilities and their outcomes and impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of results for institutional indicators 	As above
Efficiency of projects	<p>What were the main factors affecting efficiency in the closed projects?</p> <p>What are the trends in the ongoing projects?</p> <p>How did external factors (Ebola outbreak, elections) affect project efficiency?</p> <p>How competitive are salaries and top-up allowances (if possible)?</p> <p>What are the unit costs for different activities (infrastructure, rural finance)? Who are the service providers (local, national, international)? How are they contracted?</p> <p>What have the implications for efficiency been in the case of projects that operated in large geographic areas?</p> <p>What was the cost per beneficiary of the projects? What were the unit costs for some of the activities (infrastructure)? How did these unit costs compare with the benchmarks for the country?</p> <p>What was the economic rate of return (ERR) for the projects?</p> <p>What were the levels of cofinancing and what trends were seen in these levels?</p> <p>Rural finance</p> <p>Cost efficiency/cost-benefit/value for money</p>	<p>Analysis of project financial data and IOE evaluations for key efficiency indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness gap • Management costs • Levels of staffing • Disbursement rates • Cost/beneficiary • Unit costs (benchmarked against other projects and government unit costs) • Economic rate of return (ERR) • Compliance with loan agreements and loan conditions <p>Comparison with appropriate benchmarks</p>	<p>Desk review</p> <p>Financial data from projects</p> <p>Interviews with project finance officers where available</p> <p>Data analysis (including financial data)</p>

<i>Evaluation criteria</i>	<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Indicators and markers¹</i>	<i>How they will be assessed</i>
Rural poverty impact	<p>What have the impacts on rural poverty been?</p> <p>(The baseline context – civil war – and the continuing context of fragility are to be borne in mind)</p>		<p>Project documents and ratings, impact assessment reports, interviews with relevant stakeholders, data from implementers and service providers</p> <p>Field assessment/survey</p>
	Household income and assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in physical assets (farmland, water, etc.) • Changes in the composition and level of household income • Changes in financial assets and/or debts • Disaggregation of the above effects by gender and youth, if possible 	
	<p>Human and social capital and empowerment</p> <p>How participatory were the processes (in design, implementation and monitoring)? Did projects promote a greater involvement of communities in prioritizing their needs?</p> <p>What role have communities played in the operation and maintenance of infrastructure?</p> <p>To what extent did projects focus on the development of longer-term human and social capital as opposed to using a project-driven approach only?</p> <p>What was the level of maturity of beneficiary groups after project implementation in terms of their dependence on external partners for development?</p> <p>Have individual farmers trained in production techniques transmitted/transferred their skills to other members of their group?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers' associations, cooperatives, etc. • Enhanced knowledge (through training – FFS, business plans, etc.) • Access to financial services • Education levels and health status (improved by roads) • Social cohesion of rural communities • Conflict management • Communities able to take charge of development issues at their level 	
	Food security and agricultural productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of food • Nutrition status • Land productivity, return to labour 	

<i>Evaluation criteria</i>	<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Indicators and markers¹</i>	<i>How they will be assessed</i>
	<p>Institutions and policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have there been changes in the capacities of government departments (agriculture, etc.), NGOs, the private sector and national organizations (SLARI, the Meteorological Department, SLAR) involved in project implementation? • Have there been changes in the capacities of the decentralized organizations supported during project implementation? • To what extent did IFAD-supported interventions contribute to changes at the institutional and sectoral policy levels that benefit the rural poor? • To what extent and how did the projects change the service delivery and products of public institutions (decentralized offices, financial institutions, government institutions, etc.) for the rural poor? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness of capacity-building, training and facilities provided (usefulness, applicability) • Changes in laws, statutes, rules, regulations, procedures, national quality standards or norms • Increased and regular services provided to beneficiaries • Improved quality of service to beneficiaries • Greater involvement of beneficiaries in development plans 	
	<p>Thematic areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which thematic area(s) proved to have the greatest rural poverty impact? What were the pathways for success? (refer to the CSPE theory of change) • Which intervention approaches have been more successful in addressing rural poverty issues? 	<p>Analysis of the data and narrative for each thematic area</p>	
Sustainability of benefits	<p>Did project activities benefit from the engagement, participation and ownership of local communities, decentralized organizations and the rural poor and were the approaches that were used viable?</p>	<p>Extent to which IFAD activities are economically viable and sustainable since project closure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership of infrastructure (beneficiaries, wards/districts, other) • Percentage of beneficiaries in administrative positions • Source of financing and operation and maintenance (infrastructure and institutions) 	<p>Document review of supervision reports, project completion reports (PCRs) and IOE evaluations</p> <p>Key informant interviews (IFAD, district- and ward-level staff, selected institutions, other development partners)</p>
	<p>How sustainable are the various groups, associations and infrastructure (roads) set up by the projects?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued existence and effectiveness of groups after IFAD investments have been concluded 	

<i>Evaluation criteria</i>	<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Indicators and markers¹</i>	<i>How they will be assessed</i>
	<p>What external factors have affected sustainability (e.g. security, political interference)?</p> <p>Are there recurrent natural hazards that endanger sustainability?</p> <p>Have the projects facilitated the implementation of policies and legislation in such areas as access for the poor to natural resources, adaptation to climate change and the protection of biodiversity?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which external events have negatively impacted benefits of IFAD activities • Liquidation of institutions • Infrastructure in disuse • Incorporation of approaches, institutions and products into local and national policies 	
Thematic issues (sustainability)			
	<p>Productive sector</p> <p>Are FBOs expected to continue to apply improved technology and inputs (seeds, fertilizers) and practices?</p> <p>Availability of extension services</p> <p>Are beneficiary organizations/FBOs still functioning as groups? Why (positive/negative factors)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profitability from improved practices • Ease of access (availability and funds) to inputs • Regular/periodic updating of skills • Policies (on imports, etc.) • Staff and budget for extension services (gaps) • Support from other actors in the field, merged into bigger umbrellas, etc. • Leadership quality, conflict, lack of clarity of role of group, etc. 	
	<p>Agricultural marketing</p> <p>How sustainable are the project-supported marketing cooperatives?</p> <p>To what extent has market power shifted in favour of cooperatives after they received project support (better negotiating capacity with private buyers)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of profits and working capital • Access to finance (loans for expansion) • Ability to link with private sector (tap new buyers) • Strength of linkages with FBOs (regular supply of produce) • Price stabilization • Competition from imports • Level of continuing human capacity (marketing skills, business planning, managerial capacity, etc.) and cohesion • Support from the apex body • Extent to which downstream activities are controlled by cooperatives (processing, marketing and distribution) 	

<i>Evaluation criteria</i>	<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Indicators and markers¹</i>	<i>How they will be assessed</i>
	<p>Rural finance</p> <p>How sustainable were the financial institutions supported by IFAD (at the micro, meso and macro levels)? What factors have enabled or hindered sustainability at the different levels?</p> <p>What approaches have continued to be applied after project closure and has there been a learning process around successes and failures?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial health and independence of institutions 	
	<p>Youth</p> <p>To what extent have youth been able to use the skills and experience acquired under the projects outside the scope of those projects?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional stream of income Diversified sources of income Ability to obtain loans/grants (on the basis of business plans) 	
	<p>Institutional context</p> <p>What level of government support has been provided for decentralized structures and government institutions?</p> <p>How much autonomy do decentralized structures and government institutions have?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level and regularity of budget allocations provided by the central government (financial health) Staff levels and skills Decentralization of decision-making Ownership of facilities and institutional processes 	
Gender equality and women's empowerment	<p>To what extent did the projects overcome the limitations on women's participation in project activities? Are there any good practices that could inform future projects in this regard?</p> <p>What evidence is there of a practical understanding of gender and youth issues in different geographical areas, different ethnic groups and different subsectors?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women and youth in leadership positions of rural institutions 	<p>Desk review, sex-differentiated analysis of beneficiary data, project documentation</p> <p>Project visits and stakeholder interviews (project management, service providers, women)</p>

<i>Evaluation criteria</i>	<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Indicators and markers¹</i>	<i>How they will be assessed</i>
	What were the projects' achievements in terms of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and which mechanisms and interventions were most effective in supporting women?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments of whether there have been changes in: • Women's and young people's access to resources, assets and services • Women's and young people's ability to influence decision-making • Workload distribution among household members • Women's health, skills, incomes and nutritional levels • Intra-household gender relations and gender relations within groups and communities in the project area 	<p>Contextual analysis: documented practices in similar projects</p> <p>Key informant interviews (IFAD, local government and regional-level staff, former project staff, selected cooperatives and other groups)</p> <p>Focus group discussions (selected groups of beneficiaries)</p>
	<p>What strategies have the projects used to promote gender equality and women's empowerment?</p> <p>To what extent have the projects reaffirmed or transformed existing values and norms and/or ascribed roles and power relations with regard to gender?</p> <p>Have the project implementation structures provided support for the effective implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment goals?</p>		<p>Review of PPE, design, mid-term reviews (MTRs), PCRs</p>
	To what extent did the projects define and monitor sex-disaggregated results (at the COSOP and project levels) to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment objectives were being met?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and quality of sex- and youth-disaggregated M&E indicators • Gender specialists in the PMU, local government • Evidence of how women and men have benefitted from project activities, in particular regarding: • Access to resources, assets and services • Changes in women's ability to influence decision-making at home and in groups • Workload levels and their distribution among household members • Health, skills and nutritional levels • Changes in income and in control over that income 	<p>Review of PPE, COSOPS, project logframes, MTRs, PCRs</p>

<i>Evaluation criteria</i>	<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Indicators and markers¹</i>	<i>How they will be assessed</i>
	Did the projects monitor the use of resources on a disaggregated basis with a view to investing in activities promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and, if so, how did their performances compare to each other?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which projects provided adequate resources to promote activities that contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment • Ratio of funding for gender equality and women's empowerment/total project costs 	Review of PPE, project financial data
Innovation	<p>What evidence is there that practices introduced by the programme were innovative?</p> <p>To what extent (and how) did the grants contribute to innovations in the loan programme?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of similar practices at the ward, chiefdom, regional or country level 	<p>Project documents and selected development partner projects</p> <p>Key informant interviews (IFAD, local and regional-level staff, former project staff, selected groups)</p> <p>Focus group discussions (selected groups of beneficiaries)</p> <p>IFAD's Innovation Policy</p>
	What are the characteristics of the innovations that have been promoted and are they consistent with IFAD's definition of innovation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation of innovation's characteristics and their alignment with IFAD's definition of innovation 	
Scaling up	<p>What evidence is there that practices introduced by the programme have been scaled up?</p> <p>Which partners have been instrumental in scaling up innovations from loans and grants?</p> <p>What mechanisms have been used for scaling up? Have they originated from the government (at different levels), private sector/NGOs or donors?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which the government (at the local and national levels) and other donor partners have incorporated IFAD practices into their own projects and strategies • Government cofinancing ratio for similar practices/projects • Financing of similar practices/projects by other partners and organizations • Council/regional government/national policies using IFAD-pioneered activities/investments • Donors using IFAD-pioneered activities/investments 	<p>Project documents and selected development partner projects</p> <p>Key informant interviews (IFAD, local and regional-level staff, former project staff, selected groups)</p> <p>Focus group discussions (selected groups of beneficiaries)</p> <p>IFAD's operational framework for scaling up</p> <p>Review of the PPE</p>

