

# Evaluation of FAO Cooperation in Democratic Republic of Congo

## Executive Summary

### *Background*

- i. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a vast country with many natural resources and approximately 58 million inhabitants divided up into more than 200 ethnic groups. DRC owns the second tropical forest in the world and its wildlife is of an exceptional biodiversity. Although it is rich in croplands, forests and mining resources, DRC has been ranked 168<sup>th</sup> out of 177 in terms of human development and is one of the poorest countries in the world.
- ii. During the conflict which has been devastating the country since 1996, considered as one of the most murderous in the world since the Second World War, more than 3 million people, mostly civilians, died in less than five years. Many were killed during the fighting, but even more died of hunger or disease. Houses, hospitals and schools were destroyed and families and communities who had fled found themselves with no food, no water, no house or any other basic services. At the present moment, the social situation is still precarious, with an infant mortality rate twice as high as the rest of the Sub-Saharan Africa, because of the prevalence of numerous chronic diseases and a high rate of malnutrition. Insufficient expenditures by the State in social sectors and the absence of a proper policy on health and education led to the fact that only a quarter of the population can access health care and primary or secondary education, with strong discrepancies between urban and rural environments, regions and genders.
- iii. Following the first democratic elections in 2006, the country is now trying to change the course of its destiny, but peace is fragile, infrastructures are insufficient and capacities of public institutions are very weak. Despite the abundance of its natural resources, nearly 70% of the population in DRC still lives below the poverty line.

### *Objectives, scope and phases of the evaluation*

- iv. On the one hand, the evaluation aimed at providing accountability to stakeholders by reporting on the efficiency and effectiveness of resources provided by the Secretariat, in particular the government and donors who widely finance the FAO cooperation programme; and on the other hand, at improving the relevance, performance, results and impacts of FAO's work in the framework of its cooperation with DRC. The ultimate objective has been to draw lessons on various aspects of FAO's work, in particular on FAO response to rehabilitation and reconstruction problems in a still fragile post-conflict context.
- v. The evaluation concentrated on FAO's global work in DRC, namely the national and regional portfolio of projects, the so-called normative FAO activities and FAO staff activities which are not necessarily carried out in the framework of projects and programmes, for example advocacy and coordination between actors in different sectors. The evaluation, which covered the period 2003-2007, analysed FAO's portfolio as a whole, and more specifically by area of intervention, as well as FAO's various roles and functions in its cooperation with DRC. Special attention was given to emergency and rehabilitation activities, which are essential among FAO's overall activities in the

country. Similarly, the evaluation looked into the coordination functions of agricultural activities when selecting the issues and problems to be analysed, because of the important coordination role played by FAO in this sector.

- vi. The evaluation was conducted between September 2007 and June 2008 in different steps, including in-depth review of documents, preparation of preliminary analyses based on background documentation, interviews with representatives of the various stake-holders acting in the different areas of FAO activities, as well as impact studies and field visits. A household survey was carried out in order to provide (as far as possible) quantitative and qualitative elements on the effects and impacts of emergency and rehabilitation operations in five areas of intervention. The results of this survey, which was carried out through a series of group discussions, interviews with FAO partners and with approximately 1,800 beneficiary households, have been widely used by the evaluation mission.

### *Overview of FAO activities in DRC*

- vii. The portfolio of FAO projects in DRC in the period under review is composed of a total of 117 national projects, of which 73 emergency and rehabilitation projects and 44 development projects. The volume of this portfolio amounts to nearly US\$100 million, of which 70% are dedicated to emergency and rehabilitation projects and aim at improving the immediate food security and livelihoods situation, and re-adaptation of living or survival strategies. In terms of sector, the development portfolio is mainly agricultural, except for significant interventions in community forestry and development as well as in agricultural and forestry research.
- viii. The annual value of the national project portfolio evolved substantially in the last years. The main donor of FAO national projects in DRC is the United Nations «Pooled Fund» (22% of total financing, exclusively emergency projects), followed by the European Commission and the Kingdom of Belgium (each counting for 20%). Between 2003 and 2007, DRC has been involved in 15 regional projects and 7 global projects.
- ix. Apart from its portfolio of projects, as well as its normative activities, FAO plays an active role in advocacy and coordination, in the framework of the United Nations system, in partnership with the Government of DRC and other development agencies.

