

FINAL REPORT

SAFER PROJECT: MID-TERM EVALUATION

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Executive summary

The SAFER project aims to improve the resilience of households, communities and agriculture systems in four regions of South Sudan – Lakes, Jonglei, Western Equatoria and Northern Bahr El-Ghazal – through restoring and diversifying livelihoods (output 1); restoring and strengthening agricultural production practices (output 2); and strengthening community and intercommunal resource sharing and management practices (output 3). Funded by USAID, the USD 37.8 million project is implemented by FAO through five IPs over a three-year period, between 2017 and 2020.

The primary purpose of this MTE is learning, for the remaining months of the SAFER project, and especially for future resilience programming in South Sudan for which the PfRR provides an important channel. The evaluation has been carried out according to the following criteria: relevance, effectiveness and project results, efficiency, and sustainability. It explores partnerships and reviews the SAFER project in relation to the humanitarian-development nexus. The evaluation methods included: a review of relevant documentation; field visits to Yambio (WES), Rumbek (East and West Lakes), and Bor (Jonglei); key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

Relevance

Consultation with project stakeholders at local level was constrained by insecurity during the project design phase, eventually taking place in the early months of the project in 2018. Through the CBPP exercise, participants were asked to identify enterprises that the project could support, but opportunities for adapting the project design, particularly its sectoral focus, were limited. This contributed to a sense, expressed by some, that SAFER was a ‘top-down’ project designed in Juba. The project has not explored what resilience capacity means to the target population in any depth, although the RIMA II baseline survey in 2017 confirmed that the activities planned under SAFER were in line with the key drivers of resilience in the target geographical areas, and therefore confirmed the overall relevance of the project design.

The SAFER project is most relevant to crop-producing farmers, and to communities that have a cultural tradition of working in groups rather than individually. It has given much less attention to the livestock dimension of livelihoods despite being implemented in locations which are predominantly agro-pastoral such as Lakes, and despite the interest in livestock production and enterprise expressed in the CBPP in crop-producing areas such as WES. Fishing – both capture fishing and fish-farming – has been given slightly more attention, but is still a relatively small component of the project. Members of groups supported by SAFER indicated a wide range of unmet priorities, many that go beyond FAO’s mandate. The PfRR provides an opportunity to channel this information to relevant actors, for example agencies working in the water sector.

The project has mainly supported and developed existing livelihoods, for example with improved varieties of existing crops and improved agricultural practices, rather than diversifying livelihoods. The evaluation questions the project’s strategy of supporting enterprise groups with the value chain of just one marketable commodity. Many groups are engaged in a number of different productive and trading activities, and resilience programming needs to be broader ranging, and designed to spread risk. Rather than focus on marketing one commodity, enterprise groups can be supported with marketing and business

skills and encouraged to apply those skills to a range of commodities. Where SAFER has collaborated with other agencies, for example with WFP and UNOPS to construct feeder roads to surplus-producing areas supported by the SAFER project in WES, it is likely to have a more significant impact.

The project was unlikely to reach the most vulnerable within communities as they are less likely to be part of production and enterprise groups, the main vehicle for project implementation. Implemented alongside emergency projects this was a reasonable approach as the most vulnerable were being supported by either FAO's ELRP or by WFP's humanitarian programming. Women and youth were appropriately identified as priority target groups in the Project Document. Data available for some locations indicate 50 to 60% of project participants are female. No data have been collected on the percentage of youth participating in the project. Youth tend to favour non-agricultural enterprises best supported by other agencies such as UNDP, for example through Vocational Training Centres and youth employment programmes. The participation of people with disabilities is very low despite this being a USAID priority. An appropriate adaptation of SAFER in WES was support to CAFAG families followed demobilisation of children recruited by the South Sudan National Liberation Movement in 2018/ 19.

The 'one-size-fits all' approach that SAFER adopted is not appropriate for different geographical contexts and for different livelihood groups. Future resilience projects should be adapted to the local context and designed with greater flexibility to respond to new opportunities and constraints in a highly dynamic context. Alternative approaches could ensure the wider community benefits, for example making FFS and demonstration plots available to a wider group.

The SAFER project is aligned to many aspects of FAO South Sudan's previous and current resilience strategies.

Results and effectiveness

While some of the assumptions in the SAFER project logical framework are appropriate and holding, those that assume there will be no shocks are inconsistent with the logic of the project. A resilience project must instead assume that shocks will occur, and should be designed with sufficient flexibility to respond to such shocks as and when they happen.

The implicit assumption that the target population lacks agricultural inputs and that these must be supplied by FAO from external sources is also problematic. FAO's capacity for effective procurement and timely distribution of inputs was overestimated. Instead of assuming inputs must be supplied from external sources, resilience projects should be designed according to actual needs and take advantage of locally available inputs and materials.

The SAFER logical framework has conflated outputs with outcomes, which has compromised measurement of the overall project results. Although the SAFER follow-up household survey (based on RIMA-II) in early 2019 concluded that household resilience capacity index (RCI) had increased due to the project's activities, the evidence supporting this attribution is unclear. The project had not yet been implemented on the ground for a full twelve months; many agricultural inputs were delivered late in the first year; there is no firm evidence for diversified income sources; and during this period humanitarian agencies were providing relatively high levels of emergency assistance. The MTE concludes that the project

may have helped to boost food security for project participants, for example through increased food availability (relating to increased area planted to crops and vegetables, increased yields, increased fish catch), and through increased income, mainly from sales of crops and vegetables with some good practice examples. But it is premature to conclude that it has built resilience in a lasting and sustainable way.

Whether the enterprise activities under Output 1 represent diversification (as opposed to restoration) of livelihoods is difficult to determine as there are no indicators in the PIRS that specifically measure livelihood diversification. Over a quarter of the enterprise groups are marketing vegetables, but it is encouraging to see 19 different enterprise types, and a small number of ‘new’ enterprise activities such as milk bars and goat fattening. All IPs complained about the late delivery of inputs to enterprise groups with a negative impact on production and productivity. In some cases the inputs required were never delivered, a major disincentive to the group’s performance, also eroding the group’s trust in the IP. There appears to have been limited support for local input supply. Given these challenges, increasing capacity for accessing and supplying inputs locally should be explored.

Linking some types of enterprise groups to markets has also been a challenge, for example for fish where local markets near rivers are saturated yet access to more distant urban markets requires preservation and transport. Vegetable enterprise groups located near towns and urban centres have been more successful in accessing local markets. In WES there were early and quick successes amongst enterprise groups linked to WFP’s SAMS project, allowing farmers to sell their produce (mostly maize) at rural aggregation centres. Similar links have been made with ITFs, providing an outlet for SAFER groups to sell seed. These examples demonstrate the importance of joint planning and close collaboration between agencies involved in the different aspects of enhancing market linkages.

VSLAs have not been a prominent feature of the SAFER project. The original target of 375 groups was downscaled to 50, which is unlikely to be reached. This is a missed opportunity as VSLAs have been very effective in other resilience projects in South Sudan and similar contexts.

There have been delays in the construction of infrastructure associated with Output 1, such as market sheds, slaughter slabs, auction yards and milk bars, partly due to lengthy processes of site selection and approval, implying the target figures in the PIRS may have been over ambitious. Ownership is clearest where infrastructure is associated with particular enterprise groups such as milk bars, and less clear for some infrastructure with community-wide benefits such as market sheds. The construction of slaughter houses in Jonglei State has triggered a positive policy change by the local authorities, and appears to have also triggered a positive change in behaviour amongst consumers.

Project activities have focused more on producer groups than enterprise groups so far, in pursuit of Output 2. PSIR indicators show over-achievement on the 2018 targets for agricultural production (for maize/sorghum, milk, and fish catch) although it was not possible for the MTE to verify all of these indicator results.

In terms of crop production, performance varies between states. In WES, for example, there appears to have been a significant increase, much less so in Lakes. Contrasting agroecological conditions and socio-cultural factors may account for much of the difference, but available evidence suggests that training and market opportunities have significantly

influenced production and the uptake of improved agricultural practices. The late delivery of inputs has been a major and widespread challenge reducing the effectiveness of training and with negative implications for crop planting times and hence productivity. Even ITFs were often late, sometimes to the point they had to be cancelled. Much remains to be done to build resilient seed systems in South Sudan, including clarifying the objectives of different types of seed interventions in support of this aim.

Increased vegetable production appears to have been more widespread across the project's locations than increased cereal production. Irrigation means the late delivery of seed may not have had such a negative impact. Where there has been support to the livestock sector, it has mainly focused on training and support to CAHWs, linked to the ELRP for the supply of drugs and vaccines to treat disease outbreaks. Again, performance between states is variable. For capture fisheries there has been a substantial increase in production with greater access to inputs, but a challenge in processing and marketing. For aquaculture, FAO has appropriately scaled back its plans to a pilot-level activity, mainly due to lack of input supply (fingerlings and feed) and limited potential for viable production. The viability of fish farming in WES remains to be seen. A small number of bee-keeping producer groups have been supported with improved bee hives although not all have been delivered yet. Some have been supported in the processing and sale of honey, with opportunities for SAFER to learn from the experience of other agencies that have successfully run similar projects.

Progress on Output 3, on NRM, has lagged behind. Associated with community-level behaviour change it is inherently more challenging to implement, IPs may have faced time and capacity constraints, and there have been changes in international NRM staff within FAO. The target number of groups has been formed for NRM-related economic activities, such as teak production and the sale of tree seedlings, and the target number of NRM Committees has been established and trained although only one has drafted an action plan so far. Experience in WES shows that behaviour change is more likely when local events highlight their relevance, for example the threat of Ebola reducing the hunting of bushmeat.

Output 4 on livelihood protection is implemented and monitored by the ELRP.

With adequate seasonal rains and security it is highly likely that resilience, food security and incomes will continue to improve in 2019-2020, and the SAFER project will continue to contribute to improvements in outcome indicators. But the choice of project indicators is a poor reflection of the actual performance of SAFER, and there must be greater caution in making claims of attribution. To strengthen project performance in the remaining period, the following must be addressed: greater attention to market access/ development; tailored support to IPs according to their capacity gaps; greater use of local inputs with the possibility of IP procurement to avoid delays in input delivery; and increased attention to group cohesion. The cut in funding for the final year will mainly affect the infrastructure components of the project and some livelihood inputs.

Efficiency

Despite the challenging context of South Sudan the SAFER project has made progress in some areas in a short period of time, for example overcoming obstacles to construct infrastructure. Because many of the project's activities are closely tied to the agricultural season, however, the late and in some cases non-delivery of inputs has been the single biggest factor affecting timely implementation. Consequences include: wasting farmer labour where they have cleared land but seed and other agricultural inputs are delivered late and cannot be

planted; reduced yields or harvest failure; ineffectiveness of; breakdown in trust and credibility, between local communities and IPs, and between FAO and IPs. As delays in FAO procurement and delivery of inputs to South Sudan are not new but appear to be systemic, this begs a question about why the SAFER project was designed to be so heavily dependent on externally procured inputs for its success when other approaches could have been explored.

Working almost entirely through groups may have been efficient from a training perspective, but may have limited the potential for SAFER to benefit the wider community and therefore not have been the most efficient use of project resources. A more nuanced approach to training could also have resulted in the more efficient use of resources. Effective coordination is critical to the efficient use of resources between agencies and was strongest in WES but weakest in other geographical locations where there is evidence of duplication.

Partnerships

FAO and USAID have a constructive and strategic partnership, based on comparative advantage and moving beyond the confines of a purely contractual relationship. USAID's championing of the PfRR has placed the SAFER project and FAO centre-stage on this collaborative inter-agency platform. The FAO/ IP relationship with government at state level varies from state to state according to the commitment and engagement of the respective state authorities, and staff turnover on both sides. The FAO-IP relationship has been predominantly a contractual one, driven by the LOA. Prescriptive in nature, this has not been conducive to the project drawing upon the respective IP's knowledge and experience, nor to innovation.

The SAFER project began in an era of increased collaboration between UN agencies. Numerous partnerships were foreseen from the outset, facilitated in WES through rollout of the PfRR. This is where SAFER partnership with other agencies has been strongest, followed by Northern Bahr El Ghazal, offering the potential for SAFER to have a deeper and more lasting impact than if implemented in isolation. But there have also been missed partnership opportunities, with some operational agencies and especially with researchers and academia. Any future large-scale resilience programme should consider including an operational research component that is firmly linked to operational programming, drawing on experience elsewhere, that can advance understanding of resilience programming in a context of protracted crisis.

Within the partnership model knowledge transfer has tended to be one-way, of technical knowledge from FAO to its IPs, missing opportunities for them to learn from each other, or for FAO to learn from the IPs. Future partnership models must draw more on recognising and exploiting the comparative advantage of each partner, with a more dynamic and inclusive process for knowledge transfer and learning, for example through facilitating exchange visits and highlighting innovations and successful adaptations.