<i>Evaluation criteria</i>	<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Indicators and markers¹</i>	<i>How they will be assessed</i>
Environment and natural resource management	<p>How was environmental and natural resource management addressed under the portfolio within the context, for example, of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land management • Infrastructure development • Community participation • Water availability/scarcity <p>Did the projects help local communities increase/improve their access to natural resources (in general and specifically for the poor)?</p> <p>Has the degree of environmental vulnerability changed (e.g. climate change effects, potential natural disasters)?</p> <p>Have project activities had any negative effects on the environment or the natural resource base?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deforestation and erosion rates • Improved management of resources (swamps, forests, water) • Operation and maintenance of infrastructure and management mechanisms 	<p>Review of PPE, design, MTR, PCR</p> <p>Field visits and direct observation</p> <p>Interviews with stakeholders (beneficiary groups, local governments, ministries, other development partners with projects in area)</p>
Adaptation to climate change	<p>To what extent has climate change been addressed in the project designs?</p> <p>Have projects included specific adaptation and mitigation activities and, if so, what effects have they had on the livelihoods of the poor?</p> <p>Have adequate funds been allocated for measures to mitigate the climate-change-related risks identified in the risk analysis?</p> <p>Have any disaster preparedness measures been put in place (e.g. agro-meteorological warning systems, drought and flooding contingency plans, weather-indexed risk insurance)?</p> <p>How has adaptation to climate change been addressed under the portfolio by the adoption, for example, of climate-smart practices or disaster preparedness measures?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which the introduction and implementation of climate change adaptation measures have been provided for in the portfolio • Technology adoption rate 	<p>Review of PPE, design, MTR, PCR</p> <p>Field visits and direct observation</p> <p>Interviews with stakeholders (beneficiary groups, local governments, ministries)</p>

<i>Evaluation criteria</i>	<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Indicators and markers¹</i>	<i>How they will be assessed</i>
IFAD performance	How has IFAD performed as a partner: (a) at the project level; and (b) with regard to the overall country programme's management and related processes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key questions and indicators include: • An appropriate administrative budget to ensure proper supervision and implementation support • Were the support, time allowance and resources for non-lending activities adequate? • Did IFAD exercise its developmental and fiduciary responsibilities properly? • What was IFAD's role in generating innovative solutions, scaling up initiatives and identifying new funding sources? • The quality of the COSOP results management framework, project status reports, aggregated RIMS reports, country programme sheets, annual COSOP reports and Management actions • Number and length of supervision missions • Relevance of expertise mobilized in supervision missions • Use of no objection clauses • Adoption and timeliness of supervision mission recommendations 	<p>Supervision reports</p> <p>Annual progress reports</p> <p>Stakeholder interviews</p> <p>Focus group discussions</p>

<i>Evaluation criteria</i>	<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Indicators and markers¹</i>	<i>How they will be assessed</i>
Government performance	How did the Government perform as a partner: (a) at the project level; and (b) with regard to the overall country programme's management and related processes?	<p>Key questions and indicators include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did government partners provide the agreed counterpart resources (funds and staffing) in a timely manner? • Were programme management units set up and properly staffed? • Did the flow of funds and procurement procedures ensure timely implementation? • Were the programme coordination mechanisms functional and effective? • What mechanisms were in place to ensure effective coordination and communication between relevant actors working in the same sector? • Did the government fulfil all its fiduciary obligations as agreed? Were audit reports prepared and submitted as needed? • Did the government put into place any mechanisms for scaling up innovative practices? 	<p>Supervision reports</p> <p>Annual progress reports</p> <p>ICO capacity assessment</p> <p>Stakeholder interviews</p>
	Were the M&E systems set up properly and did they provide timely and accurate information?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which M&E systems were effective in providing management with appropriate, high-quality data for use in maintaining proper M&E and management functions • Quality and appropriateness of indicators • Performance of key functions (baseline, implementation surveys, impact assessments) in a timely and effective manner 	<p>Review of M&E data, supervision missions, MTR, IOE evaluations</p> <p>Key stakeholder interviews (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, M&E staff, project managers)</p>

Source: CSPE desk review and preliminary mission.

B. Non-lending portfolio – evaluation questions

Evaluation questions	Indicators/markers	How questions will be assessed
Relevance of non-lending activities:		
<p>Are policy dialogue, partnership-building and knowledge management objectives clearly outlined in the COSOPs? Are they relevant to the IFAD programme as a whole? How relevant were the activities that were not foreseen?</p> <p>How well have grants been aligned with the COSOP objectives and focus (rural finance, decentralization, capacity-building, etc.)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which non-lending activities have reasonably been incorporated into the COSOP • Non-lending activities planned for the duration of the COSOP • Compatibility of activities with projects and IFAD/government policies 	<p>Review of grant portfolio, (selected) grant documents, interviews with grant managers and grantees, COSOP and country strategy note documents, COSOP review data, in-country interviews with key stakeholders (government, development partners, NGOs, private sector)</p> <p>ICO on selected issues (ICO capacity, partnerships)</p>
<p>Have resources been earmarked for non-lending activities and explicitly outlined in the COSOPs (e.g. through grants or the administrative budget)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree to which grants and other resources (e.g. funding, time) have been programmed and made available for the realistic implementation of non-lending activities • Grant funding for non-lending activities • Planned yearly activities 	
<p>How have the work and roles of other partners been taken into account in selecting the focus of non-lending activities (e.g. FAO, WFP, World Bank)?</p> <p>How coherent has the selection of grants and grantees been in the context of the COSOPs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which analysis and dialogue with partners have been sufficient and sound enough to inform non-lending activities • Analysis and studies used to establish strategic goals • IFAD's participation in donor-coordinated studies • Number of days spent working with other donor partners 	
<p>Have non-lending activities contributed to a coherent country programme strategy?</p> <p>How have lending and non-lending activities been linked? How have the grants contributed to the lending portfolio in terms of innovations and other aspects? To what extent have non-lending activities been embedded into the loan portfolio (e.g. through the use of loan-component grants for policy engagement)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which non-lending activities have mutually reinforced intended outcomes of the overall country strategy • Mix and complementarity of lending/non-lending activities 	

Evaluation questions	Indicators/markers	How questions will be assessed
<p>Policy engagement:</p> <p>Were the intended focuses included in the COSOPs realistic?</p> <p>What has been achieved, especially in the areas of rural finance, rural infrastructure and youth?</p> <p>How has IFAD refined its approach to policy engagement in Sierra Leone over the span of the two COSOPs?</p> <p>How were the grants expected to support policy engagement? Were the grants' expected outputs/contributions realistic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which policy engagement has been based on a sound analysis of government capacity and engagement and extent to which it has been continuously updated on that basis • Explicit strategy on policy engagement in the COSOP • Consistent follow-up in supervision • Documentation of results • Evidence of inputs and results in areas of strategic focus (land registration, rural finance) • Number and quality of policies adopted and/or of policy tools implemented in the portfolio 	
<p>Partnership-building:</p> <p>How appropriate was the choice of partners?</p> <p>How focused and selective were partnerships?</p> <p>How have partnerships with public and private sector organizations been chosen and to what effect?</p> <p>How important have grants been in building strategic partnerships?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitability of partners to achieve strategic goals • Extent to which financial partners contributed to the achievement of long-term goals and the leveraging of resources • Methods used to achieve partnerships • Number, diversity and complementarity of: cofinancing partnerships; implementation partners; dialogue partners • Appropriateness and complementarity of planned and implemented activities 	
<p>Knowledge management:</p> <p>Are KM activities outlined in the COSOPs and/or is there a specific KM strategy?</p> <p>Are the available resources (including staff resources) appropriate? Was the opening of the ICO helpful in this regard?</p> <p>What have the significance and role of grants been in KM?</p> <p>What role has the regional division played in the support of KM activities in Sierra Leone and at what levels (national, regional)?</p> <p>To what extent have lessons been learned from success stories and failures in IFAD operations?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which KM featured in and reinforced lending and non-lending activities • Extent to which IFAD's experience in rural finance has been strategically mobilized • WCA KM strategy implemented in Sierra Leone • Regional exchanges • Focus of supervision missions on KM 	SM documents

Evaluation questions	Indicators/markers	How questions will be assessed
<p>Grants portfolio:</p> <p>To what extent did the grants theme address the strategic priorities of the COSOPs and the Government of Sierra Leone?</p> <p>How relevant and coherent was the selection of grantees?</p> <p>How relevant and coherent was the mix of different grant instruments?</p>		
<p>Effectiveness of non-lending activities:</p>		
<p>To what extent and in what way did the non-lending activities achieve the stated objectives? Could the same objectives have been achieved in a more cost-effective way?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness and efficiency of non-lending activities in achieving COSOP goals • Results documented for other non-lending activities • Contribution to projects 	
<p>Knowledge management:</p> <p>To what extent did lessons from earlier projects and grants inform new project designs?</p> <p>What KM results have been documented?</p> <p>Did having a single NPCU contribute to KM?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which IFAD completion reports, KM products and IOE evaluations informed new projects • Practical experiences documented and disseminated (nationally, regionally) • Activities (number and type) • Interaction between WCA and the country • Incorporation of learning into the country strategy note • 	
<p>Policy engagement:</p> <p>To what extent did IFAD attempt to influence policy-level issues or regulatory frameworks, including those relating to rural finance? Are there any lessons learned that should be applied in the upcoming strategy?</p> <p>How effective was policy engagement around the key issues identified in the COSOPs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree to which IFAD used in-house knowledge and resources to engage and inform government policy • Expertise in supervision • Engagement through supervision and KM events 	

Evaluation questions	Indicators/markers	How questions will be assessed
<p>Partnership-building: How effective were partnership types (knowledge and learning, cofinancing, coordination)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cofinancing increases outreach and impact • Partnership types • Quality of partnerships 	
<p>Grants: What specific contributions did grants make to lending operations and non-lending activities? To what extent have new technologies developed with grant support been disseminated in lending operations? What tangible benefits can be attributed to innovations generated through grants?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which grant products were incorporated into project design and supervision and whom they benefitted • Inclusion of grant-funded practices and technologies in projects 	
<p>To what extent did the non-lending activities contribute to the replication and/or scaling up of innovations promoted by IFAD?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which the government and partners learned from IFAD processes 	
Strategic and cross-cutting issues (non-lending activities)		
<p>Engagement (policy engagement) What levels of engagement has IFAD been able to maintain on policy-related issues? How did IFAD and other development partners contribute to the drafting and implementation of national agricultural strategies over the evaluation period?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree to which IFAD was present and contributed to policy processes • Supervision expertise • Interaction with government and policymakers through supervision 	<p>Review of non-lending activities through: Review of grants portfolio (Selected) grants documents Interviews with grant managers and grantees COSOP documents In-country interviews with key stakeholders (government, development partners, NGOs, private sector) Focus group discussions</p>

Source: CSPE desk review and preliminary mission.