### *Analysis of results*

- x. The evaluation emphasizes the relevance of the **emergency programme with regard** to the serious problems the country has to face. FAO implemented a wide range of diversified, and sometimes unusual, activities which respond rather well to the difficulties and opportunities of a large number of vulnerable persons. Some of these actions, such as the rehabilitation of cassava production or the input support provided to nutritional centres, were adopted by other institutions. However, the efficiency of emergency interventions is uneven. The number of beneficiaries seems to be lower than expected, mainly because of delays in the implementation. Impacts on production and on incomes declared by beneficiaries vary, but remain rather limited on the whole. Problems arising in programme implementation are both internal to FAO, for example its weak logistical capacity and heavy administrative procedures, and external, namely

the lack of transport infrastructures, the weakness of local public institutions, the lack of valuable data, and sometimes situations of social instability.

- xi. Links exist in some areas between emergency activities and development activities, which are not sufficiently explored. In some areas of the country like South-East, Equator and South-West Provinces, the needs of targeted communities evolve towards a process of transition to development which must take into account a longer term perspective than the one allowed by emergency interventions. Thus, FAO emergency projects in DRC form a complex programme which is going through a growth crisis. The volumes of financing and outputs managed since 2006 make it difficult for logistics, administration and quality control.
- xii. The analysis of FAO support in the production of **information on food security**, including the system of “*sites sentinelles*” which periodically feeds the INFOSEC bulletin, as well as the recent introduction of the Integrated Framework for classification of the humanitarian phase and of food security<sup>1</sup>, recognizes the important effort made in order to satisfy a strong demand for information from the international community and actors in the field. However, the information system which has been implemented needs to be strengthened to guarantee a wider coverage and produce trustworthy, useful and valuable information.
- xiii. The leadership of the Food Security cluster by FAO, the discreet role of the co-chairing agency (WFP), and the availability in the Emergency Coordination Unit of an FAO expert dedicated to all activities linked to this cluster, gave FAO some visibility in the **coordination of the humanitarian sector** in DRC, which also facilitated FAO access to the Pooled Fund and CERF financing. However, the dynamism of clusters is actually widely supported and motivated by discussions regarding financing, thus creating a bias in favour of discussions related to fund allocations (PF/CERF) and at the expense of a real coordination of interventions.
- xiv. Development activities of the **agricultural sector** have been relevant to priorities of the moment and people’s needs. The emphasis placed on food production in a country where a large majority of households has to face food insecurity problems conforms to priority needs. Generally, projects regarding production rehabilitation and distribution of sound cassava cuttings, as well as the introduction and strengthening of horticultural production in main cities of the country led to numerous accomplishments. The FFS (Farmers’ Field School) approach must also be considered a success. Efficient technical and normative support to government institution for seeds certification (SENASSEM) led to important financial support to the sector from the Belgian Cooperation, while approval of regulation laws for the sector, formulated with FAO technical support, is expected by the end of 2008.
- xv. The perspectives of sustainability of results resulting from FAO activities in the agricultural sector are uneven. Activities in the crop sector or those in support of the FFS are good examples of ownership, either by public institutions (SENASSEM) or by other development organizations. On the other hand, the lack of priority given by the government to activities in support of public statistical services and the absence of financial resources do not allow a sustainable strengthening of this function, which is

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<sup>1</sup> Integrated Phase Classification (IPC), FAO, 2007.

essential to the country's agricultural development. Although it is too early to draw conclusions, it is to be expected that the project in support of forest and agricultural research will face similar problems, unless the programme adjusts its activities so as to increase their relevance vis-à-vis the problems these two sectors have to face presently. A good number of projects do not forecast any progressive transfer of responsibilities towards governmental services, thus neglecting the institutional sustainability.