Sustainability

South Sudan is an extremely challenging context for the sustainability of any resilience or development programming once project funding has ended. Faced with very weak government capacity the SAFER project has appropriately pursued a strategy of supporting the private sector, most evidently in its support to, and reinforcement of the CAHW model, promoting financial independence through cost recovery, although the clarity with which this

model is being pursued and therefore its effectiveness varies between locations. The prospects for sustaining the FFS for agriculture extension services are less promising.

Appointing and building the capacity of two strong national NGOs as IPs is an important contribution to strengthening the wider institutional context for resilience and development work in South Sudan.

There are many factors affecting the sustainability of the group structure which underpins the project outcomes, including: whether groups existed before the project started; whether they have registered as cooperatives; and whether there are longer-term commitments of mutual benefit that bind the group together, such as VSLAs. The group's long-term security of land tenure, which is often unclear, is another factor. The sustainability of NRM committees relates to their recognition by local authorities and their link to NRM-related economic activities. Clarity of land tenure will also affect the sustainability of the infrastructure constructed by SAFER, for which the record is mixed.

Building resilience sustainably at local level requires longer-term engagement than two years. The prospects for sustaining outcomes for output 2 are strongest, particularly for improved agricultural practices and increased yields where these are not dependent upon externally provided inputs. For output 1, outcomes are most likely to be sustained where enterprise groups have strong and established market links, although there are currently few examples of this. Some of the output 3 activities, such as tree nurseries, may continue beyond the end of the project, but changing environmental practices through changed behavior is less likely to occur over the short time span of the project. A key learning is that achieving long-term and sustainable change requires a systemic approach, paying attention to institutional structures and processes, for example for the provision of agro-inputs as well as technical inputs and training at individual or group level.

The humanitarian-development nexus

SAFER has developed some positive synergies between humanitarian and development/resilience programming, for example encouraging SAFER-supported enterprise groups to supply seed fairs, some of which are ELRP-funded, and linking surplus-producing enterprise groups with WFP's SAMS project. This is enhanced where one NGO is implementing both emergency and resilience programmes. The volatility of South Sudan means that resilience programmes must have the capacity to shift direction to meet humanitarian needs if the context changes.

Changing the mindset from one of welfare and hand-outs to one of productive engagement, enterprise and partnership has been one of the greatest challenges – for communities, agencies and governments. This is a long-term process that must be factored into the project design and implementation. Running humanitarian programmes in the same geographical areas and the same communities as the SAFER project has caused friction between SAFER project participants and IPs, and within communities. Targeting and managing the graduation of households and communities from humanitarian to developmental assistance is another associated challenge.

Conclusions

The successful implementation of SAFER has demonstrated that it is possible to implement resilience-oriented development programmes in parts of South Sudan, even during periods of conflict and insecurity. In an extremely difficult operating environment SAFER has achieved

some important outcomes. Positive examples of collaboration with other agencies can contribute to wider impact. Nevertheless, the project was overly ambitious in terms of what could be sustainably achieved in a three year timeframe.

The SAFER project is based on a model of predominantly technical solutions, highly dependent on the provision of externally-sourced inputs and training. The effectiveness of this model has been undermined by FAO's consistently poor record of delayed delivery of inputs. A long-standing issue highlighted in the 2016 evaluation, this indicates the need for a major strategic rethink of FAO's role in procurement and delivery. The social dimension of resilience has been weaker in the SAFER project, for example building social capital within project-supported groups.

The highly prescribed monitoring and evaluation framework for SAFER, focused on numeric outputs, has tended to drive the project along a narrowly prescribed track which did not encourage innovation or grasping of new opportunities as they arose. The design is focused on individual outputs without enough consideration of how they are connected. It could have benefited from a more systemic approach/ way of thinking.

FAO is a key player in building resilience in South Sudan, especially in rural areas. With a different and better-resourced model of knowledge exchange and learning it could play a stronger leadership role, deepening understanding of resilience and synthesising and promoting learning to inform programming. The PfRR provides an important platform for fulfilling this potential.

This MTE has identified ten strategic learnings and recommendations.

SAFER MID-TERM EVALUATION

1. Introduction and background

This is a report of the mid-term evaluation (MTE) of the Sustainable Agriculture for Economic Resiliency (SAFER) project, implemented in four geographic areas of South Sudan – Lakes, Jonglei, Western Equatoria and Northern Bahr El-Ghazal¹. The project aims to improve the resilience of households, communities and agriculture systems in stressed and crisis levels of food-insecure regions of South Sudan. With three particular threats in mind: conflict, climate and economic instability, the SAFER project was designed to fill the nexus between humanitarian and development programming by promoting sustainable livelihoods. It has set out to do this through:

- (i) restoring and diversifying livelihoods
- (ii) restoring and strengthening agricultural production practices
- (iii) strengthening community and intercommunal resource sharing and management practices

The SAFER project is funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) through five service providers, otherwise known as implementing partners (IPs):

- (i) ACTED (formerly 'Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development') in East Lakes
- (ii) Veterinaires Sans Frontieres Germany (VSF-G) in West Lakes
- (iii) Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Jonglei
- (iv) Star Trust Organisation (STO) in Western Equatoria, and
- (v) Sudan Peace and Development Education Programme (SPEDP) in Northern Bahr El-Ghazal

The project duration is three years, from August 2017 to August 2020. The project budget was almost USD 37.8 million, of which USD 10 million was allocated for the Emergency Livelihood Response Programme (ELRP). In August 2019 USAID informed FAO South Sudan that the project budget would be cut by USD 5 million in its final year, which resulted in the project receiving USD 6 million instead of USD 16 million.

The MTE of the SAFER project was due to be carried out 1.5 years after implementation, but was delayed by a few months to September 2019. This is only 18 months since project implementation began in the field, led by the five non-governmental organisations (NGOs) listed above.

¹ Based on the original ten states of South Sudan

2. Mid-term evaluation purpose, scope, design, methodology and limitations

2.1 Purpose and scope

The overall and primary purpose of this MTE is learning-oriented, to guide adaptive management for the remaining period of the SAFER project. However, as there are only five months of field-based project implementation still to run, much of the learning from this MTE is directed at future resilience programming by FAO and USAID in South Sudan. The multi-agency Partnership for Resilience and Recovery (PfRR), established after the SAFER project began, also provides an important channel and target for this learning. It is an opportunity for the MTE, and for the SAFER project more broadly, to have wider influence. There is also an accountability dimension to the MTE, to the project's stakeholders and in particular to USAID, assessing the key project results achieved so far.

2.2 Evaluation design, methodology and constraints

2.2.1 Design of the evaluation and report outline

As per the Terms of Reference (TOR) – see Annex 1 – this MTE has been carried out according to the standard evaluation criteria of: relevance; effectiveness (incorporating project results); efficiency, and sustainability – all reported upon in Section 3 on the evaluation findings. Two additional sub-sections have been added to Section 3: on partnerships, as these have been central to implementation of SAFER, and are evaluated against the criteria of both effectiveness and efficiency; and on the development-humanitarian nexus, also central to the design of the SAFER project. The MTE team has been asked to validate key assumptions in the project's development hypothesis. These are addressed under 'effectiveness', as per the evaluation matrix.

As this is a learning-oriented evaluation, key learnings are pulled out and highlighted in red throughout. Higher-level strategic learning is captured in section 5. All of the learning informs the evaluation's recommendations.

2.2.2 Evaluation methodology

The MTE has been carried out by a team of two international consultants, working in South Sudan between 18th September and 4th October 2019, and subsequently working remotely from the UK.

The evaluation methodology was as follows:

- (1) Initial interviews in Juba with key project stakeholders (FAO and IP staff, USAID representative), and initial documentation review: 18th to 22nd September
- (2) Based on the findings from step (1) above, development of an evaluation matrix that unpacks the evaluation questions and sub-questions, and describes the evaluation methods in terms of data collection, information sources, and how the evaluative judgement would be formed. This was circulated for comments in the week of 23rd September. (No comments were received). See Annex 2
- (3) Field visits to three of the project's four geographical locations: - 23rd to 27th September:

Yambio (WES) – independent evaluator;
Rumbek (E&W Lakes) – independent evaluator;
Bor (Jonglei) – FAO Uganda staff member²

During the field visits:

- (i) meetings and interviews were held with IP staff, FAO field office staff, other agency staff (UN and NGOs) and government officers
 - (ii) key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with community leaders and an agro-input dealer
 - (iii) focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with members of groups and committees supported by SAFER
 - (iv) visits were made to the sites where the project has constructed infrastructure
See Annex 3 for a full list of those interviewed
- (4) Further interviews and meetings in Juba: with key stakeholders of resilience programming in South Sudan, including donors, UN agencies, government officers; and with FAO staff – 28th September to 4th October
- (5) Preliminary analysis of evaluation findings, presented to FAO and USAID, for feedback and comment – 2nd to 3rd October
- (6) Continued documentation review as more project documents were made available – 7th to 28th October
- (7) Continued analysis, remote interviews and report drafting – 7th to 31st October

The resilience index and measurement analysis (RIMA) has been used as a key tool underpinning SAFER, in a baseline and follow-up assessments. The evaluation reviews the use of RIMA II and draws on the RIMA II findings.

2.2.3 Constraints

There have been three major constraints to this MTE:

- (1) delays in contracting the two international consultants, which meant they arrived in Juba two and three days late respectively, curtailing the time available for interviews with stakeholders before the fieldwork, and the documentation review
- (2) the time available for fieldwork, and particularly for visiting communities participating in the SAFER project: this meant that it was not possible to explore certain issues which would have required much more in-depth consultation, for example how local people understand the concept of resilience, and understanding and observing gender dynamics within the groups supported by the project
- (3) insecurity: this determined which rural areas and communities the evaluation team was able to visit, particularly in West Lakes state

² Charles Owach, Deputy FAO-R, Uganda

3. Findings

3.1 Relevance

OVERALL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

How relevant is the project:

- a) to meeting the needs and priorities of the target population**
- b) in contributing to FAO's resilience strategy, and to the PfRR**

3.1.1 Relevance of the project design and implementation to the needs and priorities of different groups in the target population

SUB-QUESTIONS

EQ: How relevant is the project design, and the implementation of its interventions, to the needs and priorities of the target population, paying attention to gender, generation (ie different age groups), and other groups within the target population?

EQ: How relevant is the project to building the resilience of the target population (to gender, generation, and other groups within the target population)?

Theory of change

The theory of change underpinning SAFER, as articulated in the Project Document, is that *'in order to improve the ability of households and communities to withstand, recover from and prevent natural and man-made shocks that negatively impact livelihoods, the activity aims to strengthen and diversify livelihoods systems, as well as good agricultural production practices, while simultaneously strengthening rural community and intercommunal resource sharing and management practices. By improving households' income, diversifying their livelihood options and making them more productive, the activity will build their resilience within the complex and challenging context of South Sudan'* (pp15).

The project *'is based on implementation of a set of activities that complement each other, flexible enough to address the unpredictable and changing context, rebuilds (sic.) social cohesion through economic interdependence to enhance food security and nutrition and thereby improve livelihood resilience of different categories of the community with emphasis on youth and women'*.

This theory of change reflects what is becoming the standard approach to building resilience of rural households, through a combination of more robust and diversified livelihood systems, with a social dimension and strengthened natural resource management.

Project stakeholders' understanding of resilience and identification of shocks

Understanding what resilience means and how to strengthen it has tended to be defined and driven by aid agencies in this relatively new aid paradigm. Less well-explored is how those experiencing recurrent shocks, the target of most resilience programming, define and describe the concept of resilience in relation to themselves. "Resilience" often does not translate well into local languages, and from a cursory review the languages of South Sudan are no exception. While RIMA II has applied a now tried and tested tool to measure resilience, this

is still an externally-defined resilience capacity index. The component of RIMA II that explores households/ communities' subjective perception of their resilience was not used³.

The SAFER project has thus not had the space to explore in any depth what resilience capacity means to the target population. The community-based participatory planning (CBPP) exercise (described below), for example, asked participants to identify viable and suitable enterprises that the project could support, rather than the more fundamental question of how their resilience could be built. It was not possible to explore how local communities and local people understand the concept of resilience during the short period of fieldwork for this MTE, although we did ask about the main recurrent shocks that communities face. These are wide-ranging. Communities and key informants frequently referred to two of three main threats identified in the SAFER Project Document: conflict and climate-related (drought, floods and variable rainfall). Economic shocks were rarely mentioned, possibly because these are no longer seen as 'shocks' by local people (although this would require further investigation to confirm). But pest infestation and livestock disease featured prominently.