C. Strategic (COSOP) level – evaluation questions

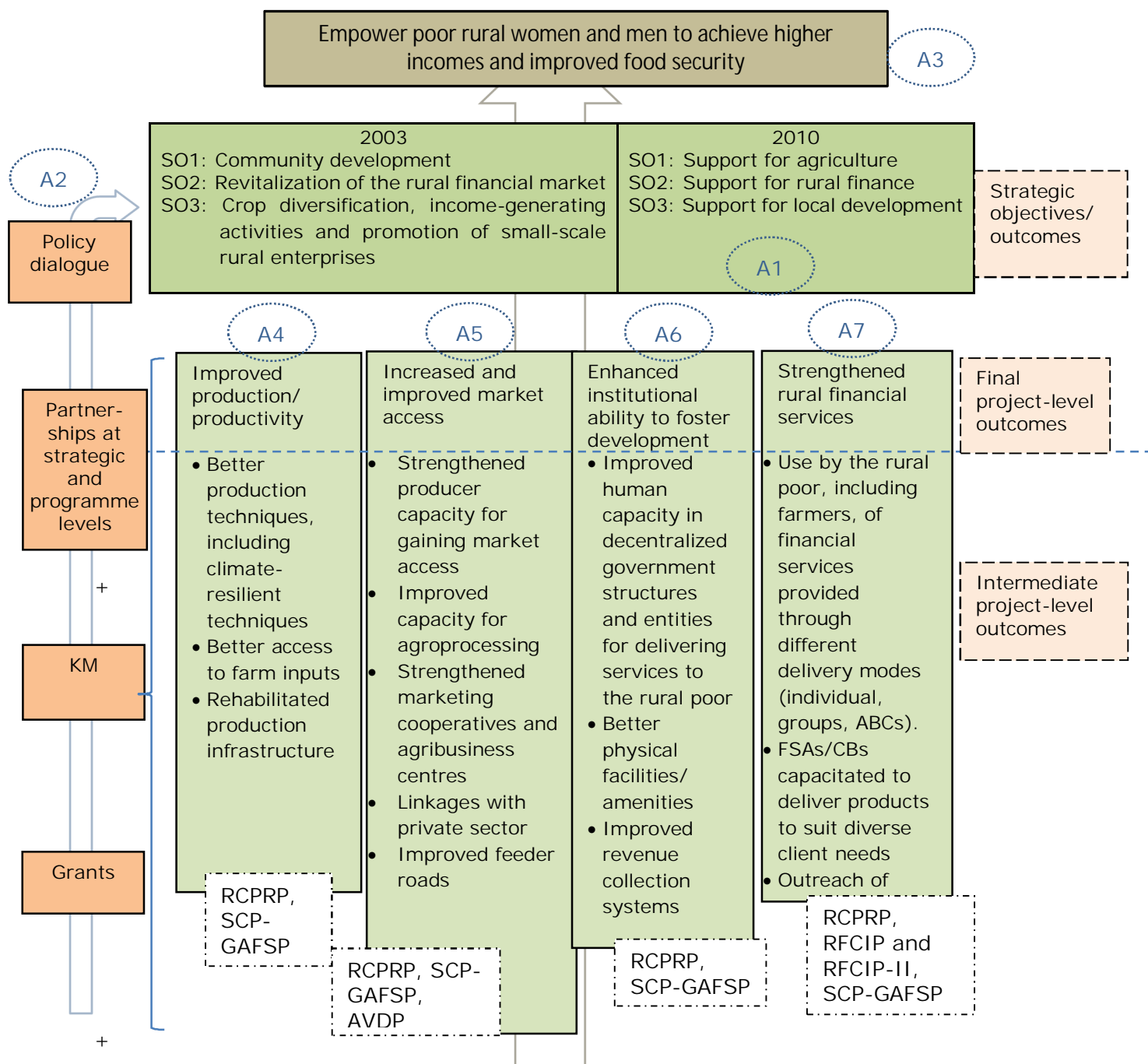
<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Indicators/markers</i>	<i>How questions will be assessed</i>
Relevance of the country programme strategy		
Alignment of strategic objectives:	Relevance of objectives	COSOP documents review
Were the strategic objectives identified in the COSOPs (rural finance, agricultural rehabilitation and support for decentralization) aligned with the government's strategies and policies and consistent with the overarching objectives of IFAD's corporate strategies and policies?	Relevance of key COSOP themes	Focus group discussions (key stakeholders and partners)
Strategic coherence:		
Have the COSOPs constituted a coherent programme since 2003 and, if so, how?		COSOP documents review
Were the most appropriate strategy elements and subsectors (rural finance, feeder roads, etc.) chosen based on a robust analysis?		Focus group discussions (key stakeholders and partners)
Were the two strategies informed by relevant experiences and lessons learned in the country since 1979?		Stakeholder survey (web survey)
IFAD's role and positioning:		
Do the strategies reflect IFAD's comparative advantage and core competencies (decentralized project units, working at the village level, etc.) ?		COSOP documents review
To what extent did partnerships with other bilateral and multilateral donors (FAO, World Bank, African Development Bank) help to strengthen IFAD's role and position?		Focus group discussions (key stakeholders and partners)
To what extent and how has IFAD been able to maintain appropriate levels of engagement with a country presence?		
How did IFAD's strategy keep up with changes in the context (decentralization, the Ebola outbreak, etc.)?		
Strategic issues – COSOP relevance		
Engagement:		
How have partnerships with organizations been chosen and to what effect?		COSOP documents review
How important were partnerships with other development partners (in particular the World Bank, FAO and WFP) in increasing outreach and impact on the ground?		Desk review of project design, supervision, IOE evaluations, relevant policies
To what extent has IFAD been coordinating its approach with other key development partners in the sector, e.g. through links with institutional and policy frameworks supported by others? Links with the private sector? How attractive is IFAD as a partner?		Interviews with key stakeholders (project managers, implementing partners, IFAD staff)

Evaluation questions	Indicators/markers	How questions will be assessed
<p>Context – risk management:</p> <p>How well have risks been understood and managed (e.g. governance, social and political conflicts) ?</p> <p>Have these risks been incorporated into IFAD strategies?</p> <p>Were any risk assessments or mitigation measures provided for at design for dealing with such circumstances?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree to which risks were anticipated, identified and mitigated at the design and supervision stages by IFAD and through policy engagement • Risks identified at design • Mitigation strategies incorporated at design • Problems identified in the course of supervision • Problems solved as identified in the course of supervision 	<p>Desk review of project design, supervision documents, IOE evaluations, relevant policies</p>
Effectiveness of the country programme strategy:	<p>Results supported by evidence relating to the theory of change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results according to key themes • Results from lending and non-lending activities mapped against the theory of change 	
To what extent were the COSOPs' main strategic objectives achieved?		COSOP documents review
To what extent can the theory of change underlying the COSOPs be confirmed?		IOE evaluations review
What unexpected results have emerged and how have they been achieved?		<p>Documented programme results</p> <p>IOE evaluations review</p>
What changes in the context have influenced the achievement of strategic objectives (changing focus on gender equity, private sector involvement, etc.)?		<p>COSOP documents review</p> <p>IOE evaluations review</p>
Were the COSOPs properly adjusted to reflect changes in the context?		<p>Focus group discussions (government partners)</p> <p>Stakeholder survey</p>
What are the documented results of capacity development efforts and how accurate and plausible are those data?		Review of M&E data and IOE evaluations
What are the aggregated results of capacity development efforts and of IFAD-supported lending and non-lending activities?		Meetings with M&E officers
To what extent did IFAD support transformative change processes, e.g. in the areas of gender and youth?		

Evaluation questions	Indicators/markers	How questions will be assessed
What contribution was made by the IFAD-funded activities?		COSOP documents review
To what extent did the grants help to achieve the COSOP objectives?		IOE evaluations review
What were the main changes and outcomes in which IFAD's contribution made a difference?		Focus group discussions
More specifically, what was the particular value added of IFAD's contribution? How can this be verified (e.g. through comparisons with similar projects supported by the government or other development partners).		Stakeholder feedback Documented results
Risk management:		
What were the factors underpinning the performance of activities in the portfolio related to different national frameworks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which supervision dealt with the mitigation of risks 	Reviewing IOE evaluations to understand the performance factors and mechanisms used for service delivery
What risks were identified in the portfolio (social and political conflicts, governance, and corruption)? How were they addressed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and type of activities per framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review of national policies, IOE evaluations and project documents (MTR, supervision reports, PCR)
Did IFAD country management and government take appropriate measures to mitigate risks related to conflicts and crises?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achievement against target per activity Risk assessments and mitigation measures designed and implemented 	Interviews with PMU staff
How well were the risks affecting programme performance analysed and managed under the COSOPs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which IFAD set up measures to minimize the possible disruption of activities Existence and quality of project exit strategies 	Desk review of supervision documents, PCRs, IOE evaluations
		Key informant interviews (beneficiaries, regional and municipal-level staff, selected institutions, other development partners)
		Field visits and direct observation
		COSOP documents review
		IOE evaluations review

Source: CSPE desk review and preliminary mission.

Theory of change of the Sierra Leone CSPE



- A1. The strategic objectives are temporally relevant to the country context and government priorities.
- A2. The government has the required capacity to implement relevant policy and development projects.
- A3. Improvements in household income and expenditure are not undermined by significant shocks.
- A4. Smallholders have adopted new production techniques and are able to access markets (affordable inputs, remunerative output prices).
- A5. Producers are able to supply the required quality and quantity of their products; feeder roads are being maintained; trade policy is favourable for producers.
- A6. Decentralized entities are given the desired responsibilities and resources.
- A7. There is a demand for financial products; loan funds are wisely invested by clients; FSAs and CBs are viable; government policy and interventions are conducive to rural finance.

Overview of portfolio lending activities

Table 1
Activities covered in the evaluated projects

Theme	Activities	RCPRP (design)	RCPRP (PCR)	SCP-GAFSP (design/MTR)	AVDP (design)	RFCIP (PCR)	RFCIP-II (MTR)
Improved production practices and/or technologies	Restore capital lost or foregone at the farming household level (tools, poultry, small ruminants, small-scale processing equipment and services that could improve productivity)	X	X				
	Inland valley swamp (IVS) rehabilitation	X ¹	X ²	X	X		
	IVS associations (IVSAs), registered and trained in IVS management + GPS surveillance	-	X				
	Planting and support for tree crop production and productivity (mainly cocoa, coffee and oil palm) and/or vegetable crop beds on the swamp peripheries	-	X ³	X ⁴	X ⁵		
	Rehabilitation of Pendembu clonal gardens for increased tree crop seedling production	-	X				
	Small-scale irrigation infrastructure development	X	X ⁶	X	in PDR, not PR		
	Land tenure agreements concluded and signed between landowners and sharecroppers	-	X				
	Recruitment and implementation support for agriculture engineering			X			
	Intercropping (plantains, cassava, timber trees)	-	X ⁷		X		
	Double/triple cropping of rice	-	X		X		
	Fertilizer and seeds for farmers	X ⁸	X ⁹	X	X ¹⁰		

¹ Clearing of weeds and bushes grown on abandoned IVSs and some repairs to small concrete structures and sluice gates + the implementation of new IVS schemes.

² Rehabilitation work was done with development loans (for tools and labour) that were 60 per cent subsidized.

³ Rehabilitation of 4,000 ha of cocoa, coffee and oil palm, but rehabilitation of coffee fields was dropped when market prices fell.

⁴ A feasibility study is being conducted for other potential tree crops (cashews, citrus fruits, banana, plantains and bamboo) – MTR.

⁵ Cocoa and oil palm only.

⁶ Integrated water and natural resource management: (i) four unplanned earth dams (replaced the outputs for innovative irrigation systems and improvement of drainage systems in sites where climate-related risk levels are high); (ii) training sessions through village development committees; (iii) training sessions in sustainable land and water management; (iv) rainwater-harvesting facilities installed (20 of 100) but this work was discontinued due to underperforming technology. The funds were redirected to: (i) a water-harvesting partnership with Njala University, which also set up planned micro-catchment sites; (ii) greenhouses; and (iii) open fields with hand-dug wells.

⁷ Farmers sensitized on intercropping.

⁸ Only seeds.

⁹ Access to rice and vegetable seeds and to subsidized fertilizer was provided through seasonal loans to IVSAs.

¹⁰ Provision of climate-resilient hybrid cocoa seeds (SLARI) and procurement of improved Tenera variety oil palm seeds (private sector).

Theme	Activities	RCPRP (design)	RCPRP (PCR)	SCP-GAFSP (design/MTR)	AVDP (design)	RFCIP (PCR)	RFCIP-II (MTR)
Improved production practices and/or technologies (CTD)	Environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient technologies and production practices	-	X ¹¹	... ¹²	X		
	Capacity-building and awareness-raising of climate change at the local level	-	X ¹³				
	Technical assistance and training for farmers	X	X (also FFS)	through FFS	through FFS		
	Support for the establishment of community nurseries	-	X		X		
	Formation of FFSs, FBOs and ABCs + capacity-building according to needs	X ¹⁴	X	X	X		
	Youth contractors engaged for construction/rehabilitation of irrigation works, IVS (+trees), infrastructure, warehouses	X ¹⁵	X	X	X ¹⁶		
	Creation of employment for youth workers in the RFIs, youth centres, ward offices					X	
	Youth centres constructed	-	X ¹⁷			X	
	Young people supported in obtaining land leases	-	X				
Youth	Youths trained in small enterprise management	-	X				
	Persons with disabilities trained in income-generating activities, group formation and management	-	X				
	Training for women and youth as skilled workers (blacksmiths, ¹⁸ carpenters, soap makers, etc.), providing services and adding value to agricultural products	X	X				

¹¹ Part of the GEF-funded project "Integrating Adaptation to Climate Change into Agricultural Production and Food Security (IACCAPFS)", which is aimed at reducing the impact of climate change on vulnerable rural communities and on natural resources critical for sustaining agricultural production and increasing food security. Activities dealt with cropping models, climate-resilient rice varieties, agricultural equipment, a participatory vulnerability mapping exercise, training extension workers, local study tours and FFS training sessions. Outputs that were not implemented: (i) the development of user-friendly tools to disseminate agro-meteorological data; and (ii) the integration of such data into decision-making at the community level.