- xvi. **Community development** support conforms to the line of efforts made by the government and partners in favour of rural development, and complies with the transition from emergency towards development which is going on in the country. Its implementation suffered from an inadequate application of the participative approach, some confusion between the roles of beneficiaries' associations and those of service providers, as well as weak performance in the income-generating activities.
- xvii. Although promising, FAO interventions in the **forestry sector** do not allow generating ownership or continuity conditions. The introduction of community forestry principles seems promising but the impact is still invisible. The role played by FNPP to facilitate the development process of texts for the implementation of the Forest Code generated some collaboration between the public sector, the private sector and the civil society which, however, has not been operationalized yet. The great involvement of the civil society in the implementation process of forestry reforms next to other stakeholders of the sector has to be accredited to FAO. In the list of weak points, FAO missed the opportunity to have an impact on the forestry policy and its implementation in the on-going political decentralization process.
- xviii. It is too early to express a final judgement on the impact of projects on sustainable management of forest resources in DRC. Presently, the extension of legislative texts is far from being effective since the Forest Code and regulations applicable to natural resources are being ignored in the field. Generally, services of the Ministry of Environment are practically inexistent in FAO activity sites. Illegal logging and uncontrolled game hunting are practised along the road Matadi-Boma with complete impunity. Charcoaling in the forests of *miombo* near Lubumbashi is also practised with no control.
- xix. The evaluation recognizes the important support provided by FAO to the **formulation of policies, strategies and legislative frameworks**. Support to policies, mainly carried out in the framework of projects, and with restricted means when speaking of TCP, obtained good results, for most of which a follow-up was given or is planned. On the other hand, the project financed by the Government of the Kingdom of Belgium in support to policies had mixed results, mainly because of competing objectives of internal support to the Representation and external support to the various ongoing policy processes. Linked to the policy, strategy and legislation support, FAO's effort in **advocacy and coordination** on the role played by agriculture, forestry and fishery in food security allowed the mobilization of public national and international opinion as to the urgency to solve the food crisis and challenges linked to the management of forestry resources, as well as to relaunch a policy and strategies for agricultural development in DRC. As a result of this effort, FAO's lead position in the agriculture and forestry sectors has been consolidated. Unfortunately, this performance has been slightly affected by the departure of the former FAO Representative in 2006, and because coordination has been focused on the CAF and PAP processes, thus giving government

the deserved position of leader of thematic groups on forestry, agriculture and rural development.

- xx. **Capacity building** support meets real needs in the present situation of institutional weakness. Despite some positive results in the support to restructuring of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock (MAPE) and to the strengthening of statistical services, support to capacity building provided by FAO, which concentrated on central services, would have gained efficiency by conforming to the decentralization process with stronger synergy. In that sense, the extreme weakness of provincial services of agriculture, forestry and fishery constitutes an area where FAO will have an important role to play.
- xxi. Among the activities of **knowledge dissemination** carried out with FAO support, the evaluation considers the introduction of the FFS approach or the support to rural radios as successes. Access to and use by national institutions of normative services and products, which are important FAO instruments for knowledge dissemination, could only be ascertained in an anecdotal way.
- xxii. Except for the DIMITRA project, which is a rare example of successful integration of the **HIV/Aids** thematic in an FAO project, FAO activities related to awareness-raising and mitigation of HIV/Aids impacts are limited and remain anecdotal. Although relevant, these activities mainly suffer from a lack of institutional relationships with the organizations working on these issues in DRC, as well as a lack of focus in high or relatively high prevalence zones or in areas considered at risk.
- xxiii. Although FAO managed to target women in its projects, it has not always been able to systematically integrate **gender aspects** into the different steps of project design and implementation. Except for the DIMITRA project which, while addressing both women and men, mainly aims at strengthening women's capacities, gender-based data are available only in the case of the *Project on Support to the Development of Urban and Peri-urban Horticulture* (HUP) and the *Programme on Support to Community Development* (PADC). Although women are the major beneficiaries of emergency projects, no gender-based data are provided in the implementation reports of those projects.
- xxiv. The evaluation notices the good results obtained in terms of **performance of the FAO Representation**, in spite of its reduced staff and problems encountered inside the country regarding communications and logistics. In Kinshasa, relationships are satisfactory with the government and donors, but the internal liaison capacity with provincial authorities is limited. Other FAO offices, in particular technical divisions at headquarters and TCEO, met the Representation's requests, but assistance was not always received in a timely manner.
- xxv. On its own, the emergency programme represents approximately 70% of the overall programme in the field and is well structured, operationally speaking, to deliver humanitarian assistance at the provincial level. However, the FAO Representative should further associate emergency with non-emergency activities in order to guarantee a more cohesive programme in the field. Project operations are guided by clear procedures, but delays in project implementation show that context constraints are not always taken into consideration efficiently.