The MTE did, however, explore the concept of resilience with FAO and IP staff, particularly at state level. While FAO staff described resilience in terms of coping with, recovering from, and adapting to shocks, closely reflecting FAO's definition of resilience, IP staff were more likely to describe resilience in terms of producing a surplus. In the words of one IP project manager: 'sustaining yourself to have a surplus, changing the mindset from subsistence to producing more for the market'. To some extent this may be influenced by the project design, which emphasised increased production in year one. Interestingly, diversification of livelihoods was rarely mentioned by FAO or IP staff although this is a key strategy for building resilience within the SAFER project. When exploring how resilience programming is different from development programming, there was often a lack of clarity. Resilience to shocks was occasionally mentioned, but more often it is defined in relation to the nexus and linking humanitarian and development programming.

The RIMA II baseline survey in 2017 showed that key drivers of resilience in the geographical areas targeted by SAFER, included investment in household assets, building social safety nets (SSN), improving education and training and income diversification. It concluded that these findings were in line with the planned project activities, thus confirming the overall relevance of the project design. Somewhat surprisingly it identified drought as the most statistically significant shock impacting resilience, according to the regression model. This does not chime with how local people described the shocks that have impacted their livelihoods at the time of the evaluation, particularly in conflict-affected areas and in relation to pests and livestock disease. This may indicate changing perceptions over time, but is also an argument for taking time to explore local people's perceptions and experience. As explained in section 3.2 below, the recurrence of most shocks during the project's lifetime was somewhat surprisingly 'assumed away' in the SAFER Project Document, rather than planning for them.

Consultation with the target population

This is obviously critical to ensuring the project meets the needs and priorities of the target population. 2016, when the project was under design, was a period of high insecurity which constrained fieldwork. This may have contributed to the sense expressed by some key

³ Although there was a qualitative element to the SAFER baseline survey using RIMA II, this appears to have focused on aspects of livelihoods, food security status and shocks and stresses, and less on what resilience means to the target population

informants that SAFER had been designed in Juba in a ‘top-down’ manner. The main period of consultation with project stakeholders at local level began when the project started, with validation workshops with state-level officials in the first quarter of 2018. But consultation at community level did not happen until IPs had been appointed and Letters of Agreement (LOA) signed. At this point the latitude for adapting the project design, particularly its sectoral focus (see below), was limited.

CBPP was the main tool for community consultation. Previously used by WFP and FAO in Northern Bahr El Ghazal for the BRACE project, FAO was keen to use the same approach to promote consistency across projects. In practice, the CBPP appears to have been used for two main purposes under the SAFER project. First and foremost it was used to engage the community and generate a sense of ownership of the project. A wide range of different stakeholders was involved in each CBPP exercise. Second, it was intended to identify potential economic opportunities for the enterprise groups. It appeared to achieve both, but the range of economic opportunities identified went well beyond the prescribed scope of the SAFER project. In WES, for example, in the CBPP exercise facilitated by STO, participants identified brick-laying, sand and aggregate making, petty trading and requested loan schemes as well as agriculture and fisheries. In East Lakes, ACTED adopted a slightly different approach, starting with the list of options provided by FAO in the LOA, and exploring the viability of each with community members. For the producer groups, however, it appears that there was less consultation and choice, according to members of those groups consulted by the evaluation team and according to the available documentation. Instead, in collaboration with FAO’s Area office, the respective IPs held community meetings to identify existing producer groups that could be supported by the project.

SAFER’s crop orientation: relevant for whom?

Although the Project Document acknowledges the significance of livestock to livelihoods, especially in Lakes, Northern Bahr El Ghazal and Jonglei, the design of the SAFER project is oriented to boosting and supporting agricultural (meaning crop) production and marketing. This is especially evident under Output 2, to restore and strengthen good agricultural production practices. According to the Project Document there is still scope to focus on the livestock dimension of livelihoods, but in practice this has been given limited attention in implementation. See Figure 1 and Annex 6 for the sectoral focus of enterprise groups in the four geographical locations targeted by the SAFER project.

The reasons for the strong crop orientation appear to be two-fold. According to key informants interviewed for the MTE, USAID favoured a more crop/ agriculture-oriented project to boost food security, partly driven by South Sudan’s large cereal deficit. The FAO South Sudan office appeared to reinforce this, regarding SAFER as the agriculture-oriented resilience project as a counter-balance to the EU-funded cross-border resilience project which has a major livestock focus.

As a result, SAFER has been most relevant to crop-producing farmers, despite being implemented in geographical locations which are predominantly agro-pastoral, such as Lakes, especially the eastern Lakes. Even in the predominantly crop-producing region of WES, early project consultations at local level indicated a high degree of interest in the project supporting livestock production and enterprise: goats, pigs and poultry. This was raised as a priority in 12 out of 14 CBPP exercises. Yet there have been a very small number of livestock producer/ enterprise group in WES. Fishing – both capture fishing and fish-farming – has been given slightly more attention in the project design and implementation,

but is still a relatively small component of the project. While the project has clearly addressed some of the agricultural and fisheries needs and priorities of the target population, it has only marginally addressed their livestock needs.

In FGDs with group members carried out for this MTE, their wide range of other unmet priorities was striking. In Western Lakes, for example, three groups identified water as one of their major needs, also identified by two groups in WES along with other basic services. Finding ways of channeling this information to actors working in the water sector is essential, which should be facilitated by the PfRR. Female members of an enterprise and a producer group in WES identified grinding mills as a high priority, to make their work easier so they have time for other activities. Although the provision of grinding machines was included in the Project Document under Output 1, to support local value chain activities, this has not yet been followed through in implementation. Transport, often bicycles, was frequently mentioned by group members in all three different geographical locations: Jonglei, WES and Western Lakes, usually for taking surplus produce to market.

Strengthening, and/ or diversifying livelihood systems?

In practice, the SAFER project has mainly supported and developed existing livelihoods rather than diversified livelihoods. For example, it has provided farmers with improved varieties of the crops they were already cultivating, and trained and supported them to improve their agricultural practices. While this has improved yields and the marketable surplus for some groups, there is little evidence that it has actually diversified their livelihood. The few examples of livelihood diversification mostly relate to vegetable production where new crops may have been introduced.

In supporting enterprise groups, the project has concentrated on just one marketable commodity, for example maize, or milk, or fish, on the assumption that focus is important to the group being successful. Focussing on a specific value chain was regarded by the project as a learning process to understand the bottlenecks in the value chain development. However, many of the groups are engaged in a number of different productive and trading activities. In WES, for example, one enterprise group in Nzara county was farming maize, producing vegetables, growing teak and coffee and had a fish pond. It was supported by the project only to market maize. In Lakes, one of the more successful groups designated by the project as a 'tree nursery group' was similarly involved in a range of different activities beyond seedling production, although the project only supported the latter. Instead, the project could have supported groups with basic business skills to strengthen their capacity to market their surplus in more than one commodity. When asked about their unmet priorities, members of most groups indicated a range of priorities: infrastructural, productive and processing/ marketing. This raises a question about the decision to support groups with just one marketable commodity, especially where pests, like fall army worm, and livestock disease can have a devastating impact on that one commodity. Although the SAFER Project Document recognizes that: 'In years of crop failure, livestock play an important role as fall back assets especially small stock for female headed households' (pp18), in practice the SAFER project has been much more 'monocultural' in its approach.

Resilience is multi-faceted. The current thinking about appropriate approaches to promoting resilience in South Sudan (and elsewhere), favour a multi-sectoral and area-based approach. Where SAFER has collaborated with other agencies, for example with WFP and UNOPS to construct feeder roads to surplus-producing areas supported by the SAFER project in WES, it

is likely to have a more significant impact. There is a limit to what one agency can achieve, through agriculture-related development and trade alone.

Learnings:

The monocultural emphasis should be re-visited. Resilience programming needs to be broader ranging, recognising the importance of spreading risk. Rather than focus on marketing one commodity, enterprise groups can be supported with marketing and business skills, and encouraged to apply those skills to marketing a range of commodities. Building resilience requires a multi-sectoral approach and multi-sectoral interventions.

Target population, working in groups and the wider community

Almost by definition, the project as designed was unlikely to reach the most vulnerable within communities as they are less likely to be part of production and enterprise groups. However, implemented alongside emergency projects, there was a certain logic in expecting that the most vulnerable were being supported by either FAO's ELRP or by WFP's humanitarian programming. A more relevant question, explored below, is the extent to which the SAFER project was designed to contribute to building resilience for the wider community.

Women and youth are identified as priority target groups in the Project Document. Although the document does not articulate the rationale for either group, it nevertheless appears to make sense. FSNMS data and analysis over a number of years have shown that women are generally more disadvantaged and that female-headed households are more food insecure, despite the contradictory and surprising information provided by the baseline survey that female-headed households are more resilient. South Sudan has one of the youngest populations in the world: over 70% of the population is estimated to be under 30 years old⁴. There is therefore a logic to targeting young people.

FAO's LOAs with its IPs stipulate that 60% of project participants should be female, matching FAO's target percentage for seeds and tools distribution under the ELRP, and that 20% should be youth, aged between 15 and 29. Available data for some locations indicates female participation between 50 and 60%. In contrast, there have been no data collected on the percentage of youth participating in the project although the evaluation team did encounter a significant number of young people (often more than 20%), both male and female, in the FGDs with group members. There is one well-known group, the 'Bethlehem Group' in WES, with a membership that is entirely comprised of youth. According to key informants, in the consultations at the beginning of the project youth often identified non-agricultural enterprises in which they would like to be engaged, for example bricklaying. They are said to favour less labour-intensive livelihoods and a more rapid economic return than is normally associated with traditional farming. Their stated priorities are therefore more likely to be met by other agencies such as UNDP that are supporting Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) and youth employment.

USAID's Disability Policy, which promotes the participation and equalization of opportunities of individuals with disabilities, features clearly in the Project Document. One pre-existing producer group formed entirely of people with disabilities (PWD) has been

⁴ <https://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/south-sudan/>

supported by SAFER in WES. Otherwise there appears to have been low representation of PWD in the project⁵.

An entirely appropriate adaptation of SAFER in WES, once the project was already underway, was the addition of new producer groups to support families of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAFAG). This followed demobilisation of children recruited by the South Sudan National Liberation Movement in 2018/ 19. UN agencies collaborated closely to support their reintegration and rehabilitation. Producer groups which were 50% families of demobilised children and 50% members of the host community were established.

The project model, based on working through groups of 30 members, was more relevant to some geographical locations and cultural ways of working than others. It generally worked well in WES where communities have a cultural tradition of working in groups, on land that is being collectively farmed or where a group moves from one household's farm to another. This was less relevant, however, in Lakes where the group may have come together for the purpose of the project, but households continued to farm individually.

However, a number of project stakeholders interviewed for the MTE – FAO and IP staff in particular – described the limitations of working entirely through groups, which became the project's *modus operandi*. While appropriate for some communities and some activities, they expressed the need for greater flexibility in the project design so that individual households could also be supported in developing enterprise activities, for example to sell their surplus production outside the group, and for the project to work with progressive farmers within the wider community rather than just within the groups, to promote improved agronomic practices more widely.

Learning:

- The 'one-size-fits all' project approach that SAFER adopted is not appropriate for different geographical contexts and for different livelihood groups. Future resilience projects should be adapted to the local context and designed with greater flexibility to respond to new opportunities and constraints in a highly dynamic context
- Alternative approaches could ensure the wider community benefits from such a resilience project, for example making Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and demonstration plots available to a wider group, and/ or encouraging SAFER-supported farmers to provide training, extension and saved seed to other members of the community

Timeframe

Building resilience is normally regarded as a long-term process. However, the SAFER project will be implemented for just two years on the ground. The opportunity to substantially diversify livelihoods during such a short time-frame is limited, implying a less ambitious objective would be more appropriate. While there have been some early and quick results, especially amongst the crop production/ enterprise groups in WES which benefit from two growing seasons per year and have seen substantial increases in yields, generally groups require longer-term support to achieve major and sustainable change.

⁵ Project and donor staff indicate this may be addressed in the no-cost extension, in response to this MTE finding

3.1.2 Relevance of the project design in terms of coherence between outputs

EQ: How relevant is the project design in terms of coherence between outputs, especially between the resilience outputs and the emergency output 4?

In the Project Document the three outputs intended to build resilience appear quite coherent. Output 1 focuses on diversifying livelihoods from production through to marketing and value chain support; Output 2 focuses on increased productivity and strengthened production practices – for crops, sustainable fishing and livestock – through extension, training and the provision of inputs; Output 3 focuses on natural resource management and infrastructure to increase access to water.

Any confusion or lack of coherence has emerged during implementation where the project has implemented Output 1 predominantly through enterprise and marketing groups and Output 2 through production groups, as instructed in FAO's LOAs with its partners. But in reality the distinction between producer and enterprise/ marketing groups has been somewhat artificial and there has been considerable overlap between the two. In response to this lack of coherence, STO made an early and entirely appropriate adaptation in its implementation of SAFER in WES. As the first agricultural season was about to start when their LOA was signed, they began working with producer groups as the entry point in pursuit of Output 2, and after one year selected and supported the more successful and cohesive producer groups to become enterprise groups once they were producing a surplus. This brought a coherence and sequencing to these two outputs that was lacking in the LOA but made sense on the ground, although it was not followed elsewhere.