¹² The SCP-GAFSP design speaks discusses opportunities for introducing practices that enhance climate change resilience but does not propose any specific approaches.

¹³ Re-establishment of the rain gauges network; climate change capacity-building for radio station staff plus advertisements, radio-based theatrical campaigns, community leaflets and posters; support for stations that includes the provision of computers, solar panels, batteries and a generator; community workshops.

¹⁴ The design mentions only FFSs, FBOs and community groups.

¹⁵ No trees or warehouses yet.

¹⁶ Not only youth, but youth account for the largest share.

¹⁷ Trained in business management, report-writing, bookkeeping, conflict resolution, and management and leadership skills. The centres were handed over to the district youth councils. All of them were assisted to establish basic business plans.

¹⁸ FAO promoted the establishment of rural blacksmith workshops for the repair and manufacture of hand tools. Carpenters are mentioned only at design.

Theme	Activities	RCPRP (design)	RCPRP (PCR)	SCP-GAFSP (design/MTR)	AVDP (design)	RFCIP (PCR)	RFCIP-II (MTR)
Youth (CTD)	Improvement of quantity and quality and value addition by increasing access to inputs, processing facilities (equipment and infrastructure, training/technical assistance) and marketing opportunities (ABC model, agro-dealer model for inputs and contract farming)	X ¹⁹	X ²⁰	X	X		
	Training and certification of agro-dealers			X			
	Strengthening the business skills of ABCs, FBO, FFSs				X		
Value chain development	Mapping of existing value chain players				X		
	Creation and support of multi-stakeholder platforms				X		
	Roads constructed, rehabilitated or upgraded	X	X		X		
	Establishment of road maintenance units	-	X				
	The construction or repair of public and post-harvest infrastructure (wells, storage facilities, drying floors, rice sheds)	X	X		X ²¹		
	Capacity-building of local contractors in bidding for and successfully implementing contracts and maintaining infrastructure	X	-				
	Creation of the Rice Processing and Marketing Agency (RIPMA) and four district-level cooperatives as agents for the marketing of rice by project-supported farmers	-	X ²²				
	Provision of loans from CBs to FBOs to finance agricultural or agribusiness activities	-	X				
	CB and FSA shareholders and establishment of savings accounts					X	
	People accessing at least one agricultural finance product						X
	Establishment and licensing of FSAs and CBs (and the apex body in place)			X ²³		X	X

¹⁹ Small-scale rice mills, oil presses, cassava graters and other post-harvest units.

²⁰ Linkages to agribusiness operators for improved processing and marketing.

²¹ Confined to the rehabilitation of warehouses (to improve drying and storage capacity).

²² RIPMA was incorporated as the Rice Processing and Marketing Company (RIPMCO).

²³ A memorandum of agreement was signed with the RFCIP under the supervision of the NPCU for the establishment of 15 FSAs and 7 CBs. It is also intended to ensure that 10 per cent of the targeted farmers have bank accounts with, and access to loans from, either FSAs or CBs. The FSAs and CBs have been built, staffed and made operational.

Theme	Activities	RCPRP (design)	RCPRP (PCR)	SCP-GAFSP (design/MTR)	AVDP (design)	RFCIP (PCR)	RFCIP-II (MTR)
Access to rural financial services	Rehabilitation and restructuring of existing CBs					X	X
	Business plan establishment for additional FSAs and CBs					X	
	Smallholder farmers, rural poor and FSA staff trained in financial services and sensitized about project activities					X	
	Management and technical assistance for FSAs and CBs					X	
	Establishment of TAA, staff training, development of promotional material and installation of a management information system					X	
	Insurance that targets farmers who have active bank accounts at, and access to loans from, either FSAs or CBs			X ²⁴		X	X ²⁵
	Revision of the share capital target of the new FSA to US\$70,000						X
	Development of three new FSA products during the implementation period: mobile money, salary payments and agricultural loans. In addition to these products, CBs added an inventory credit scheme, equipment loans, rehabilitation loans and agricultural input loans.					X	
	Support for the Bank of Sierra Leone and TAA (monitoring, supervision, capacity- building, information technology equipment)			X		X	
	Strengthening of FSAs, CBs and the Apex Bank and training of staff						X
	Submission of a proposal to the Bank of Sierra Leone for the Apex Bank to be authorized to do agribusiness SME lending						X
	Improvement of agricultural lending along the value chain			X ²⁶			X ²⁷
	A recovery strategy and refinance facility for ABCs			X			
	Establishment of an agribusiness financing unit at the Apex Bank and recruitment of a senior manager						X

²⁴ 10 per cent of the target.

²⁵ Shares, savings, credit and remittances.

²⁶ MTR: agricultural lending along the value chain has been extremely low at 6 per cent. Most of the lending has been for other commercial activities because of the perceived risk of unsecured loans. Until a higher lending threshold is achieved, the component cannot be described as successful. The staff of the FSAs and CBs may need to be retrained in certain aspects of rural development and also to learn about the lending models that have been used by other institutions to support unsecured loans to the agricultural sector.

²⁷ Design and operationalization of an agricultural finance strategy. The strategy should include capacity-building in agricultural finance and loan administration.

Theme	Activities	RCPRP (design)	RCPRP (PCR)	SCP-GAFSP (design/MTR)	AVDP (design)	RFCIP (PCR)	RFCIP-II (MTR)
Access to rural financial services (CTD)	Capacity-building for the Apex Bank inspectors in the area of financial analysis and interpretation						X
	Finalization of the submission of APEX Bank's five-year business plan to IFAD and the design of a capitalization strategy						X
	Design and implementation of a structured outreach strategy for the RFIs						X
	Enforcement of the policy on the independence of the Apex Bank Board						X
	Establishment of a proposed headquarters building for the Apex Bank						X
	Follow-up with the Bank of Sierra Leone about issues affecting the growth and sustainability of the Apex Bank RFIs (minimum capital, payment of dividends, ability of FSAs to mobilize savings, etc.)						X
	Transfer of CB accounts with the Bank of Sierra Leone to the Apex Bank						X
	Revision of PAR 30 days from <3 per cent to <5 per cent						X
	Development of indicators that would enable tracking and measurement of outcomes resulting from non-agricultural lending activities + assessment of the value of these loans						X
	Organization of a workshop for the relevant parliamentary committee, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Bank of Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Finance and other relevant stakeholders on best practices in rural finance.						X
	Capacity development of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry staff relevant to project activities	-	X	X			X
	Training of government staff, community workers and volunteers					X	
	Training of process facilitators and community-based group promoters in subjects such as participatory appraisal and planning, gender analysis, poverty assessment and M&E to enable a gradual assumption of the leadership role at the community level (Later some activities transferred to ward development committee and district agricultural offices (DAOs) ?)	X	X				X but discontinued
	DAOs constructed + logistic support, furniture and office supplies provided to DAOs and district councils	-	X				

Theme	Activities	RCPRP (design)	RCPRP (PCR)	SCP-GAFSP (design/MTR)	AVDP (design)	RFCIP (PCR)	RFCIP-II (MTR)
Institutional context	Capacity-building of local councils in the districts	-	X			X	
	Cadastral systems for revenue generation in the form of property taxes were established in three district councils and one city council	-	X ²⁸				
	Establishment / capacity-building of ward development committees (trained in roles, responsibilities, literacy, numeracy, participatory rural appraisal, development planning, household planning and cross-cutting issues, e.g. gender, HIV/AIDS, environmental issues)	-	X				
	Office buildings for ward development committees constructed					X	
	Two additional direct project coordinating units (DPCUs) set up in Koinadugu and Kenema	-	X				
	Further decentralization of the PMU management structure at the district level + capacity-building of DAOs			X			
	Support the National Federation of Farmers of Sierra Leone to develop as a national support organization for FBOs in the areas of market linkages, policy and advocacy			X			
	Capacity-building and awareness raising of climate change at the institutional level	-	X ²⁹				
	Capacity-building for community groups comprising essential training, gender sensitization, peacebuilding awareness enhancement, awareness-building on HIV/AIDS, health and nutrition	X	X			X ³⁰	X ³¹
	Use of participatory rural appraisal techniques in the formulation of participatory community development plans, priorities setting / identification of pilot micro projects at the village level	X	X				
	Community development fund established	X ³²	-			X ³³	

²⁸ Kailahun, Kono, Koinadugu and Koidu New Sembehun city councils; staff were also trained to operate these systems.

²⁹ Certification of three Meteorological Department staff following an intensive one-year meteorological technicians' course; on-line training of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry staff in statistics and applied climatology; installation of automatic weather stations.

³⁰ Communication and sensitization campaigns conducted (media/PR) on HIV, gender, peacebuilding and project activities.

³¹ Initiative of community journalism in all areas covered + sensitization through the provision of relevant information pamphlets (IFAD to provide the information) on the use of loans in a way that is not detrimental to the environment.

³² Utilized for the development of small-scale infrastructure at the community level.

³³ Inventory credit scheme products.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>RCPRP (design)</i>	<i>RCPRP (PCR)</i>	<i>SCP-GAFSP (design/MTR)</i>	<i>AVDP (design)</i>	<i>RFCIP (PCR)</i>	<i>RFCIP-II (MTR)</i>
	Literacy training			X		X ³⁴	X ³⁵
Community development	Improved access to potable water and sanitation				X ³⁶		
	Women farmers trained in income-generating activities					X ³⁷	
	Expanded implementation of GALS methodology at all CBs and FSAs + integration of nutritional sensitization, especially for young children, into the GALS methodology						X
	Employment opportunities created by increased productivity and commercialization at both the production and post-production levels	X	X	X			
	Training of service providers and improvement of extension services	-	X ³⁸	X	X ³⁹	X ⁴⁰	
Other soft components							

Source: President reports, MTRs and PCRs.

³⁴ Functional literacy, numeracy and life skills.

³⁵ Financial literacy.

³⁶ Financed by the Adaptation Fund.

³⁷ Group formation and management, food storage, off-farm activities and rearing of small ruminants and poultry.

³⁸ Training for Agricultural Engineering Department extension service providers and youth contractors and training for IVSAs on IVS rehabilitation, water management and best agronomic practices.

³⁹ Number of ABCs with an improved capacity for service provision.

⁴⁰ Training of group promoters and agricultural extensionists.

Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE

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1. OVERVIEW

This brief shares insights provided by the results of a household survey of 302 members of farming communities selected from various regions of rural Sierra Leone. The respondents included both rural finance beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. These survey findings also complement insights garnered by other methods that are being used to arrive at a more complete evaluation of the performance of the RFCIP and RFCIP-II projects in supporting rural communities' access to financial services. More specifically, the outcomes of the study are intended to help project stakeholders fully understand the way of life of clients of rural financial institutions (RFIs) and their activities, along with their pain points and the challenges that hinder smallholder farmers from accessing financial services, particularly through RFIs. The findings also point to several areas of opportunity for improving overall efficiencies in providing financial services to rural dwellers and thus deepening the impact of RFIs on targeted beneficiaries.