## *Conclusions and recommendations*

- xxvi. In a rapidly evolving phase where DRC is getting out of a long period of political instability and conflicts, FAO activities, in particular those related to emergency and rehabilitation, have rapidly increased. In this evolving context, FAO was able to implement a wide-ranging and large-scale programme which resulted in numerous accomplishments and which represents today, in terms of volume, the second field programme in the world for the Organization.
- xxvii. FAO's contribution has generally been relevant to the country's needs and to those of its population. In general, activities related to agricultural development as well as those related to emergency and rehabilitation, met the needs of a large portion of the population in a context of geographical isolation, market dysfunction and decay of public institutions. Activities related to seeds and cuttings, or the development of urban/peri-urban horticulture introduced with the FFS approach, contributed to the improvement of food security and nutrition of beneficiary households. Support to elaborate a legislative framework in the forestry sector and the introduction of community forestry triggered off a momentum for change, though weak for the time being. Although on a small scale and with limited means, FAO worked well in terms of policy and legislative support.
- xxviii. This success (although limited) is the result of several factors, including FAO presence in Kinshasa and in the provinces, the only one among all international agencies to be there during the conflict period. Other factors need to be taken into consideration, among which the absence of competitors and the dynamism of an FAO Representative who was able to make the international community aware of the importance of agriculture, food security and other sensitive issues in the forestry sector. Later on, the increasing presence of stakeholders, as well as a government more and more capable to take its responsibilities regarding coordination of international assistance, and the departure of the FAO Representative in 2006 when the new strategic framework for assistance was being defined, did not allow FAO to maintain its status of lead organization in the agricultural and forestry sectors.
- xxix. The evaluation emphasizes that FAO interventions, even if appropriate, do not form a coherent country strategy. The National Medium-Term Priority Framework, a document which was drafted in 2006 and which has been shelved since then, does not define clear priorities and does not correspond any longer to today's reality. This lack of strategy is reflected by the presence of two FAOs in DRC, one which works on development and one which leads emergency and rehabilitation interventions. An overall FAO vision is missing, which would articulate the role of the latter along an emergency/rehabilitation/development continuum.
- xxx. The ongoing decentralization process at the provincial level sets a challenge and, at the same time, represents an opportunity for FAO. There is a great need to assist governance and provincial public institutions. A certain number of international actors already work to define a strategy and elaborate a plan at provincial level, including for the agricultural sector. Taking into account the positive results regarding support to policies and capacity building in DRC, as well as an explicit demand from provincial administrations, FAO

remains in a good position to play a role in this decentralization process. Therefore, it must reconsider its positioning at national, provincial and local levels.

xxxi. Finally, being in part the victim of its own success, FAO must now cope with an operational capacity which jeopardizes its reputation and position. This applies to its whole programme but has even more dramatic consequences in the framework of emergency and rehabilitation operations.

### **Recommendations**

xxxii. In response to evaluation objectives, the mission produced 22 recommendations, of which a summary<sup>2</sup> including key elements is described below:

- **Recommendation 1: Emergency sector.** The strategy for emergencies will have to adapt to the rapidly evolving situation in the different regions of the country, reflecting differentiated responses according to the emergency situations themselves and situations offering possibilities of a transition towards development.
- **Recommendation 2: In emergency situations,** FAO will have to redefine its strategy: (i) by providing more reliable services to its partners and to beneficiaries, focusing on quality rather than on quantity of seeds, cuttings and tools distributed; and (ii) by concentrating on an improved implementation efficiency by putting in place strategic stocks of vegetable seeds and tools in order to be able to satisfy emerging requests as quickly as possible.
- **Recommendation 3: In transition situations,** FAO will have to develop a medium-term strategy so as to meet producers' needs for inputs and tools, but also for assistance and technical guidance. FAO will also have to intensify advocacy with stakeholders to adapt the conditions of their financial support to the transition situation which exists in most parts of the country, and to define with public structures some programmes to support agricultural professional organizations and groups of producers, who are the real spearheads of the agricultural revival in DRC.
- **Recommendation 4: Information on food security.** FAO will have to reinforce further the analysis work on food security and nutrition, by placing a full-time expert at the Representation (or in the UCU), by improving data collection through the system of "*sites sentinelles*", by collaborating with the national service of agricultural statistics and associating the various partners at the provincial level. The dissemination and contents of the INFOSEC bulletins will have to be improved in order to better meet the information needs of all stakeholders.
- **Recommendation 5: Coordination of the humanitarian sector.** FAO must focus on its role of organizer/facilitator by strengthening the technical content of its contribution to the coordination of the humanitarian sector. More efforts must be put in parallel in the analysis of the humanitarian situation and needs in order to facilitate a real coordination of interventions in this sector.
- **Recommendation 6: Advocacy.** Following the example of what is being done in the framework of development aid, FAO must reinforce advocacy to progressively associate the government to its legitimate role of coordination of humanitarian assistance as well as to decision-making processes (planning and financing).
- **Recommendation 7: Agricultural sector.** Both in the design and implementation of agricultural interventions, FAO must develop further **approach coherence** between its

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<sup>2</sup> These recommendations are detailed in the text.

emergency and development activities, especially when they have similar objectives, as this is the case for the modalities of distribution of vegetable seeds.

- **Recommendation 8: Agricultural sector.** FAO will have to expend a lot of effort to strengthen the institutional anchorage in the coordination and piloting of programmes and projects. Technical services of the Government are now partners that cannot be ignored and must play a central role. With the help of the ongoing decentralization process, FAO must involve more systematically government technical services at the provincial level.
- **Recommendation 9: Agricultural sector.** Activities in this sector must prioritize knowledge dissemination and extension of knowledge in order to adapt its usefulness to the current needs of Congolese producers. In agricultural and forestry research, it is important that FAO reinforce partnerships with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) for assistance to public technical services and extension of research results already available. In the same way, the FFS approach for dissemination of technical knowledge must be carried on and extended to create networks through the use of resource persons, female facilitators trained in FFS and NGOs specialized in FFS.
- **Recommendation 10: Community development.** FAO will need to improve the design and implementation of community development projects by: (i) reinforcing participative approaches to allow a better identification of needs and a better targeting of needy groups; (ii) adopting selection criteria which would make a distinction between service providers and beneficiaries' associations; and (iii) transferring management (especially of credits and micro-finance) to decentralized financial institutions where they exist.
- **Recommendation 11: Forestry sector.** FAO will have to define clear overall objectives, providing better coherence to activities in this sector. It will have to carry on with support to the formulation of a forestry policy and of the National Forestry Plan as well as integrate the ongoing decentralization process in the elaboration of the implementing legislation of the Forest Code and in approaches for sustainable management of forest resources.
- **Recommendation 12: Forestry sector.** FAO will have to reinforce technical support, including for gender aspects in the design of field projects in order to ensure a better ownership of results. It will have to continue to support partnerships between the public sector, private sector and civil society in the implementation and extension of the Forest Code, by better integrating in the standard specifications the link between local development and forest management, as well as the role of the private sector and civil society in this dynamic.
- **Recommendation 13: Support to policies and legislative frameworks.** Work related to legislation and policies must take into account the time needed for participative and inclusive processes to ensure a better ownership and follow-up by institutions, most of them in reorganization. Support to regulatory frameworks and to policies must also be contemplated in the wider perspective of institutional strengthening.
- **Recommendation 14: Support to policies and legislative frameworks.** While the decentralization process makes progress, assistance to define policies and strategies will have to take into consideration the provincial dimension. FAO will have to concentrate its support on policies, strategies and planning in a few provinces where decentralization has developed well and where a strong political will exists.
- **Recommendation 15: Support to policies and legislative frameworks.** FAO will have to focus on advocacy activities, in particular by ensuring a strong presence in

thematic groups, especially where FAO has important interventions, i.e. forestry and agriculture, and by emphasizing the role of agriculture in food security and poverty alleviation.