Interpretation of Output 3 has been wide-ranging. In some locations NRM committees have been established with a community-wide brief, to strengthen governance over natural resources, raise awareness of environmentally sound practices and discourage unsustainable environmental practices. In other locations enterprise groups with a more limited remit, for example to establish and run a tree nursery or for bee-keeping, have been established and supported under Output 3. While the overall impact of both approaches may be environmentally beneficial, and both types of activities are included under Output 3 in the Project Document, there could have been greater clarity and coherence if there had been a distinction made between outputs aimed at strengthening governance over natural resources and outputs directly targeting the livelihoods of individual households.

On the other hand there is a high degree of coherence between the project's value chain activities and the infrastructure it has constructed, for example fish landing sites, milk bars, slaughter slabs, and market shades for vegetable traders.

After the project had started a fourth output was added, to protect the livelihoods of the most vulnerable households. This was a pragmatic move to enable USAID to contribute to FAO's emergency programming. The funds were allocated to the ELRP which has been implemented alongside the SAFER project in its four geographic locations as well as elsewhere in the country. The coherence of this is covered in section 3.6 below on the nexus.

3.1.3 Relevance of the project to FAO's resilience strategy, and to the PFRR framework

EQ: How relevant is the project to FAO's resilience strategy, and to what extent is it coherent with the PFRR framework?

FAO South Sudan's resilience strategy has recently been updated. The current strategy runs for three years, from 2019 to 2021. It references trends of deteriorating food security and evidence of decreasing resilience, especially since 2016⁶. It states that: 'Significant investments in humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities in the last decade have not resulted in a corresponding reduction of vulnerability or food insecurity' (pp14), identifying areas where FAO can make a difference and has comparative advantage.

The SAFER project is aligned to many aspects of both the previous and the current resilience strategies, for example through its emphasis on agricultural production to close the food gap, and improving access to markets through a value chain approach. The new strategy is positioned to work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Under one of the outputs this includes boosting production of seed and some other inputs, linked with the ELRP and seed fairs, which clearly follows the SAFER model. The strategy sets out FAO's role and contribution in building evidence and knowledge about what works for strengthening resilience, although this still seems to be externally driven, as described above in relation to SAFER, with more emphasis on harmonizing agency approaches and less on capturing the perspectives of the rural South Sudanese themselves. The resilience strategy prioritises local governance and peacebuilding. While this is also a part of the SAFER project, as part of output 3 promoting sustainable natural resource management (described below), it is not as prominent a part of the project as it is in the resilience strategy.

The PfRR provides a broader framework for strengthening resilience in South Sudan, with four pillar areas: re-establishing access to basic services, rebuilding trust in people and institutions, restoring productive capacities, and nurturing effective partnerships. Thus, it promotes a highly collaborative approach based on partnership. The SAFER project was designed in advance of this thinking, and is less collaborative in design. However, the influence of the PfRR in WES especially has encouraged multi-sectoral programming in which SAFER plays a part. The PfRR also promotes a bottom-up community-driven approach, to a greater extent than appears to have been the case in SAFER, despite the investment in CBPP: 'the Partnership is not about delivering resilience to communities – it is about helping communities deliver on their ambitions and commitments to change and building resilience'⁷. On the one hand the experience of the SAFER project (including this MTE) offers valuable learning for future resilience programming through the PfRR, and on the other hand the PfRR framework offers a platform for a more collaborative, multi-sectoral approach for any new resilience programme, although the PfRR is still being rolled out and its full potential is yet to be realised.

⁶ Based on FSNMS data and IPC analysis

⁷ See the 2-pager summary on PfRR

3.2 Results and effectiveness

What has the project achieved against its target results?

To what extent is the project on track to meet its objectives?

3.2.1 Project assumptions

EQ: To what extent are the assumptions (implicit and explicit) underpinning the project design, holding and appropriate?

The assumptions included in the SAFER project logical framework are presented in Annex 4, together with the evaluation team's comments regarding their appropriateness and whether each is holding. Nine of the 13 explicit assumptions are generally considered to be appropriate and holding, though three of these have not yet been fully tested because the NRM action plans have yet to be developed. Three of the assumptions are considered by the evaluation team to be inconsistent with the logic of the project in terms of building resilience against particular shocks, i.e. the assumptions relating to a secure and/or stable environment, and various types of shocks. Since the start of the project, there have been periods of insecurity in parts of WES, Lakes and Jonglei States; widespread infestation of fall army worm, also infestations of snails, shoot flies and stalk borer; as well as East Coast fever outbreak in WES; and floods and drought in Jonglei and NBeG. As such, insecurity and recurrent shocks should be anticipated as part of the project design.

Learning: resilience projects must assume that shocks will occur – which is indeed the rationale for building resilience – and should be designed with sufficient flexibility to be able to respond to/ deal with shocks as and when they happen.

The project design is further underpinned by an implicit assumption that that the target population lacks agricultural inputs and that these must be supplied by the project (and specifically by FAO) from external sources. It is also assumed that FAO has the capacity to procure a wide range of inputs of the appropriate types, and to deliver these on time in relation to the agricultural calendar.

Agricultural inputs provided by SAFER in the first year of the project included a wide range of items, from seeds, tools and fishing hooks, to beehives, ox ploughs, goats and canoes, to moisture meters, milk cans, motorized grinding mills, and peanut butter machines. Efforts to consolidate procurement plans for greater efficiency across different projects in 2017 reduced the flexibility of procurement within SAFER. Most of the items were imported from either Uganda or Kenya, and many were distributed late in relation to training sessions and the agricultural calendar. As will be shown below, inputs such as seeds are often locally available⁸, and – within the SAFER Project - there are also examples of inputs (e.g. fish feed, beehives, fuel efficient stoves) that can be made locally, using locally available materials.

⁸ Seed System Security Assessments undertaken in 2018 reveal that the majority of households surveyed indicated there was enough supply of seed of various crops within their community, though this varied across states and by crops; in those areas where farmers felt that there was inadequate seed supply, seeds could generally be obtained from local markets and through social networks. In the ELRP, there has been a shift away from direct seed distribution towards seed fairs in areas where seed is locally available.

Learning: The capacity for effective procurement and timely distribution of inputs was overestimated within SAFER; rather than assuming that inputs must be supplied from external sources, resilience projects should be designed according to actual needs and take advantage of inputs and materials that are locally available.

3.2.2 Achievements to date

EQ: To what extent is the project meeting its specific outcomes, and its four outputs, with reference to different groups in the population eg gender, generation?

This section is structured according to the project outcomes and outputs. For each outcome/output, key indicator results are summarized, and the factors contributing to the results are then discussed. All indicator results are presented in Annex 5, based on the most recent Performance Indicator Reference Sheet (PIRS) report (October 2019).

Finding: The SAFER logical framework conflates outputs with outcomes; what are referred to as *outputs* (livelihoods diversified, agricultural production strengthened, NRM strengthened) should be *outcomes*. Consequently, there are insufficient outcome-level indicators to be able to measure the overall project results.

Outcome: Improved resilience

The SAFER follow-up household survey⁹ (based on RIMA-II) carried out in early 2019 showed that the household resilience capacity index (RCI) had increased by 14 percent (from 28 to 32¹⁰) in the SAFER project areas over the 14-month period from November 2017 to January/February 2019. Its findings show that the main drivers of household resilience had shifted to household asset-holdings and adaptive capacity rather than social safety networks (SSN) and asset holdings during the baseline survey period. It states that:

‘This could be attributed to project support with productive assets, agricultural inputs, trainings, livestock services and diversification of income sources. The reduced relevance of SSN as a key driver of resilience could imply relatively better adaptive and absorptive capacities and increased asset holdings possibly as a result of the project interventions’ (pp2)

However, the evidence for suggesting this attribution are not clear. The project had not yet been implemented on the ground for a full twelve months; many agricultural inputs were delivered late in the first year; and there is no firm evidence for diversified income sources. Moreover, at the time of the baseline data collection (November 2017), there were ‘alarmingly high’ levels of food insecurity in South Sudan due to the reduced harvest resulting from displacement and disruption of livelihoods (FSNMS Bulletin, Round 21, May 2018). The high level of food insecurity and shocks (notably high food prices, insecurity and violence, also drought, dry spells or irregular rain) was reflected in the adoption of

⁹ This is a panel survey of 1288 households, out of which 888 (69 percent) are SAFER beneficiaries and 400 (31 percent) non-beneficiaries. The baseline data were collected in November 2017, and the follow-up survey was conducted in Jan/Feb 2019. Approximately 90% of the original (baseline) households were reached by the follow-up survey. Note that the SAFER household survey is different to the Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring Survey (FSNMS). The SAFER Project Baseline Report (November 2017) is drawn from data collected in July/August 2017 (Round 20) of the FSNMS survey. The FSNMS sample contains 6,231 households, out of which 1,244 households lie in the SAFER project counties, though not necessarily the SAFER communities.

¹⁰ The resilience capacity index is based on a scale of 0 to 100, 100 being very resilient.

emergency and crisis coping strategies, which was likely to have eroded household resilience (*ibid.*). At this time¹¹, humanitarian agencies were providing relatively high levels of emergency assistance; this is likely to have contributed to the high relevance of SSN at baseline, as well as the overall increase in the RCI noted above. For these reasons, and based on the findings of the fieldwork carried out for this evaluation – FGDs with members of SAFER-supported groups and key informants – the MTE concludes that while the project may have helped to boost incomes and food security for project participants, it is premature to conclude that it has built resilience in a lasting and sustainable way.

Outcome: Increased household food and nutrition security and income

Dramatic increases are recorded for both the percentage of food secure households¹² and the percentage of households with an acceptable food consumption score (FCS)¹³ (Annex 5).¹⁴ However, the SAFER Follow-Up Survey Report (2019) notes that the baseline data for FCS is derived from Round 20 of the FSNMS (not the SAFER baseline survey). This means that the baseline FCS figure – collected in July/August 2017, during the lean season – is being compared to data collected in January/February 2019, after the main harvest season. Given that the FCS is based on a recall of foods consumed in the seven days prior to the survey, it can be expected that seasonal differences would account for some variation. Again, the overall severity of the 2017 situation must be highlighted; it was recorded as ‘the worst food security situation since the Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System (FSNMS) began in 2010’ (FSNMS Bulletin, Round 20, December 2017: p.1). As such, the baseline starting point of the SAFER project was unusually low.

A review of the IP reports suggest that the SAFER project is likely to have contributed to increased food security through increased food availability (relating to increased area planted to crops and vegetables, increased yields, increased fish catch) and increased incomes. This is further discussed in relation to Output 2 below. Other factors noted in the IP reports that are likely to have contributed to increased food security include: seasonal performance¹⁵ (especially good for livestock, though maize was adversely affected by fall army worm), widespread general food distribution (GFD) and food security and livelihood (FSL) interventions by other agencies.

Within the SAFER project, increased income at the outcome level is measured by the value of annual sales of farms and firms receiving USG assistance.¹⁶ Neither the original SAFER Baseline Report¹⁷ (November 2017) nor the Follow-Up Survey Report (March 2017)

¹¹ Note that earlier in the same year (February 2017), famine had been formally declared in parts of Unity state.

¹² As noted in the PIRS, the food security index classification is based on a simple average of household food consumption score, food expenditure share score and asset depletion score. <https://resources.vam.wfp.org/CARI>

¹³ Food consumption score (FCS) is a proxy of households’ food access and used to classify households into different groups based on the adequacy of the foods consumed in the week prior to being surveyed.

¹⁴ The percentage of food secure households is reported to have increased from 18 percent to 32.7 percent, and the percentage of households with acceptable food consumption score reportedly increased from 15 percent to 43 percent (Annex 5).

¹⁵ The VSF-G 2018 post harvest assessment, for example, noted increases in maize, groundnut and cowpea in comparison with the previous season, and a drop in sorghum production.

¹⁶ This indicator sums the total value of sales of an agricultural commodity (including crops, vegetable, fish, beekeeping and livestock) by direct beneficiaries in a year. The indicator originally included in the SAFER logical framework was ‘percentage change in household income’; it is not known why this was changed.