1.1 Methodology

This section details the approach used to conduct a household survey of 302 household representatives (including RFI clients who had received a loan from these institutions, RFI clients who had no current loan with these institutions and other members of the farming community) in the catchment areas of RFIs – i.e. financial service associations (FSAs) and community banks (CBs). This survey had the following main objectives:

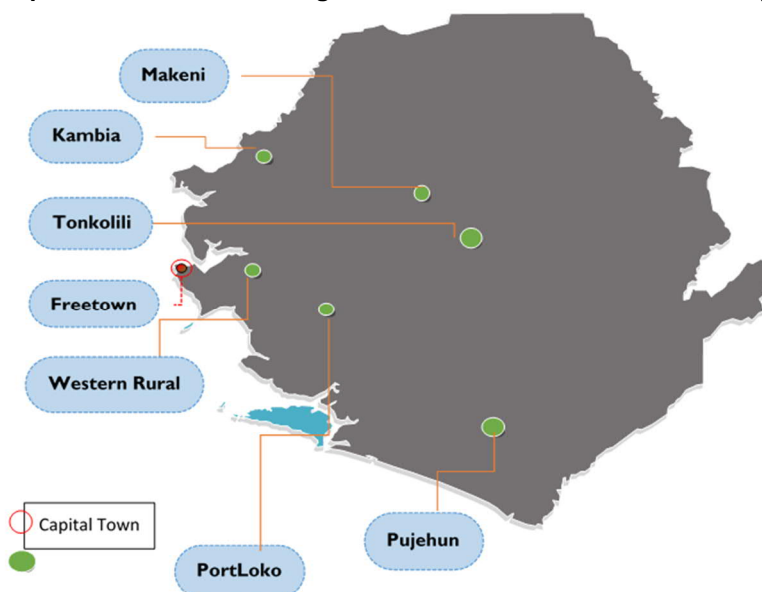
- (i) Assess participants who had alternative primary income sources apart from farming;
- (ii) Determine whether RFI clients who borrowed funds used them for farming purposes or, if not, how the loan was used and what impact it had;
- (iii) Provide an understanding of the needs of these farmers and insights into how agricultural loan products could be tailored to the needs of farmers with irregular cash flows.

1.2. Study location

The survey was conducted in 7 districts, namely, Bombali, Moyamba, Tonkolili, Port Loko, Pujehun, Western Rural and Western Urban. It involved 10 agricultural business centres (ABCs), 2 farmer-based organizations (FBOs) and 5 FSAs. The map below shows the areas covered by the survey.

Figure 1

Map of Sierra Leone showing locations where the household survey was conducted



Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

1.2.1. Sample selection

The selection of the districts where the survey was conducted took into consideration the areas where rural finance programme initiatives were implemented under the RFCIP and RFCIP-II. Other factors considered in the selection of these districts were the concentration of smallholder commercial farmers and the travel logistics and travel times involved in reaching the study locations. The identification of individual participants was based on lists provided by selected ABCs and FSAs from which study participants were randomly chosen while taking into account the need for a balanced gender and age distribution.

Table 1
Selected participants

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Distribution</i>
FSA/CB clients	142
Non-clients	160
Total number of respondents	302
Breakdown of RFI clients	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FSA clients = 84 people • CB clients = 58 people • RFI borrowers in last 12 months = 113 people 	

Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

1.2.2. Survey implementation

A team of six enumerators helped to conduct the survey using android smartphones; all the survey data were then digitized using SurveyCTO software. Each form was filled out for individual participants by trained enumerators, and the completed forms were then encrypted, uploaded and hosted by the SurveyCTO server in a secure environment.

1.2.3. Qualitative interviews

Two qualitative focus group discussions to supplement the household survey findings were held in in Port Loko District and Western Rural District. These discussions covered a wide range of topics, including income sources, farming approaches and methods, financial service use and RFI linkages.

1.2.4. Data analysis

Stata data analytics software and Excel were used to derive insights from collated data. This work was based on key focus areas or themes as prescribed by the project framework.

2. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section shares profiles of the different RFI clients and non-clients with whom IOE engaged during the study in order to assess their income sources, their access to and use of RFI loans, and the impact of RFI support on the beneficiaries' lives.

2.1. Demographics

2.1.1. Gender and age distribution

For this study, IOE representatives spoke with a group of RFI clients (44 per cent women and 56 per cent men) and a group of persons who were not RFI clients (65 per cent women and 35 per cent men) (see figure 2). Research participants were selected across the different age groups from 18 up to 55 years of age, but the great majority of the participants were between the ages of 36 and 45. Table 2 below shows the age distribution of research participants.

2.1.2. Level of education of the participants

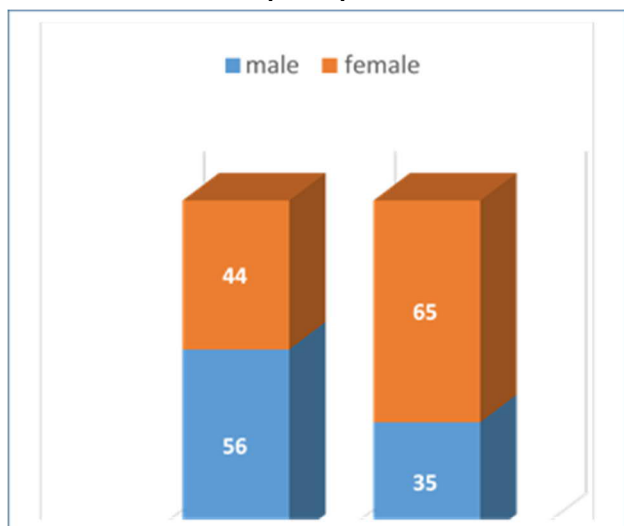
A cursory examination of the level of education of RFI clients and non-clients shows that many of the study participants possess an informal education only (see figure 2). This mainly includes religious preparation or training in which people receive religious instruction as well as basic reading and numeracy training. The results also indicate that

RFI clients have relatively higher educational qualifications than non-clients, with more RFI clients having completed their primary education and a substantial number having a tertiary-level education (see figure 3).

2.1.3. Source of employment for research participants

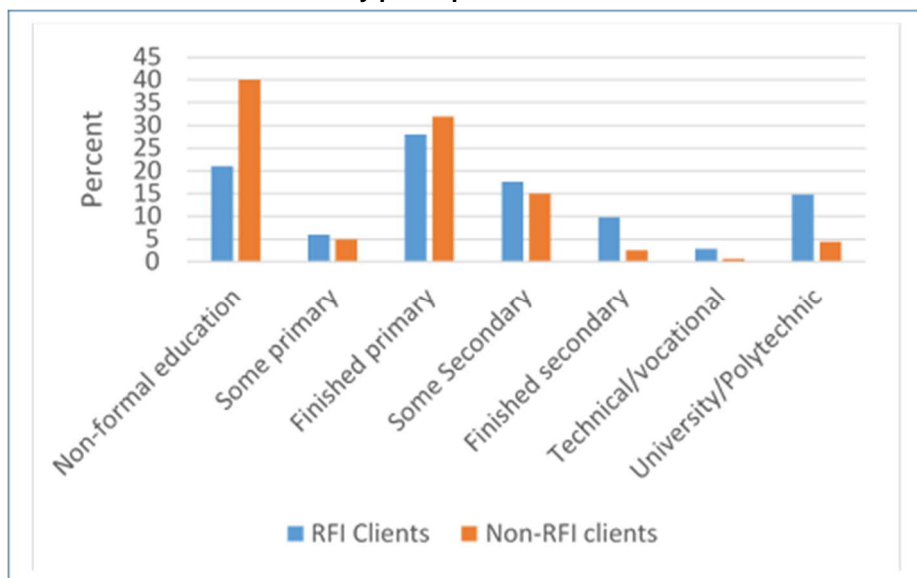
In terms of the participants' main source of income, the results (see figure 3 below) indicate that agriculture, trading (especially petty trading of agricultural produce) and formal employment at a local government level (e.g. at a district headquarters or as a schoolteacher at a local school) were frequently mentioned as the key source of income for both RFI clients and non-clients.

Figure 2
Gender distribution of participants



Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

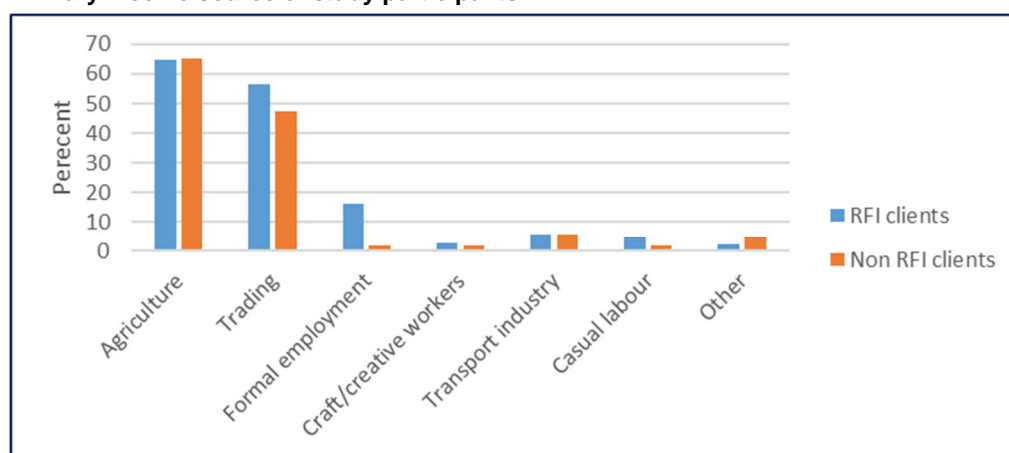
Figure 3
Educational attainment of study participants



Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE

Figure 4, indicates that the RFI clients have relatively higher educational levels than non-clients on average: 20 per cent of RFI clients are illiterate, while 40 per cent of non-clients are. On the other hand, in the case of both RFI clients and non-clients, a larger number of people's educations consist of informal training.

Figure 4
Primary income source of study participants



Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

Table 2
Age distribution of participants

Age bracket	Percentage
Below 25 years	6
26 - 35	19
36 - 45	32
46 - 55	24
55 and above	19

Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE

In this study, 32 per cent of the 302 participants were between the ages of 36 and 45, but the other age brackets were also fairly represented.

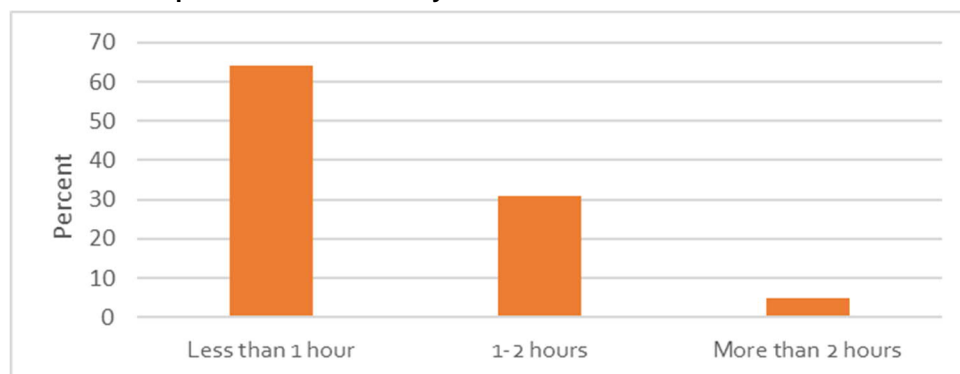
2.2. Access to RFIs

This section provides a detailed look at how the farming community and other intended project beneficiaries are utilizing the RFIs.

2.2.1. Membership of the RFIs

The RFIs, and especially the FSAs, are held in high esteem because they are usually the only available option in rural communities, where there is limited access to banks or to even the most rudimentary forms of financial services. The FSAs have gained wide acceptance among village communities. For example, 84 (59 per cent) of the 142 RFI clients who were interviewed had accounts with FSAs, while 58 (41 per cent) had accounts with nearby CBs. The key driver for signing up for FSA or CB accounts is the fact that these institutions are located in the farming communities themselves and are thus much closer to where the farmers live than other formal institutions are. Over 60 per cent of the RFI clients who were interviewed indicated that it takes them less than an hour to reach a nearby FSA (see figure 5).