- **Recommendation 16: Capacity building.** FAO needs to intensify its efforts in the capacity building of governmental institutions, in particular at the provincial level. FAO must ensure that its support is in line with a wider context of institutional strengthening and seek complementarities while working with partners.
- **Recommendation 17: HIV/AIDS.** HIV/AIDS problems should be taken more systematically into consideration in project design, especially in areas of high prevalence or considered at risk. A mission by an expert from headquarters and/or from the Regional Office for emergency operations in Nairobi (REOA) would help define a strategy in line with guidelines developed by FAO<sup>3</sup>, building on positive experiences in DRC related to awareness-raising and mitigation, and developing partnerships with organizations involved in these issues.
- **Recommendation 18: Gender aspects.** FAO will need to integrate gender aspects in the various steps of project design and implementation in a more systematic manner. This requires increased consultation with beneficiaries, availability of gender-based data, awareness-raising of FAO staff on gender-related issues, and a proactive position towards partner organizations involved in this domain.
- **Recommendation 19: Monitoring and evaluation.** It will be necessary to simplify the revision of the monitoring system for emergency interventions and its database, and concentrate on an in-depth identification of information needs for a sustainable management of interventions by the UCU. In the first place, information needs to relate to project progress, and to activities, beneficiaries and specific information needs of stakeholders in the second place. To this end, FAO could follow the model of monitoring systems of the various field programmes.
- **Recommendation 20: Performance of the Representation.** In order to improve his/her operational capacity and effectiveness, the FAO Representative must work in close collaboration with UCU, the CTR coordinators in the provinces, TCEO, OCD and technical units at headquarters. Liaison with the government and donors at the provincial level must be reinforced by training CTR coordinators to also carry out liaison and advocacy functions with provincial governments on the Representation's behalf. Support from headquarters and decentralized offices must be received on time by those who requested it. Operational capacity of the Representation and of the UCU must be improved. Processes of financial transactions within the Representation and the UCU should be revised. UCU operations should be undertaken by staff experienced in monitoring and evaluation who are able to properly carry out administrative and procurement functions.

xxxiii. The last two recommendations, of a general nature, are elaborated on the basis of the above 20 sectoral and/or thematic recommendations:

- **Recommendation 21: Redefinition of the FAO National Medium-Term Priority Framework.** The NMTPF should reflect an overall coherence and show some continuity between emergency, rehabilitation and development activities, by better targeting areas where it would be necessary to carry on with emergency and rehabilitation interventions, and by increasing synergies between the various activities and elaborating some advocacy for transition. Some specific support must be foreseen

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<sup>3</sup> FAO, *Regional tool to address HIV/AIDS problem in an emergency context*. Draft 2, 29 September 2005.

to the benefit of the new provincial institutions regarding strategy definition and planning, and capacity building at provincial level. Other elements to be considered include FAO comparative advantages compared to other interveners in terms of policy and legislative support as well as of analysis and dissemination of information on food security, the latter being where FAO has recognized technical expertise. FAO NMTPF should be realistic vis-à-vis the Organization's operational capacity and take into account the government plan for the implementation of DSCR (the strategy document for growth and poverty reduction, also known as PRSP), CAF (Country Assistance Framework) and PAP (Plan for government priority actions) for the short term. FAO staff working on development activities and those working on emergency and rehabilitation should also be involved in this exercise. This also applies to government and donor partners, who will approve the final document. In support of this exercise, it is recommended to plan a joint mission involving TCE and the Regional sub-office in Libreville.

- **Recommendation 22: Improvement of the Representation's capacity.** In order to increase capacities of advocacy and participation in the mechanisms of coordination and management of the project portfolio while respecting the volume and diversity of activities, it is recommended to raise the Representation classification (presently B) to A level. A stronger presence should be guaranteed at the provincial level by using staff from decentralized offices and sub-offices for the formulation and supervision of all FAO activities, including development, as well as advocacy and liaison activities with the government and partners. The profile of staff posted to provinces should be revised according to these new responsibilities. Operational capacities of the Organization should be strengthened, among others, by reinforcing the procurement unit and upgrading the delegations of authority.