¹⁷ The Baseline Report provides figures for average monthly income (USD 81, based on average monthly expenditure as a proxy) and the average number of income sources (1.36), but makes no mention of the ‘annual sales’ indicator.

provides any analysis or explanation of the indicator results, which show a 277 percent increase¹⁸ (presumably for the period from November 2017 to January/February 2019) (Annex 5). The IP reports and qualitative data collected by the evaluation team suggest that sales of crops and vegetables have provided the main source of increased incomes¹⁹. Vegetable sales are particularly important in Lakes and NBeG (especially of benefit to women). See Box 2. Farmers in WES in particular have benefitted from the sale of grains and seeds to WFP's Smallholder Agricultural Market Support (SAMS) project and FAO-supported Input Trade Fairs (ITFs) respectively. (See Box 1 below). A post-harvest assessment undertaken by VSF-G in October 2018 found that an average of SSP 56,153.70 was earned from the sale of agricultural produce (mainly crops) by SAFER-supported farmers in Lakes State. Using the SAFER baseline figure of SSP 32,153²⁰, this represents an increase of 75 percent, which is well above the target increase of 10 percent, though not as high as the recorded increase of 277 percent. It is possible that the target level of increase is far too modest, though the evaluation team is unable to draw any firm conclusions in this regard.

Output 1: Livelihood diversification

There are no indicators in the PIRS that specifically measure livelihood diversification (Annex 5). The SAFER Follow-Up Survey Report includes 'number of income sources' among the variables used to calculate the adaptive capacity pillar of the resilience capacity index, but the actual data results relating to income sources are not presented. The discussion below presents qualitative findings compiled by the evaluation team on livelihood restoration and diversification.

Based on the PIRS, available monitoring results to date show that the number of enterprise groups formed and the individuals trained have been more than anticipated, though the targets relating to female participation, group-based savings/lending, and infrastructure have not been met (Annex 5). These are further discussed below. In general, there have been challenges in reporting due to the lack of clear differentiation between the group types (producer, marketing, enterprise), as defined by the LOAs.

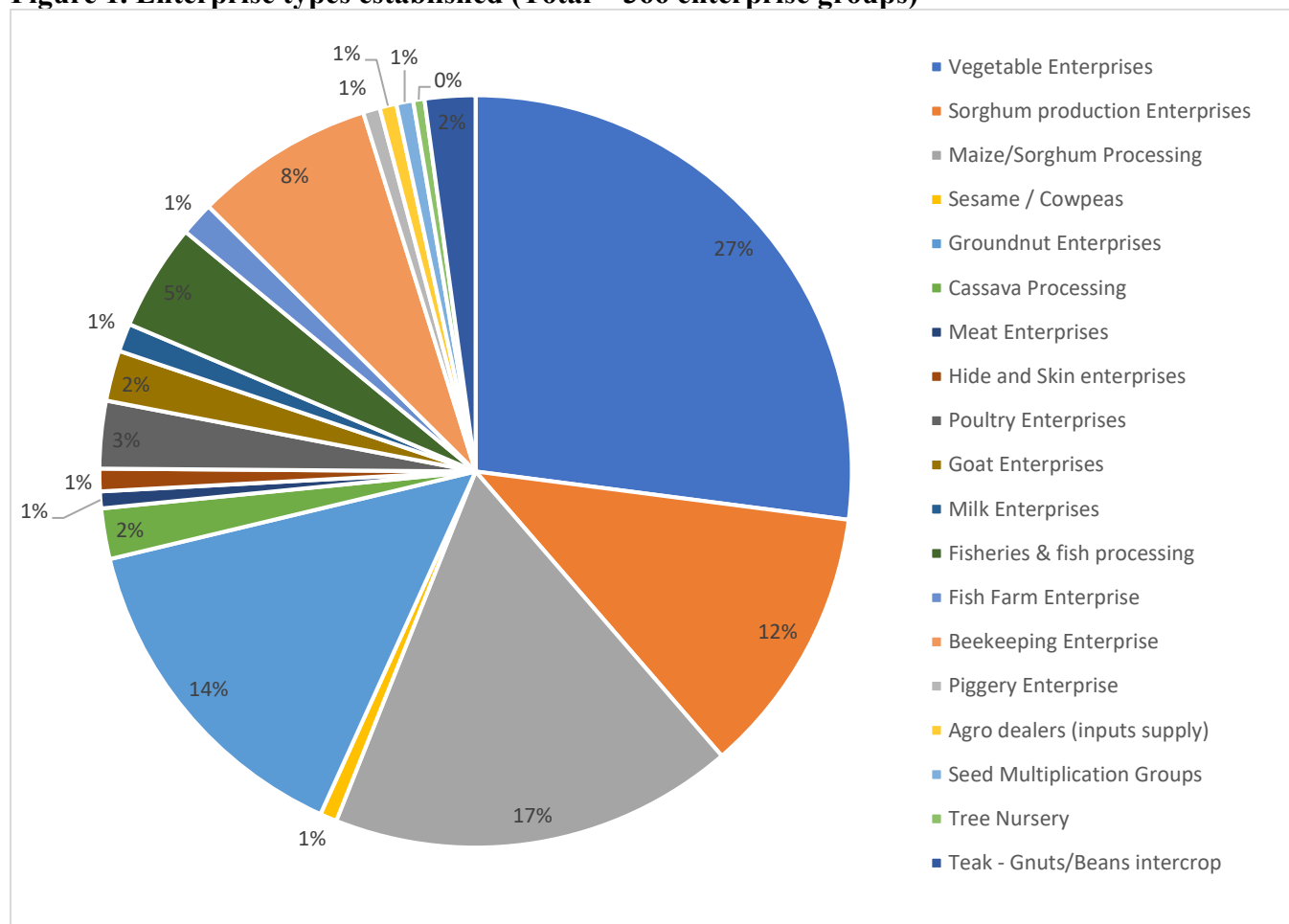
Figure 1 illustrates the range of different enterprise groups established, showing that the four top enterprise types account for 70 percent of all enterprises. Annex 6 provides a more detailed listing by project area. Without quantitative data on the number of income sources, it is difficult to determine whether or not the enterprise activities represent diversification (as opposed to restoration) of livelihoods. All of the enterprise groups visited by the evaluation team were existing groups who were already practising the activities promoted. Key informant interviews provided a small number of examples of 'new' enterprise activities, e.g. milk bars and goat fattening, also seed multiplication for the input trade fairs.

¹⁸ It is not clear how price changes and currency fluctuations caused by hyper-inflation and depreciation of the South Sudanese Pound (SSP) were taken into consideration in the calculation of this increase. It would also be helpful to know the relative contributions of the different commodities to these sales, and the range of values reported for the sampled households across the different project locations.

¹⁹ The Follow-Up Survey Report also found that crop and vegetable sales provided the main source of income-generating activities to 77 percent of the sample households at baseline, increasing to 86 percent (44 percent crop sales; 42 percent vegetable sales) in 2018.

²⁰ SAFER M&E Plan (December 2017). Note that this is the baseline figure for all SAFER project areas, not specifically Lakes State.

Figure 1. Enterprise types established (Total = 366 enterprise groups)



Source: Adapted from SAFER project spreadsheet shared with the evaluation team

Overall, it is encouraging to see the wide range of different enterprise types established, though this inevitably creates challenges in developing and providing the customized support packages required due to the wide range of different inputs needed. All IPs complained about the late delivery of inputs required by enterprise groups; due to the seasonal nature of most of the enterprise activities, input delays have negative impacts on production and productivity. In a number of cases, the inputs required were never delivered, e.g. groundnut seed for enterprise groups in E Lakes; fridges for the milk bar in NBeG; and post-harvest processing equipment in WES and NBeG. The non-delivery of inputs acts a major disincentive to the group's performance, and also erodes the group's trust in the IP; both have consequences in terms of effectiveness. With the exception of input trade fairs (which appear to be scaling up within SAFER), there appears to have been limited support for local input supply,²¹ and the evaluation team did not find any examples of support to individual agro-dealers.

Learning: SAFER's approach to livelihood diversification, in which it is assumed that the project must supply a wide range of inputs required for the different enterprises, has created

²¹ Examples include the local fabrication of improved bee hives and fish feed in WES, and support for 3 agro-dealer groups supplying seeds and tools in NBeG. The potential for the local manufacture of tools has been assessed by ELRP and found that there was a lack of high-quality metal. The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) is supporting the emergence of local seed companies, and FAO has committed to purchasing seed from these companies for the 2020 planting season. FAO is also developing a proposal for training and supporting blacksmiths

challenges in the timely procurement and distribution of inputs, limiting the effectiveness of the groups. Alternative approaches should be explored in which support is provided to enhance the capacity for accessing and supplying inputs locally.

Another key challenge has been linking some types of enterprise groups to markets. In the case of fish, for example, local markets near rivers are often saturated, yet access to the more distant urban markets requires fish preservation and transport. At least two groups (one in Jonglei and one in E. Lakes) have successfully accessed the Juba fish market through individual traders who act as middlemen. Vegetable enterprise groups located near towns and urban centres have also been successful in accessing local markets, provided that they have access to transport and also irrigation to be able to grow vegetables year-round. In WES, WFP and UNOPS both consulted with FAO and other stakeholders in decisions about where to rehabilitate feeder roads, to improve access to SAFER project areas that have surplus production. This type of collaboration is being actively encouraged under PfRR, and WFP has successfully used PfRR for resource mobilization for feeder road rehabilitation.

In WES, there were some early and quick successes amongst enterprise groups (all of which were initially established as producer groups) linked to WFP's SAMS project, allowing farmers to sell their produce (mostly maize) at rural aggregation centres established by STO in all SAFER operational counties. This link between SAFER and SAMS has been possible because STO is the IP for both projects. Similar links have been possible in some locations with the ITFs, allowing SAFER groups to benefit by selling seed at ITFs. See Box 1. In W Lakes, however, the distance of some of the fairs made it impossible for the majority of SAFER group members to reach them to benefit either as seed suppliers or buyers. In both of these examples, it was reported that post-harvest losses were reduced and the quality of products (i.e. grain and seed) increased through the control standards put in place by SAMS and ITFs respectively.

Box 1: Market linkages for grain and seed in Western Equatoria State: an example of successful collaboration

The WFP Smallholder Agriculture Market Support (SAMS) programme was initiated in WES in September 2018. Star Trust Organization (STO), the SAFER implementing partner in WES, was purposefully selected by WFP as a SAMS implementing partner so that farmers could benefit from both projects in combination. Through SAMS, rural aggregation centres have been established in most payams in SAFER's operational areas in WES, providing a market for individual farmers and farmer groups. STO established linkages between the SAFER crop production groups and the aggregation centres, which also serve as knowledge transfer centres. Farmers take their harvested grain (of maize, groundnuts, and sesame) to sell to the aggregation centre where they receive a voucher, which is then taken to Kush Bank for payment. WFP reported that they are buying 800 to 1000mt of grain per season, and it is estimated that about 60 percent of the total amount comes from SAFER-supported groups. Motivated by the ready market provided through SAMS, farmers have been quick to take up the improved practices and improved seed varieties promoted by the SAFER project; as a result, yields have increased and post-harvest losses have gone down. Members of the Nzara crop production/ enterprise group, for example, reported that their maize harvest has increased from 30 or 40 sacks, to over 100 sacks. Previously their groundnut yield was about two sacks per feddan; now it is 7 to 10 sacks. Group members are able to pay school fees with the income from the sales, and some groups have been able to buy bicycles. Although STO reported that farmers were not happy about the maize purchasing price offered by WFP (which was said to be below the market price), SAMS provides an important market for a

number of groups – so much so that one interviewee expressed concern about a potential over-dependence on SAMS, though it was also reported that some groups were unable to sell all of their surplus to SAMS.

The successful collaboration between FAO-SAFER and WFP-SAMS provides a good example of the coordinated approach to co-location promoted through the Partnership for Recovery and Resilience (PfRR), launched in Yambio in 2018.

Market opportunities have also been generated through FAO's expansion of seed fairs in SAFER project areas in WES. In April 2018, seed fairs targeted 4000 households' as beneficiaries and provided market opportunities to 42 SAFER groups (18 in Yambio, 18 in Tambura and 6 in Nzara) who participated as seed vendors selling local varieties of maize, groundnuts, sorghum, rice, sesame, and cowpeas. The total amount of seeds sold by the 42 groups was just over 78 MT, worth 9,433,832 SSP, providing substantial profits. The groups used the money many different ways; some bought land or other assets such as motorbikes, a cleaning machine for rice, and storage facilities. Individual members used their profits to pay school fees and hospital bills. The market opportunity afforded by the seed fairs has encouraged some farmers to open new land for cultivation.

Access to markets has provided a major boost to farmers, helping them to become more resilient by transitioning from subsistence to commercial production, through which they can generate incomes and invest in various different types of assets. This shift also involves a change in mindset, illustrating that farmers have become less dependent on external aid and are willing to achieve greater self-reliance.

Learning: Enhancing access to markets involves many aspects that require coordinated efforts by multiple agencies.²² The examples above illustrate the need for joint planning and close collaboration among different agencies involved in the different aspects of enhancing market linkages.