Figure 5
Travel time required to reach a nearby FSA



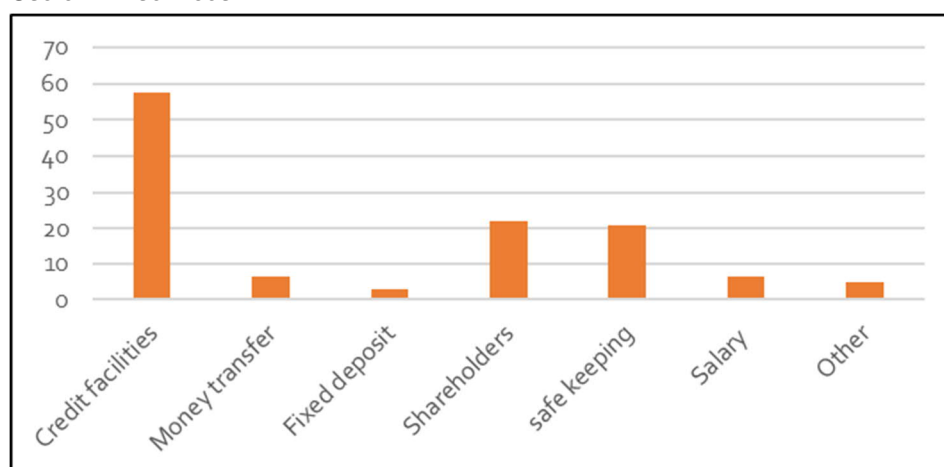
Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

However, qualitative interactions with RFI clients indicate that the key challenges are that these FSAs have very basic systems and processes as well as limited funds for lending. They also rely on a lean staff as a way of paring down costs. There is thus a need to support the FSAs by improving the training of members and staff, enriching their current product portfolios and ensuring that their capital base is increased so that they are able to serve the needs of more rural borrowers.

2.2.2. The motivation for communities to access RFI services

Visits to selected FSAs and interaction with the 302 research participants revealed that these RFIs provide a range of financial services to their members, although more product innovation is still needed if they are to fully cater for the needs of their clients, especially in the area of agricultural lending. Currently, the services commonly offered include credit, savings accounts and the safekeeping of funds and valuables. As illustrated in figure 6, the main reason why members of these communities join RFIs is to gain access to credit facilities so that they can expand their farming operations by buying improved seeds and fertilizer or can cover other costs, such as the cost of feeding farm labourers, especially during the planting season.

Figure 6
Use of RFI services

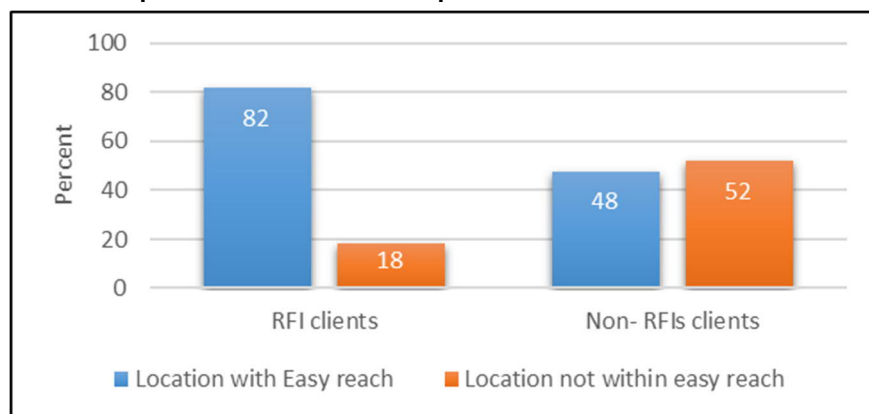


Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

As shown in figure 6, 58 per cent of the 142 RFI clients who were interviewed listed access to credit as the key benefit of their membership in a CB. A few also noted shareholding and the safekeeping of money at the RFI as being important benefits.

The location of FSAs nearby or within farming communities has also motivated rural dwellers to embrace these institutions and to sign up as clients or members. As shown in figure 7, RFI clients for whom an FSA was within easy reach formed the majority of the RFI clients who participated in the study.

Figure 7
Relationship between RFI membership and RFI location



Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

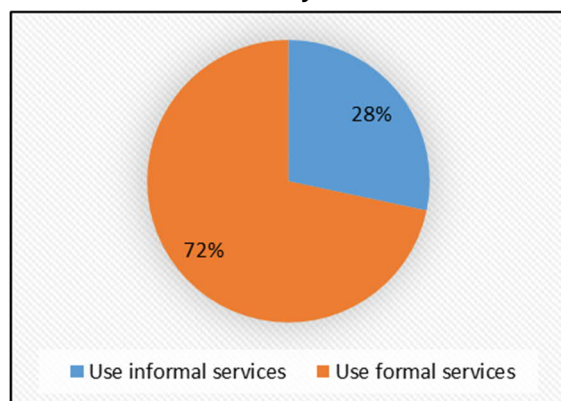
2.2.3. Commonly used informal financial service institutions

RFI clients indicated that they also use informal financial service institutions or channels to manage their money alongside the FSAs or CBs (see figures 8a and 8b). The informal financial institutions that are commonly used by RFI clients in rural areas are osusus and voluntary savings and credit associations.

Osusus are informal financial systems in rural communities that are mainly used by farming households and farmers as a place to save and as an important source of credit. This is because most farmers lack access to formal financial institutions but do not want to hide their money at home or invest it in an asset such as grain, livestock or chickens, which are subject to risks such as disease, theft or fluctuating market prices. The majority of farmers who were interviewed indicated that they obtain loans from these groups rather than approaching a formal financial institution. This option is less risky for them because the osusu has flexible requirements that are predominantly based on group identification (the identified identify the unidentified).

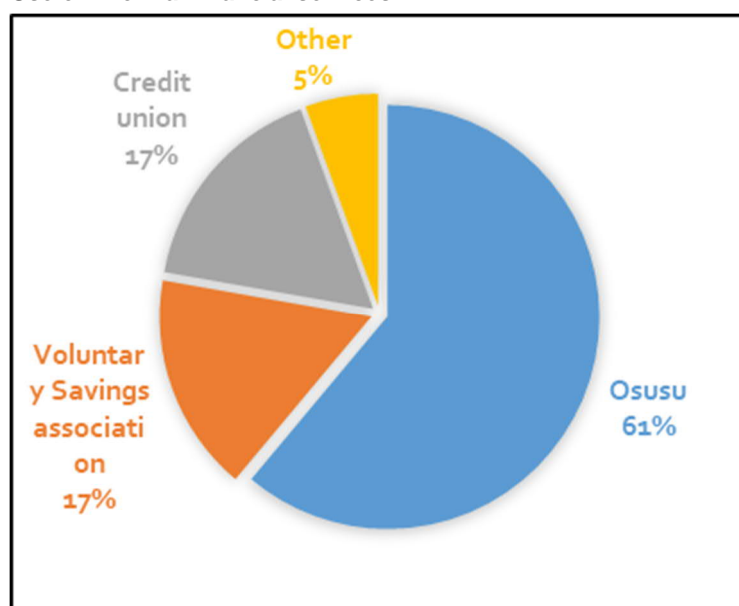
The RFI clients who were interviewed noted that osusus are often preferred to FSAs because the osusu group is lenient with its members, and members support each other to ensure that they repay the loan on time. A key challenge for the osusus is that their paper-based records of financial transactions are subject to errors that then provide an unreliable basis for decision-making. In addition, when hard times hit, especially during the rainy season, group lending is constrained because all the members want a loan but there is not enough savings in the “pot” to lend to everyone.

Figure 8a
Financial services used by RFI clients



Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

Figure 8b.

Use of informal financial services

Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

As indicated in figure 8a, the majority of RFI clients (72 per cent of the 142 respondents) use only RFI services, while 28 per cent of them still use informal financial services to fill their financing gaps. Additionally, as highlighted in figure 8b, 61 per cent of the RFI clients who do use informal services indicated that they are members of osusos and mainly use those osusos to manage their money.

2.3. Accessing credit

2.3.1. Accessing credit in the past (from 5 to 10 years ago)

The study shows that for both RFI clients and non-clients, it was harder to access credit 5 or 10 years ago than it is now. The key factors that hindered both groups from accessing credit in the past included the stringent requirements of lending institutions (regarding, for example, guarantors and collateral), the need to travel long distances to reach lending institutions because they were usually located in the larger towns in each district and a lack of knowledge about where to go to obtain credit.

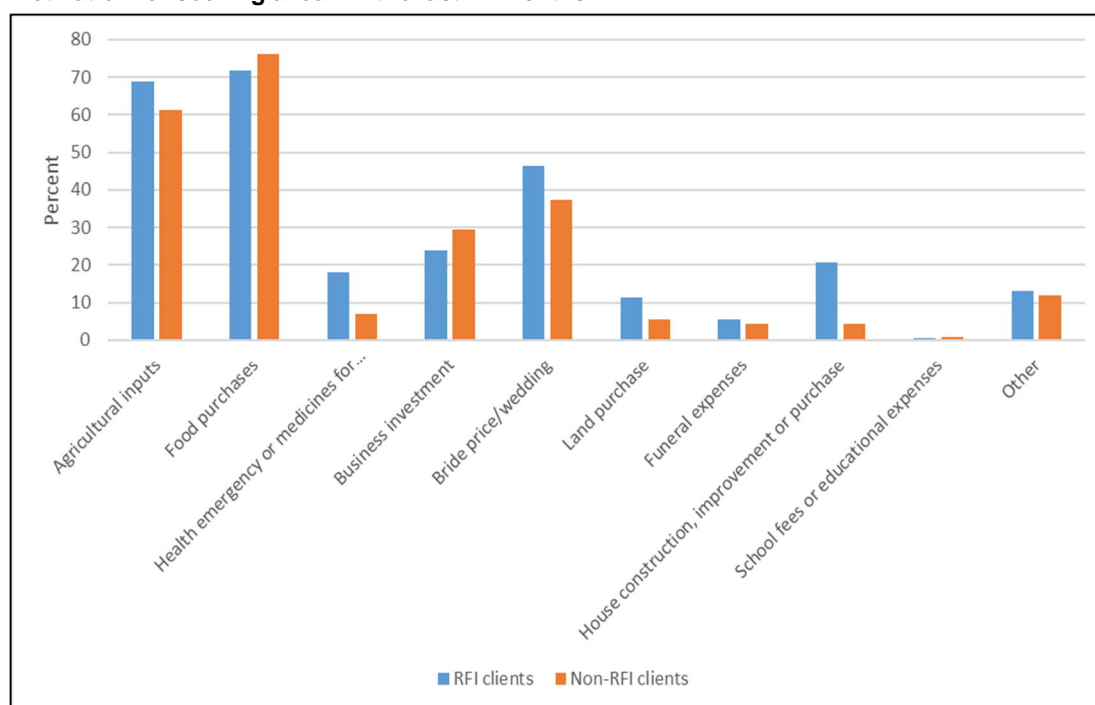
2.3.2. Accessing credit in the present

The study participants noted that, although some challenges that hindered them from accessing credit 5 or 10 years ago still exist, there has been an improvement in the conditions surrounding credit access in rural areas. For example, in the villages visited by the evaluation team, people noted that more lending options were available, including those offered by RFIs, than there were 5 to 10 years ago. The improvement is attributed, among factors, to an increase in the number of RFIs that are within easy reach of their clients. Additionally, some study participants noted that ABCs now offer basic financial services – e.g. savings and credit services – such as those provided by savings groups and that they now use these institutions as repositories for their savings and as a source of credit.