Women's participation varies according to the enterprise type. For example, vegetable groups, milk enterprises and poultry groups are largely comprised of women since these activities are traditionally regarded as women's work. There is a tendency for men to 'take over' traditional women's activities if these activities are perceived to be profitable. For this reason, it is important that the IPs ensure that women do not get 'pushed out' over time from viable income-generating activities. The establishment of all-female groups might be one way to avoid this; this had been proposed in the original Project Document, and some women-only groups do exist. Box 2 describes the positive impact of Vegetable Groups in Western Lakes State, where women comprise the majority of the membership.

Box 2: Women's Vegetable Groups in Western Lakes State: increasing income and improving nutrition

Vegetable groups account for almost 70 percent of the 55 SAFER-supported enterprise groups in western Lakes State. Since vegetable production and marketing are regarded as the role of women, the majority of group members are women. The overall success of the vegetable enterprise groups in Western Lakes has increased women's incomes; FAO staff estimate that

²² For example, ensuring that products are of high quality and that processing techniques are appropriate; ensuring consistency of production throughout the year/season; enhancing the capacity of traders to act as effective middlemen; improving transport links and access to transport; providing or identifying source of market demand, among others.

the production and sale of vegetables brings in a monthly income of 10,000 – 15,000 SSP for most months of the year, particularly if water is available for irrigation. The women are able to use their earnings to help cover household expenses and to pay school fees for their children. As well as cultivating their individual plots within the larger group vegetable farm, many women have also started to cultivate vegetables such as oilseed rape and tomatoes at their homesteads. Other advantages include the increased availability of vegetables in local markets and increased consumption of vegetables (whether through own production and/or purchase) at the household level, thus supporting enhanced nutrition, particularly among children.

One of the main challenges faced by the vegetable groups is the supply of water for irrigation; each of the three of the groups visited by the evaluation team had faced different types of water challenges and displayed varying levels of capacity in dealing with them. In one case, the borehole pump had broken, there was no functional water management committee, the local community was unable to repair it, so the vegetable group could no longer grow vegetables in the dry season. In another case, the borehole was well-managed and, when faced with a repair on the pump that was too expensive for the management committee to fund, the individual members of the vegetable enterprise were quick to contribute the additional money needed to repair it. In a third case, the vegetable group was unable to accept new members wanting to join because the water provided by the borehole was not sufficient to expand the area under irrigation.

Two of the groups visited in western Lakes State had established their own form of group savings through a rotating fund or merry-go-round scheme. In one case, the method of saving money was learned by the group chairwoman while she was living in Khartoum. Group members regarded the ability to save and access savings and loans through the group as a significant benefit.

The target for group-based savings, micro-finance or lending programs was down-scaled from 375 groups in the original Project Document to 50 groups in the PIRS, and did not feature prominently in the LOAs, despite the need for savings/micro-finance schemes being highlighted by the CBPP process in at least three of the five project areas. By September 2019, 17 groups had been established (Annex 5), and it is unlikely that the target of 50 will be reached without additional efforts beyond the current LOAs. The reasons for SAFER's lack of emphasis on group-based savings is not clear, particularly since Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) have been shown to be very effective in South Sudan and other resilience projects in similar contexts. This is regarded by the evaluation team as a missed opportunity.

One of the key advantages of the VSLA approach is that it provides training in household financial management and allows individual households to choose how to invest their savings and loans for asset-building and productive purposes, effectively leading to increased resilience and diversified livelihoods. Any income-generating inputs required (often small livestock such as chickens or goats) are purchased by the individual VSLA member, thus avoiding the need for procurement and distribution by the project. VSLAs have been shown to be effective either on their own, or in combination with other interventions such as cash-for-work or group-based enterprise development, because individuals can save their income

from these interventions through the VSLA and access loans and/or savings at a time when they choose to invest in other purposes. A key question is whether FAO and its IPs are best-placed to implement VSLAs; if not, then this would provide an opportunity for collaboration with a suitably experienced agency.

Another advantage of the VSLA approach is that it allows different group members to invest in different income-generating activities, thus spreading the risk of failure by the group overall. Within the current SAFER approach, in which the majority of enterprise groups invest in a single commodity, there is a risk of failure in case of marketing constraints or poor production due to poor rainfall, pests or disease.

The types of infrastructure associated with Output 1 include market sheds, slaughter slabs, auction yards and milk bars. Delays in construction have been caused by the lengthy processes involved in site selection and approval (see section 3.3.2 below on land tenure), as well as the need for adjustments to the design in some cases following on-site feasibility assessments. A decision was made not to proceed with the planned seed stores due to past experience of management challenges and high running costs²³. With the benefit of hindsight, the target figures in the PIRS were perhaps overly ambitious. Some structures are associated with particular enterprise groups, e.g. the milk bar in Aweil North, whereas others are regarded as a community-wide benefit, e.g. market sheds. There appears to be a clear sense of ownership over those structures associated with specific enterprise groups, whereas this was seen to be lacking in some of the community-wide structures, with implications for their future use and management; this is further elaborated in section 3.5.1 below on sustainability. The construction of slaughter houses in Jonglei State has triggered a positive policy change by the local authorities, and appears to have also triggered a change in behaviour amongst consumers. This can be considered a successful, if unintended ripple effect of this particular project activity. There is also valuable learning to be gained from the experience of setting up the management committees. See Box 3.

Box 3: Positive benefits of the SAFER investment in slaughter houses in Jonglei State, and learning from implementation

Two slaughter houses in (former) Jonglei State - in Twic East County and in Bor South County, were completed in July 2019 and handed over by the Implementing Partner, NRC, to the community management committees. The establishment of livestock slaughter facilities helps to reduce the risk posed by zoonotic diseases and contributes to improved marketing infrastructure, particularly given the growth in South Sudan's urban population. In line with FAO's livestock policy for South Sudan, this type of infrastructure is crucial for further driving the commercialization agenda in the pastoral sector.

By the time of the evaluation team's visit in September 2019, it was reported that the local authority in Twic had banned the slaughter of animals on bare soil, even at the household level; all animals must be brought to the slaughter house to ensure that slaughtering is done in a hygienic manner. Community members buying meat reportedly now demand to know whether the meat is from an animal slaughtered that has been slaughtered in the slaughter house because they recognize that the meat is more hygienic. Community members interviewed in Bor County said that the use of the slaughter house makes them feel more

²³ In the opinion of the evaluation team, this was the correct decision, though it is unfortunate that it was not made earlier in the project design process to avoid raising expectations at community level. This illustrates the need to incorporate learning from past experience – both within South Sudan and within FAO more broadly - into the project design process.

secure because wild animals no longer come to feed on the remnants of animals slaughtered on the soil.

The construction process included participatory discussions with communities and local authorities to identify the most suitable sites, and land certificates were obtained from the local government. Technical feasibility assessments were undertaken, and discussions with the community ensured a mutual understanding of the future management and governance of the infrastructure. The Letter of Agreement (LoA) signed between FAO and NRC did not specify exactly when the management committees were supposed to be formed in relation to the construction process, and it did not make any provision for the training of the committee members. If the management committees had been formed earlier, they might have had some input into the design of the structure; committee members reported that the windows of the slaughter house were big enough for thieves to enter and requested that they should have welded shutters to prevent theft. The construction process involved the use of labourers and workers from the local community, though it was reported that they received a low level of pay from the contractors. Again, the management committees might have played a role in negotiating fairer wages for local workers, had they been formed earlier.

The slaughter houses are considered to be owned by the community at county level and are managed by community through the management committees. The management committees include members from the SAFER-supported meat enterprise groups. The SAFER value chain team developed business plans that include a proposed management plan along with projected financials and revenue; the feasibility of these plans has yet to be seen in practice. Subsequent to the handing over of the structures, MoUs were to be signed between the newly formed management committees and the respective state authority.

Output 2: Good agricultural production practices

Indicator results for agricultural production (for maize/sorghum, milk, and fish catch) presented in the PIRS report appear to show over-achievement on the 2018 targets (Annex 5). It has not been possible to verify all of these indicator results, though the fish catch figure has been over-estimated (see comments in Annex 5). The number of farmers who applied improved agricultural technologies appears to have declined from the baseline, and no data are provided for the area of land under improved management/technologies; it seems likely that there may have been a problem with the baseline figures. The number of beneficiaries trained in improved agricultural practices was above target in 2018, but slightly below target in 2019; given the different ways in which IPs distinguish producer groups and enterprise/marketing groups, it is possible that some of those trained may have been captured instead under the training indicator for Output 1 (which was over-target).

No project-level aggregated data were available for the breakdown of producer groups according to products, but information from IPs suggest that most of the groups are focusing on cereal or vegetable production, with a smaller number of groups engaged in capture fisheries, fish farming, bee-keeping, or livestock. A review of the IP reports indicates that project activities to date have focused more on the producer groups than the enterprise groups, though this may well shift in the final year of implementation.

As noted elsewhere (see section 3.3.1), the late delivery of inputs (for all producer group types) has been a major challenge, reducing the effectiveness of training and also having negative implications on crop planting times and hence productivity. Post-harvest crop assessments by ACTED and VSF-G for the 2018 season found respectively that 97 percent and 72 percent of sampled farmers received seeds and other inputs either 'late' or 'too late' (Annex 7). Even when seeds were provided through input trade fairs, there were complaints

that these were often late; some in Lakes State were so late that they had to be cancelled. The impact of late seed delivery on late planting is clearly illustrated by Box 7.3 (Annex 7); the majority of farmers' own seeds were planted in April and May, whereas the FAO-SAFER seeds were planted mainly in June and July. Whilst there are occasionally situations when late seed can usefully be used for re-planting²⁴, late planting generally leads to lower yields. Box 4 summarizes more general challenges relating to seed provisioning, highlighting the need to be clear about the objectives / aims of different types of seed interventions in supporting the emergence of resilient seed systems.

Box 4: Building Resilient Seed Systems in South Sudan

Most seed distributions in South Sudan have been carried out without proper assessment or analysis²⁵, and there is a failure to understand how local seed systems have been affected by crisis or events. The recent Seed System Security Assessment (SSSA, March, 2019) found that seed aid accounted for just 14 percent of seed source use, and that it has been the main source of new varieties among farmers, contributing about 74 percent of all sources of new materials to farm households. This suggests that the value of seed aid in South Sudan is not so much in the provision of seed *per se*, but in the diversification of cropping systems through the introduction of appropriate new crop varieties. In general, the SSSA report recommends that rapid seed security assessments should be carried out to determine the main seed security constraints (e.g. whether lack of seed availability, lack of access to seed, or lack of varietal diversity, etc.) so that appropriate responses – whether short-term responses such as the timely direct seed distribution of appropriate varieties or seed fairs and vouchers, or medium- to long-term interventions that contribute towards resilient and sustainable seed systems – can be designed accordingly. The SSSA report provides a number of recommendations for building resilience. Many of these are being implemented to varying degrees within the SAFER project, though these need to be applied more systematically if resilient seed systems are to emerge. It is encouraging to see that FAO has recently committed to support the emergence of a market-based seed sector through procuring seed from local seed companies and through expanding the use of seed fairs. Greater attention is needed to support crop and varietal diversification of cropping systems by ensuring that the specific crops and varieties provided are matched to local agro-ecologies and/or market opportunities.

Despite a lack of verified quantitative data on crop production and agricultural practices, qualitative information for WES suggest that there has been a significant increase in crop production; the IP as well as FGDs with group members attribute this to training, the adoption of row planting and crop spacing, as well as opportunities for output marketing made possible by the links with seed fairs and WFP-SAMS noted above. The situation in Lakes State, on the other hand, was found to be very different; as shown by Annex 8, the 2018 VSF-G post-harvest survey found that just 42 percent of 135 sampled farmers reported to have received some form of sensitization or training, and only 7 percent of these (i.e. 4 farmers) could recall the training topics and had applied the improved practices and observed changes in their production. The majority (70 percent) of farmers were found to be using traditional sowing patterns (mainly broadcasting) as opposed to row planting. In terms of

²⁴ Re-planting may be needed in situations when the main seed sown either fails to germinate, or gets washed away by flooding, or young plants die after germination due to a dry spell. In WES, where there are two cropping seasons, some farmers were able to keep seed that was delivered late and plant it in the following planting season.

²⁵ Seed System Security Assessment (SSSA) in South Sudan (March, 2019)

production, maize, groundnuts and cowpeas showed slight increases on the previous year's production, whereas sorghum production had fallen. On average, farmers planned to use approximately 57 percent of the harvest for household consumption and just 10 percent for sale.

Whilst contrasting agroecological conditions and socio-cultural factors likely account for much of the differences between WES and Lakes State, the different experiences described above suggest that training and market opportunities significantly influence both production and the uptake of improved agricultural practices. Although more detailed information regarding the training approaches used by the different IPs is needed to draw any firm conclusions, it is thought that the use of lead farmers (by STO) may have been more effective than the use of community facilitators (by VSF-G), particularly given the lack of experience and limited agronomic training provided to the community facilitators. It should also be noted that STO dropped non-performing groups, which may have also accounted for some of the differences in the results presented above.

Learning: there are opportunities for the implementing partners to learn from each other and potentially enhance their performance by sharing and comparing the different methods and approaches to farmer training that have been used within the SAFER Project.

In contrast to the (assumed) minimal increases in grain crops production in Lakes, there is thought to have been a more substantial increase in vegetable production, particularly in areas where there is market demand and water available for irrigation. Vegetable production was also seen to be successful in WES, Jonglei and NBeG. With irrigation, the time of planting is not so critical, so the late delivery of seed does not have such a negative impact on vegetable production as it does on grain production. Farmers and key informants commented on the need for water for dry season vegetable production, also appropriate inputs/technologies for diseases and pests.

As noted in earlier sections, there has been less attention given to livestock, and this has mainly focused on training and support to community-based animal health workers (CAHW). Various IP reports highlight effective links between SAFER and ELRP in the supply of drugs and vaccines (from ELRP) to CAHWs for the treatment of disease outbreaks in SAFER areas. In NBeG and Jonglei, cost recovery schemes for the supply of veterinary drugs are being supported. In Lakes State, however, the training provided to CAHWs was reported to be inadequate, and the IPs are waiting for guidance from FAO in how to establish a revolving fund for the supply of drugs²⁶. Pastoral associations have been established and trained in Lakes State, NBeG and Jonglei, but their purpose and effectiveness is not clear.

For capture fisheries, access to inputs (hooks, twine, nets and canoes) has reportedly led to an increase in production from approximately 3-5 kg to 15 kg per day per person. Fish are in abundant supply; the challenge is not in production but in processing and marketing. Improved processing technologies (i.e. fish drying racks and fish smoking ovens) are currently being piloted in Juba, but – given the short time-frame of the project – it is not clear why these pilots are not being done in a participatory manner with fisherfolk and processors within the SAFER project areas.

²⁶ The Food Security Cluster is involved in an on-going discussion at national level on the different models for revolving funds for livestock drugs.

For aquaculture, on the other hand, it appears that FAO has had to curb the enthusiasm of the IP and fish farming groups established in WES by scaling back their plans for large-scale fish production to a pilot-level activity, mainly due to the lack of input supply (fingerlings and feed) and the limited potential for viable production. A cost-effective fish feed from locally available ingredients is being made by the group, yet the viability of fish farming in WES remains to be seen. In other African countries which lack reliable and affordable aquaculture inputs (e.g. Zambia), household-level fish farming tends to be promoted in appropriate agro-ecological areas among better-off farmers as a small-scale activity to boost the production of nutritious food for the household rather than as a commercially viable enterprise.

There are a small number of bee-keeping producer groups in Lakes, Jonglei and NBeg; these groups have also been supported in the processing and sale of honey. In WES, bee-keeping has been promoted mainly under Output 1 as a business enterprise; in Lakes there is also one honey processing enterprise group. Improved bee hives had been received by the IP but had yet to be delivered to the bee-keeping groups in Lakes. In WES, groups were trained in how to make improved top bar beehives using local materials, though it is too soon to tell whether these have been used effectively²⁷ for increased production and whether the marketing aspects will allow the groups to be economically viable. In W. Lakes, Oxfam has provided support to bee-keeping, honey processing and marketing, which appears to be sustainable, now that the project has now ended. There are opportunities for SAFER to learn from this experience.

Output 3: Natural resource management (NRM)

Some of the indicators under this output have proved difficult to measure (Annex 5), but – after a slow start in the first year – there has been good progress (on target) in the formation of groups for economic activities relating to NRM issues. The establishment and training of NRM Committees (NRMCs) have both been on target; 19 committees are reported to be functional²⁸, and 12 payam-level NRM natural resource inventory mapping and conflict analysis reports have been conducted (exceeding the target of 3 in 2019). Although Annex 5 shows that the committees had yet to complete any action plans by the end of the most recent reporting period (September 2019), earlier in 2019, a guideline was developed to deliver support to NRMCs and to enable them to develop conflict-sensitive NRM action plans. Only one of the NRMC formed under the project, managed to work towards the elaboration of an NRM action plan as was the case of the one drafted in Bor, briefly described below.

In general, progress in this output appears to have lagged behind the others, possibly due to time and capacity constraints among the IPs; also perhaps this output is inherently more challenging to implement because it aims to promote behaviour change in the wider community, rather than being solely focused on group-based activities. There have also been changes in the lead NRM technical staff at FAO, possibly resulting in some discontinuity, despite the good capacity of the existing national NRM officers. There are plans to strengthen the NRM Unit with additional international and national human resources and to train NRM committee members and local authorities on peacebuilding and how to conduct dialogues between groups.

²⁷ Group members reported that the metal sheets they wanted to close the hives were not available in the local market.

²⁸ FAO staff reported that 28 NRM committees had been formed, but with 9 committees requiring orientation on how to organize themselves, assign tasks and responsibilities.

In relation to effectiveness, it was observed that NRM committees in WES were better able to effect behaviour change when local events highlighted their relevance, e.g. the threat of Ebola has helped to reduce the hunting of bushmeat, and recent dry spells have highlighted the need for actions to combat climate change. A focus on specific environmental issues of local relevance has also helped the committees to gain traction, e.g. to address fish poisoning and the damaging practices of an international company in extracting local teak. See Box 5 for a good practice example of one NRM committee in Nzara.

Box 5: Successes achieved by the Nzara NRM committee, WES

The Natural Resources Management Committee (NRMC) in Nzara County, WES, was established and trained in February 2019 after STO had conducted an initial awareness meeting, followed by a series of consultative meetings with the community and local leaders to nominate members for the NRMC. The 16 NRMC members (9 men, 7 women) were then voted in and organized into two groups to cover different geographical locations. The initial training provided by STO generated an understanding of the most important natural resources in the local area, what is involved in planning for sustainable natural resource management, and how to resolve conflict over the use, access and control of natural resources within the community. Avocado tree seedlings were provided by SAFER and these were planted at household level; committee members expect to be given pigs and goats if the trees do well. The NRMC currently meets twice a month, and the committee members also conduct sensitization meetings with community members. Committee members say that they need financial support and transport to help them cover the area; they would also like to have IDs and uniforms.

Local NRM challenges in Nzara are mainly caused by the misuse and over-exploitation of natural resources by the community in relation to their livelihood practices, e.g. indiscriminate logging in the forests (including a concern about teak dealers cutting mahogany trees), cutting down trees for honey harvesting, slash-and-burn clearing of agricultural land, hunting of bush meat, and the use of poison for fishing in the dry season. Weekly sensitization meetings have reportedly been held in the different areas, although raising awareness is challenging due to the low levels of education. In September 2019, the NRMC conducted an awareness session with the local community, attracting 167 participants (127 men, 40 women) from five bomas. The community participants proposed a number of resolutions for local issues, including: to report fishermen who poison the water to the community police or local leaders; to stop poachers from killing animals; to stop bush burning, especially in the dry season; for the chief and community members to act as ambassadors in promoting NRM; and frequent community awareness sessions on the importance of NRM.

Recent successes described by NRMC members illustrate their determination and the way in which the broader SAFER project is also supporting NRM. For example, after the local chief refused to help address the problem caused by the Equatoria Teak Company in burning offcuts, the NRMC took the matter to the county commissioner who effectively stopped the practice; offcuts are now reportedly used by local communities for fencing. Committee members said that it has been difficult to stop poachers from killing animals because people have become dependent on hunting as a source of food, but they have worked with local churches to raise people's awareness about conservation. The threat of Ebola has had the greatest impact in

reducing the hunting of wild animals. Finally, the work of the NRM in creating awareness about not cutting and burning trees for honey harvesting has been helped by the provision of improved hives through SAFER.

An NRM action plan has been drafted by the Bor NRM committee (Jonglei State) which is currently awaiting endorsement by the local authorities. It is encouraging to see that this committee has good representation from local youth (just less than 50 percent of members). Although this committee had also been supported by Catholic Relief Services through another project, committee members highlighted the need for some form of income generation for the committee to be more effective, e.g. to cover transport costs. Similar concerns relating to the sustainability of NRM committees emerged in the other states visited by the evaluation team, highlighting the importance of their recognition by state and local authorities and to link some of the NRM-related economic activities to the NRM committee, as proposed in the Boma-level NRM action plans.

Economic activities relevant to NRM include bee-keeping and teak production, also the sale of tree seedlings, though in Rumbek the latter was reported as not very profitable and only covered the cost of tea for the group meetings. SPEDP has experience in the fabrication of fuel efficient stoves, and a prototype design for a portable stove which is better adapted to local preferences has been developed. There are plans to support the establishment of a training centre so that groups can be trained to make the stoves using local materials. VSF-G has already been training a substantial number of beneficiaries on the construction of fuel efficient stoves, though this has yet to be assessed. Plans are also being developed for future production of briquettes as an alternative energy source.

Output 4: Livelihood protection

The SAFER PIRS does not include indicators for this output, which is implemented and monitored by the ELRP. In 2018, 35,400 households were reached under this component of the project through the distribution of agricultural and fishing inputs.

3.2.3 Likelihood of meeting objectives

EQ: What is the likelihood of the project continuing to meet its outcome and outputs by the time the project ends?

Considering the unusually low levels of resilience and food security at the start of the SAFER project, provided that there are adequate seasonal rains and security remains good, then it is highly likely that resilience, food security and incomes will continue to improve in 2019-2020. The SAFER project will continue to contribute to the anticipated increases in the outcome indicators but it is important to be cautious in making claims of attribution as there are many other contributing factors, as described above.

For Output 1, the design of the project and the types of enterprises being supported does not appear to be contributing to the diversification of livelihoods in a substantial way. The fact that there is no specific indicator to measure livelihood/income diversification is a serious oversight. Greater efforts must be made to involve women in the group activities and trainings if the target for female participation is to be achieved. Increased efforts will also be needed in establishing and supporting VSLAs within the enterprise groups.

The effectiveness of both Output 1 and Output 2 has been considerably undermined by the late delivery of inputs, but the specific indicators that have been included in the PIRS are not adversely affected by this shortcoming. As such, although it is likely that the project will continue to meet its stated Output 2 targets (possibly with the exception of the application of improved technologies, depending how this is determined on the ground), the evaluation team regards the choice of indicators themselves as a poor reflection of the actual performance of the project. .

At least two of the indicators used to measure Output 3 are also problematic in that it has proved difficult to 'measure' them accurately on the ground. Despite a slow start, the pace of implementation of the NRM activities is now picking up, though there is a short time left to complete the community action plans if this is to be done to the standards required.

The funding cut will mainly affect the infrastructure components of the project (see Annex 9 for details) and also livelihood inputs.

In general, the following factors have been seen to contribute towards the relative effectiveness of the project to date and must be addressed if the project is to perform to a higher level in the remaining period:

- They key role of markets in promoting production and the adoption of improved technologies, as well as income. FAO and the IPs need to continue to seek partnerships and collaboration with other agencies that can support different aspects of market access / market development.
- Variable capacities of IPs, including staffing capacities; some IPs generally require more support than others, and some IPs might have specific capacity gaps that require additional training on certain issues. FAO staff need to allow time to address the needs of the IPs on an individual basis. Given the budget cut, any potential budget changes for the IPs in the remainder of the project must carefully consider their staffing capacity.
- Delays in input delivery and training; in some cases, IPs have responded by encouraging farmers to use/access their own inputs, or fabricate inputs locally. This should be encouraged, and the possibility of IPs procuring certain inputs for themselves should also be explored.
- Group cohesion and other psycho-social aspects; increased recognition of / attention to group cohesion is needed, including the disappointment / discouragement caused by late inputs / non-delivery of inputs. IPs might be able to share their experiences and learn from each other.
- Lack of clarity in LOAs on some issues needs to be addressed promptly, as and when issues are raised.

Staff turnover, both in FAO (also in relation to recent office re-structuring) and IPs; although this is unavoidable, timely recruitment, good handovers and adequate briefing / on-boarding of new staff members can reduce potential discontinuities.

3.3 Efficiency

3.3.1 Timeliness and use of resources

To what extent has implementation been efficient in terms of timeliness and use of resources to achieve the desired results?

EQ: To what extent have activities been implemented in a timely manner, and what are the contributing factors?

South Sudan is a challenging context for achieving timely implementation. There are many factors that can cause delay, from insecurity to logistical hurdles to recruitment of staff where there is high competition for skilled and experienced staff amongst international and national development agencies. In some states, like Jonglei, large areas become inaccessible during the rainy season which means that there is a relatively short window for implementation during the months of the dry season. If that is missed, the project must wait for months to recommence implementation. Not surprisingly, the SAFER project has been affected by many of these challenges, and has made considerable progress in some areas in a relatively short period of time, for example overcoming obstacles to construct infrastructure.