2.3.3. The motivation for applying for a loan in the last 12 months

The evaluation team talked to both RFI clients and non-clients who had sought a loan in the previous 12 months in order to explore their reasons for doing so (see figure 9). Although the motivations were similar for both groups, RFI clients' key reasons for borrowing included the purchase of food, the purchase of agricultural inputs such as seeds, payments to seasonal workers who help on the farm and meeting community obligations such as making wedding contributions. Loans are commonly used for multiple purposes.

Figure 9
Motivation for seeking a loan in the last 12 months

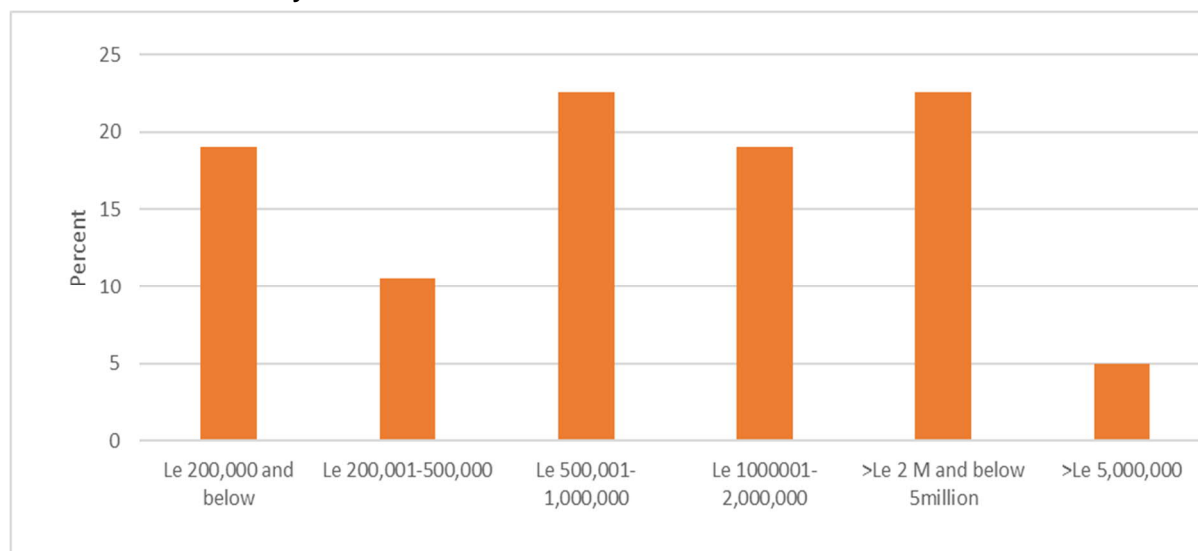


Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

2.3.4. Size of loans taken out from FSAs in the last 12 months

The 113 RFI clients who had taken out a loan in the preceding 12 months were asked how much they had borrowed. The findings show that 25 per cent of the 113 people who obtained credit from FSAs in the preceding 12 months had taken out substantial loans ranging from Le 2 million to Le 5 million (see figure 10).

Figure 10
Size of loans taken out by RFI clients



Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE

2.3.5. Loan shortfalls and how they have been managed

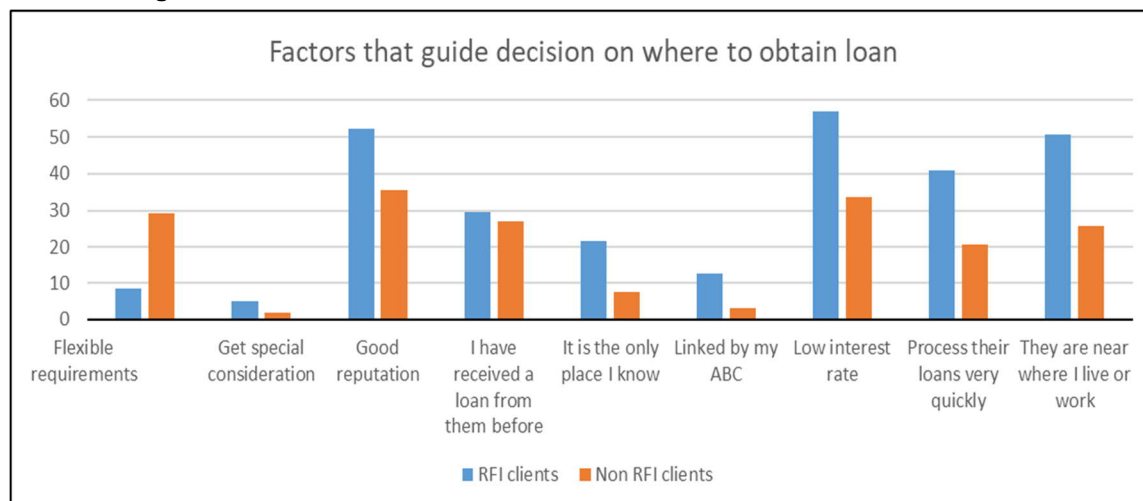
The 220 research participants who had obtained credit in the preceding 12 months were asked if they had been able to obtain the full amount of the loan that they needed, regardless of the source. The survey results indicate that 22.2 per cent of the borrowers (49 out of 220) had received a smaller loan than they had needed. To cover this shortfall, RFI clients had obtained the top-up amount from microfinance institutions, shopkeepers

and osusus. RFI clients had also attempted to meet with the RFI managers in order to renegotiate higher amounts.

2.3.6. Factors considered by RFI clients and non-clients in determining where to obtain a loan

The RFI clients and non-clients cited similar considerations regarding their decisions as to where to apply for credit. The key factors included low interest rates, trust in the lending institutions concerned and the proximity of their location (see figure 11). Non-clients also said that the flexibility of the lending institutions' requirements was an important consideration.

Figure 11
Factors that guide decisions as to where to obtain a loan

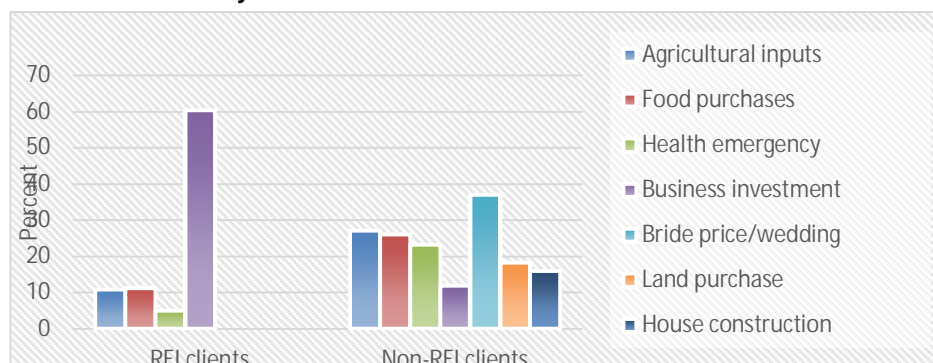


Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

2.3.7. Use made of the borrowed funds

Although both RFI clients and non-beneficiaries claimed that one of the key drivers for seeking a loan was the possibility of investing in agricultural-related activities, the results indicate that, in the case of the RFI clients, much of the money borrowed from RFIs was used for business investments and trading (see figure 12 below). The qualitative interviews indicated that this is partly attributable to the fact that financial service institutions are apprehensive about lending to farmers. The fact that specifically designed agricultural loan products are not offered by most of the RFIs makes it difficult for farmers to take out loans because monthly instalments are required and no grace period is given.

Figure 12
Uses made of money borrowed



Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

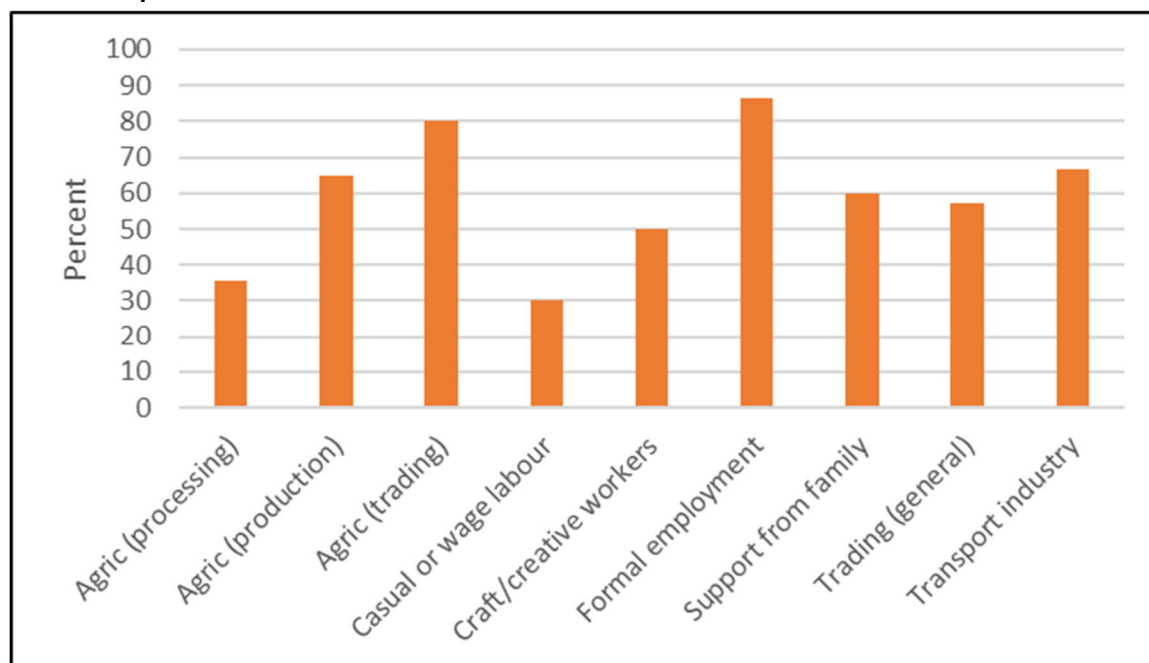
2.3.8. Relationship between the source of income and access to RFI credit

The evaluation team also explored the relationship between the RFI clients' source of income or employment and the RFI loans that they had taken out during the preceding 12

months. As figure 13 below shows, many of the RFI borrowers are in one way or another engaged in agricultural production, processing and/or marketing. It is worth noting that the largest proportion of agricultural borrowers were engaged in agricultural trading (80 per cent of the 113 clients who had taken out loans in the preceding 12 months).

Figure 13

Relationship between borrowers' main source of income and access to credit



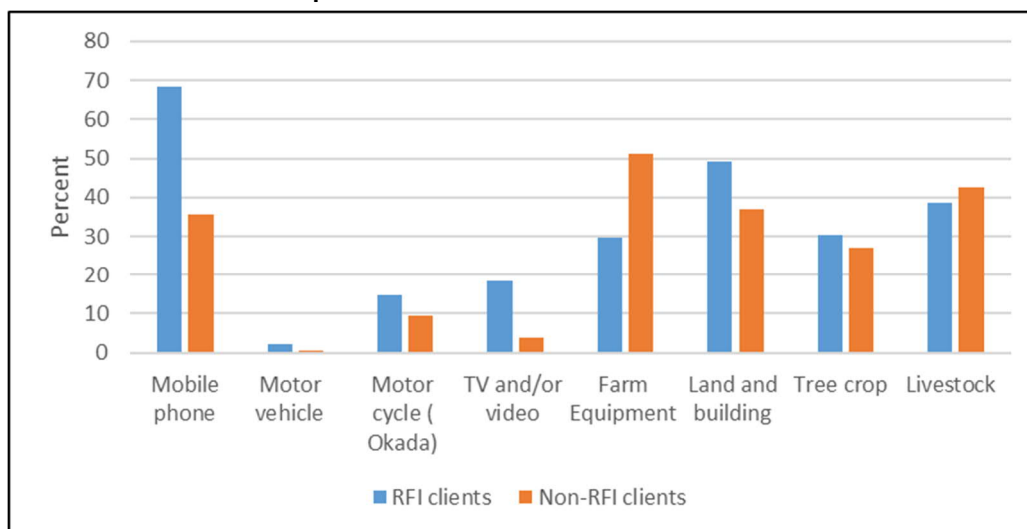
Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

2.4. Assets and living conditions

2.4.1. Asset ownership

The survey results also point to the existence of different asset ownership profiles for RFI clients and non-clients. For example, non-clients' holdings of assets consist mainly of livestock, farm equipment and tree crops (e.g. cocoa and cashew crops), whereas RFI clients' main assets include a mobile phone, land/buildings and livestock (see figure 14). The RFI clients regard a mobile phone as an important asset because they use it to find businesses or connect with business colleagues in areas to which they have physical access. RFI clients possess fewer agriculturally related assets, such as farm equipment, land and livestock (e.g. goats and sheep) than non-clients do because more RFI clients are involved in trading than in farming per se.

Figure 14
Household asset ownership

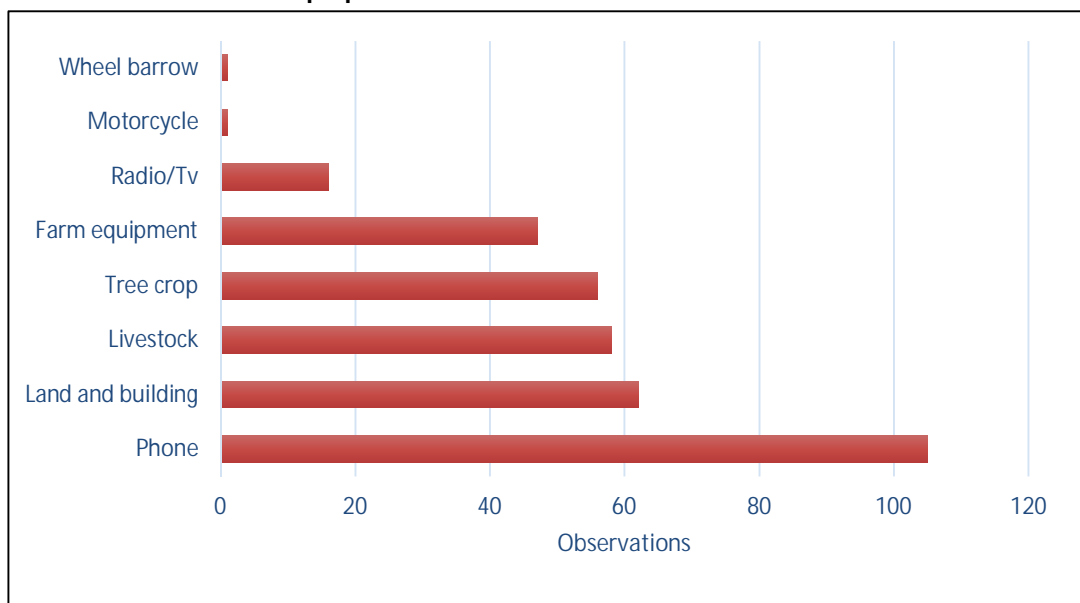


Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

2.4.2. Assets used for business purposes

RFI clients were asked to indicate which of the assets that they own are used for their businesses (see figure 15). These respondents listed a range of assets that they used in their businesses, with the foremost among them being mobile phones.

Figure 15
Assets used for business purposes



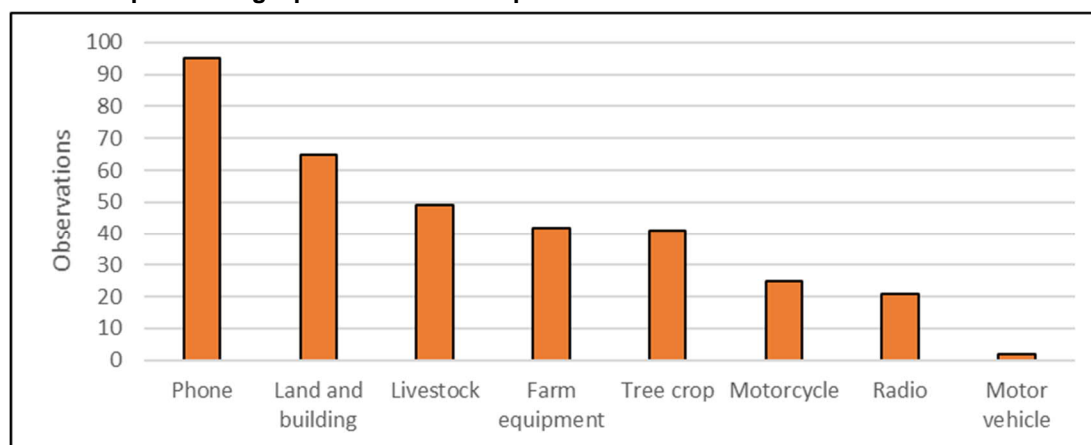
Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

The 113 people who had obtained credit from an RFI in the preceding 12 months were asked if they had used part of the loan to build up their asset profile, and many of them reported that they have at times borrowed from an RFI for the purpose of acquiring an asset or have used part of their loan to acquire a range of assets. Figure 16 shows the assets listed by RFI clients as having been acquired at least in part with money borrowed from RFIs in the preceding 12 months.

A comparison of the assets used for business and assets acquired using a portion of a loan shows up the existence of a close relationship, since, apart from the wheelbarrows, all the assets used for business match up with the majority of the assets acquired using a portion

of the borrowed funds. This indicates that access to RFI credit enables clients to acquire assets that power their various businesses.

Figure 16
Assets acquired using a portion of RFI loan proceeds



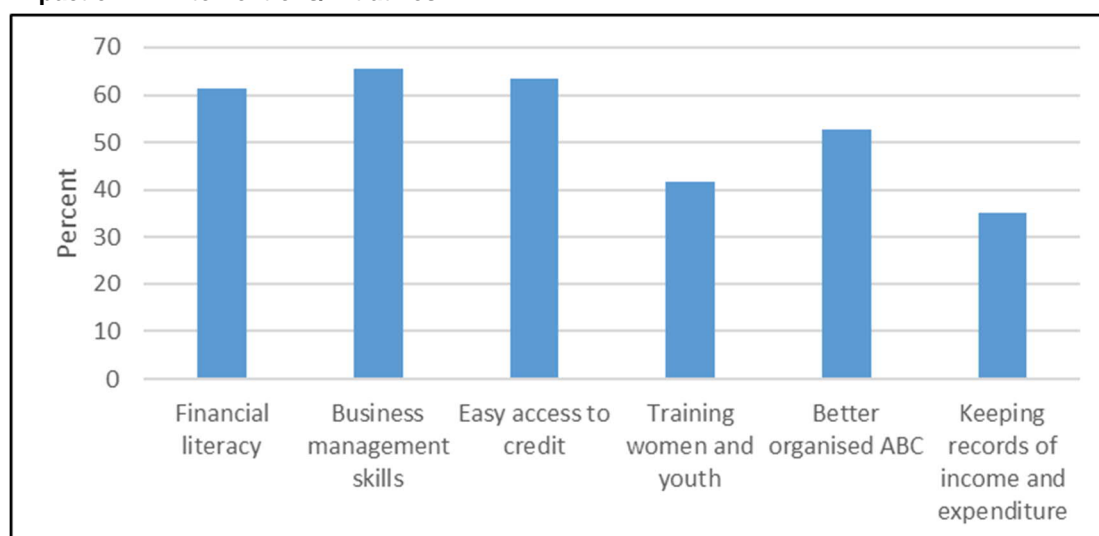
Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

The results highlighted in figure 16 confirm that having access to RFI credit has enabled some clients to increase their holdings of certain assets or to acquire new assets, many of which play a key role in their businesses.

2.4.3. Empowering RFI clients

In order to assess the benefits obtained by RFI members that are not available to non-members, participants were asked about their views concerning various project interventions, including those dealing with financial literacy and business management skills, access to credit, income-generating training for women and young people, and advisory services designed to help farmers establish well-structured, effective ABCs. The survey results also indicate that RFI clients scored more highly in financial literacy, business skills and ready access to credit than non-clients did (see figure 17). This is a positive sign regarding the ability of people who have dealings with RFIs to make positive changes in their lives by attaining new skills and becoming more empowered.

Figure 17
Impact of RFI interventions/initiatives



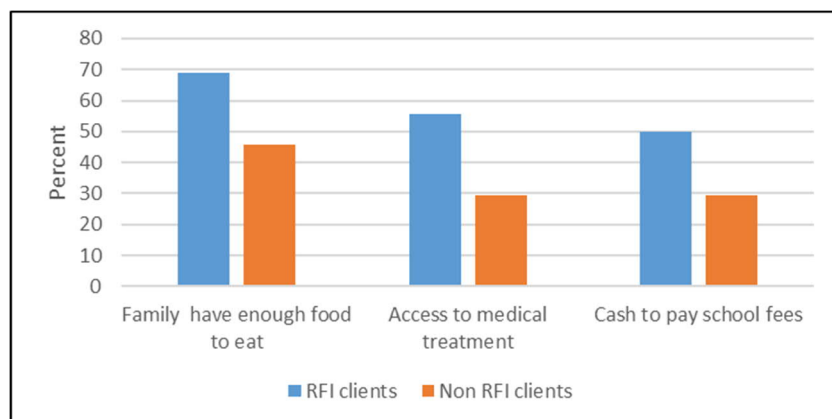
Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

2.5. Living conditions of targeted beneficiaries

The survey covered several factors related to living conditions, including whether beneficiaries have an adequate food supply, can afford to send their children to school and

can cover medical bills (see figure 18). On all three of these fronts, the results indicate that RFI clients are in a better position than their non-client counterparts. The RFI-client respondents attribute this to the fact that they have ready access to credit from such sources as an FSA and that their membership in an RFI has enabled them to gain important skills and knowledge from peers that they can then leverage when encountering problems in these areas.

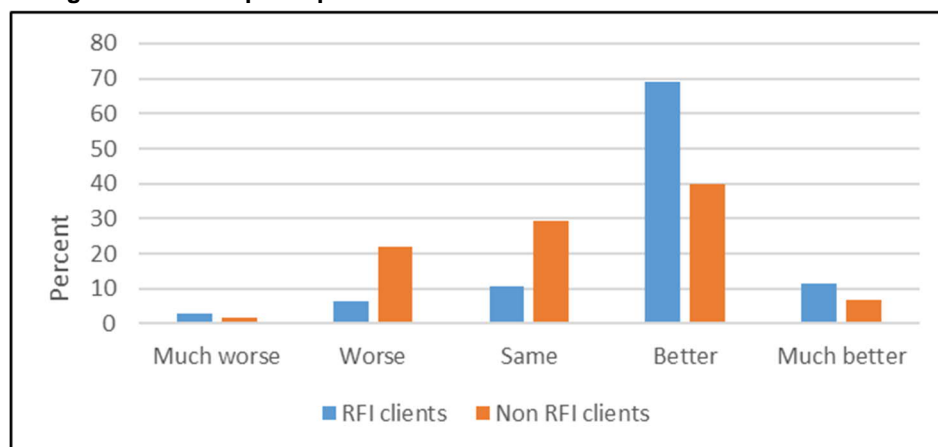
Figure 18

Access to essential services

Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

As indicated in figure 19, RFI clients noted that their current living conditions have improved and are better than those of non-clients.

Figure 19

Living conditions of participants

Source: Annex XI: Report of the household survey on rural finance conducted by IOE.

3. CONCLUSION

The results of this household survey show that the rural finance outreach programme implemented under RFCIP and RFCIP-II has been beneficial for rural dwellers in many ways, including by helping them build their asset profiles using funds obtained from RFIs. This is evidence that the programme has had an impact on its target group. While the results of the interviews also suggested that the RFI network still faces a number of challenges – such as limited financial product offerings, a lack of sufficient capital to meet all of the needs of their clients and the problems associated with the limited staffing table that they maintain in order to keep their costs down – these entities have gained widespread acceptance among village communities. This being the case, efforts to support the replication and further development of the concept should be greatly encouraged.

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