Many of the SAFER project activities are closely tied to the agricultural season, and dependent on FAO's procurement and delivery of inputs. The late, and in some cases non-delivery of inputs has been the single biggest factor affecting timely implementation. Indeed, delayed delivery appears to have become the norm rather than the exception in the SAFER project. Section 3.2 describes how this has compromised the project's effectiveness, and Annex 8 illustrates this for seed in one geographical area. The major negative impacts and associated inefficiencies, include the following:

- (1) Farmer labour is wasted where they have cleared land, but seed and other agricultural inputs are delivered late and cannot be planted. This waste of farmer resources can actually undermine resilience²⁹.
- (2) Reduced yields or failure of the harvest where seed is delivered and planted late
- (3) The ineffectiveness of training in the use of improved inputs when those inputs arrive months after the training was carried out, for example training in post-harvest handling and storage
- (4) It has been highly detrimental to the relationship and trust between local communities and IPs, with IP frontline staff 'taking the hit'. The evaluation team heard of one case where farmers will no longer clear land in advance on the promise of seed being delivered; they must see the seed first before taking action
- (5) It has negatively affected FAO's credibility with IPs, with other agencies and with local government

The inefficiencies are exacerbated where there is no advance communication from FAO to its IPs so that the land can be planted to other crops. Indeed, IPs appear to be poorly informed by

²⁹ The evaluation team saw an example of this in WES, where a production group had cleared land in anticipation of the timely delivery of foundation seeds. But the seeds were not delivered in time, and it was then too late in the agricultural season for the land to be used for an alternative

FAO about delays and delivery dates and described receiving inputs in small and unpredictable consignments, which reduced their efficiency of delivery.

The implementation of some ITFs has suffered similar delays, as described in section 3.3 above. In both eastern and western Lakes States, ITFs were implemented by VSF-G and at least four different local NGOs, some of which lacked experience with ITFs. In two counties of western Lakes, the location of the fairs meant that SAFER-supported farmers could not participate; similarly, in two counties of eastern Lakes, it was reported that those implementing the fairs failed to work with the SAFER targeted groups, choosing other groups instead; this led to considerable resentment among those left out.

Particularly concerning is the fact that these delays, in procurement and delivery of inputs, and in holding ITFs, are not new. The 2016 FAO South Sudan evaluation drew attention to exactly the same issues, and they seem to have persisted since. Following the 2016 political crisis, FAO had to downscale its warehouses in its hubs, resulting in much greater dependence on road transportation for seeds and tools, which may have exacerbated a pre-existing problem³⁰. The evaluation team understands that delays can also occur at multiple points in the process of seed procurement and delivery, for example, and that regional suppliers rarely hit their target delivery date inside South Sudan. However, if these delays are systemic and cannot be redressed, it begs a question about why a project like SAFER has still been designed to be heavily dependent on externally procured inputs for its success when other approaches could have been explored.

3.3.2 Efficiency of implementation modalities

EQ: How efficient are the implementation modalities of the SAFER project, e.g. CBPP, training, group-based activities, technological innovation, etc., in terms of use of resources?

The SAFER project design is complex, not least because of its heavy dependence on externally procured inputs. As described above, it was overly ambitious from the procurement perspective with highly complicated technical specifications. In this respect its implementation modality appears to have been overly influenced by an emergency mindset of the project supplying almost all inputs.

The time spent on consultation with key stakeholders and with communities early in the project was important in terms of building ownership and engagement, and in identifying local priorities. However, the way the CBPP was carried out, at least in some locations, may not have been the most efficient use of people's time. In WES, for example, CBPP meetings could take four to five hours, with around 70 people involved. Key informants have suggested that the process be more sequenced in future, taking place through a number of different and shorter targeted sessions.

Working almost entirely through groups may have been efficient from a training perspective, targeting a well-defined group/ groups. The grouping together of enterprise groups marketing the same commodity in WES, for example, was an efficient approach to training. STO was able to conduct 10 trainings for 116 enterprise groups, with three or four members of each

³⁰ FAO is now reopening warehouses in SAFER locations of Bor, Rumbek, Aweil, Yambio. This may improve prepositioning.

group participating in the training. But working almost entirely through groups, as described in section 3.2 above, may also have limited the potential for SAFER to benefit the wider community and therefore not have been the most efficient use of project resources. Although there may have been some adoption of improved agronomic practices by other members of the community who have observed and copied changes in practice by the SAFER-supported groups, the project was not set up to reach the wider community, apart from the infrastructure component. FFS and demonstration plots, for example, were only available for target producer groups, but could have been adapted and intensified to reach a larger number of farmers.

The SAFER project would also have benefited from a more nuanced approach to training. A lot of it has been done through short training interventions. While this may have been appropriate for some topics, it has been less so for others, for example literacy and numeracy training: a more efficient use of resources in a short timeframe would have been targeting those with some basic skills rather than those with no education. CAHW training was cut short in some locations due to budget constraints. Again, this may be a false economy if it does not achieve the desired outcome. Combining resources with other projects to ensure a more thorough job could be done would have been more appropriate.

Within FAO South Sudan there has been restructuring of the organization during implementation of the SAFER project. Whatever the long-term benefits of this restructuring, it has created some confusion in reporting lines and has, at least temporarily, reduced the efficiency of the SAFER project team. Addressing this should be a priority for the remaining months of the project.

Effective coordination is critical to the efficient use of resource between agencies. Coordination has been strongest in WES where the PfRR is more established. Geographical areas were selected specifically where there were no similar activities, to avoid duplication, and where the work of SAFER could complement the work of other partners. But coordination has been weaker in other geographical locations where it was not unusual for SAFER IPs to begin work in rural areas to find other agencies already engaged in similar programming. This lack of coordination and duplication is extremely inefficient and a key issue for the PfRR to tackle.

3.4 Partnerships

3.4.1 Appropriateness and effectiveness of partnerships

EQ: To what extent are the partnerships through which the project is working appropriate to, and contributing to the project's effectiveness?

The SAFER project is based on partnership, and the functionality and effectiveness of these partnerships is critical to the project achieving its objectives.

FAO- USAID partnership

This appears to be a good working relationship, mainly focused at the Juba level where there has been close contact and collaboration between the FAO South Sudan office and the USAID team on an ongoing basis. USAID has been responsive to wider needs and the changing context, for example providing an additional \$10 million to SAFER to enable FAO to maintain its emergency programming alongside efforts to build resilience, yet at the same

time USAID appropriately held FAO to account over its performance and slow delivery rate in 2018, requiring FAO to provide monthly updates until performance improved.

USAID's championing of the PfRR has placed the SAFER project and FAO centre-stage on this collaborative inter-agency platform. USAID staff have also taken the initiative to launch the Fawligen trials for fall army worm, bringing the SAFER project in to facilitate the trials at the field level. Overall, this is indicative of a constructive and strategic partnership between FAO and USAID, drawing on the respective role and comparative advantage of each, and thus moving beyond the confines of a purely contractual relationship.

FAO/ IP – government relationship

At federal level FAO has a working relationship with the Government of South Sudan, although this is less relevant to the SAFER project where donor conditionality means that direct support can only be provided at local/ state level. The nature of the FAO/ IP relationship with government at state level varies from one state to another, dependent on the commitment and engagement of the respective state authorities and how the relationship has been built up over time. Thus, for example, FAO and STO have a strong relationship with state government in Yambio, where the PfRR is being rolled out with strong engagement and commitment from the local authorities. In some other states high turnover of both local government staff and FAO staff have hampered the forging of a close working relationship.

FAO-IP relationships

This is fundamental to the effectiveness of the SAFER project. All five IPs had previously been contracted by FAO as service providers under the ELRP, and some had partnered FAO in other resilience projects: both NRC and SPEDP had worked as IPs for the BRACE-2 project. At the Juba level the FAO-IP relationship is predominantly a contractual one, driven by the LOA, with the emphasis on monitoring and accountability against pre-determined outputs. While accountability must play a part, the nature of the relationship is not conducive to the project drawing upon the respective IP's knowledge and experience, yet most of the IPs already had considerable experience of implementing resilience programmes at community level. For some this was evident in the proposal they submitted in response to FAO's 'Request for Proposals' (RFP). NRC, for example, refers to its experience of implementing FFS in South Sudan since 2015, and its use of the lead-farmer approach to agricultural extension. But this approach was not adopted by the SAFER project despite some key informants saying it would have been appropriate.

The nature of the relationship between FAO and its IPs in the SAFER project echoes the findings of the 2016 FAO South Sudan country evaluation:

‘The contractual arrangement between FAO and IPs (LOA), presents many difficulties for the IPs and does not contribute to a genuine partnership relationship. Instead it is oriented more towards service provision’ (pp71),

The 2016 evaluation recommended FAO develop a more strategic partnership with selected IPs, drawing on the knowledge and comparative advantage of each organization. The SAFER project could have been an ideal opportunity to develop this. Instead, the staff of one IP described the sense of being ‘an implementing agent rather than a partner. There is no room for innovation’. A number of IP staff used the word ‘prescriptive’ to describe the SAFER project, and lamented the limited opportunities to adapt on the ground or introduce new ideas.

Whether the relationship between FAO and its IPs provided any latitude for the respective NGO to influence and shape implementation of the SAFER project has depended very much

on the day-to-day working relationship between the IP project manager and the FAO Area Coordinator at state level. This appears to have worked particularly well in WES between FAO and STO. The relationships have also been good in Northern Bahr El Ghazal with SPEDP, and in West Lakes with VSF-G although the turnover in both FAO and VSF-G staff in Rumbek has been a constraint and hampered continuity. Where relationships have been good they have been characterized by regular meetings, formal and informal, FAO and IP staff working collaboratively and addressing challenges together, although the scope for deviating from the prescribed SAFER outputs has generally been very limited. The relationship has not been so positive in Jonglei between FAO and NRC, nor in East Lakes between FAO and ACTED. But even if the relationship is good at local level, IPs have commented that they often have had little or no input into the range and type of inputs that FAO has provided. Yet when the inputs are inappropriate or late, it impacts on the IP-community relationship and triggers a loss of confidence and trust by the community in the respective NGO.

Overall, the nature of the FAO-IP relationship does not seem to have mirrored the more strategic peer relationship FAO has with USAID, particularly at the Juba level.

SAFER partnership with other agencies and projects

Programmatic synergies between the SAFER project and other NGOs and UN agencies were foreseen from the outset, and mapped out in detail in the Project Document for the four geographical locations, although it is not entirely clear how these have been followed-up during implementation in some of those locations. The SAFER project began in an era of increased collaboration between UN agencies, particularly evident in Northern Bahr El Ghazal where the DFID-funded BRACE project had specifically incentivized FAO and WFP collaboration.

As mentioned above, the PfRR came into being once the SAFER project had been launched, predicated on the benefits and multiplier effects of coordinated and collaborative agency programming. Rolled out first and foremost in WES, with the backing of state government, this is not surprisingly the location where SAFER partnership with other agencies has been strongest. Examples, each of which have been elaborated upon elsewhere in this report, include:

- (1) collaboration between UN agencies, including FAO and SAFER, for CAFAG
- (2) collaboration between FAO/ SAFER, and two UN agencies – WFP and UNOPS – constructing feeder roads to SAFER-supported surplus producing areas
- (3) collaboration between FAO/ SAFER and WFP's SAMS. (See Box 1 above)
- (4) recent collaboration with CORDAID to support enterprise groups after the SAFER project ends

Northern Bahr El Ghazal is the other location where collaborative opportunities have been grasped, for example FAO support to conservation agriculture and adapted planting techniques to build resilience to floods implemented in synergy with construction of dykes for flood protection. Each case offers considerable potential for the SAFER project to have a deeper and more lasting impact than if it was implemented in isolation.

The evaluation team is also aware of missed opportunities for SAFER to work in partnership with other agencies, for example in Lakes to link with Oxfam which has been training artisans to construct beehives and has developed marketing channels in Juba for honey. Potential but unrealized opportunities for SAFER to collaborate with WFP in Jonglei were

also raised with the evaluation team. These opportunities can still be grasped, but time is running out to make full use of them.

A missing partnership – between FAO/ SAFER and researchers/ academia

Although FAO has been spearheading resilience measurement and analysis, hosting the multi-agency Resilience Analysis Monitoring and Measurement Unit (RAMMU) in South Sudan, there has been little scope in SAFER for ongoing and more in-depth research at local level beyond the occasional household level survey based on RIMA-II. Yet for such a large-scale project working on a topic for which solid evidence is still sparse, especially in protracted crisis contexts, there is great potential for deepening understanding of livelihoods, of what building resilience means at local level, and of exploring the most effective interventions. There are models from other countries for incorporating operational research into the project design, for example the Taadoud project in Darfur funded by DFID: the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University has run the operational research arm, in close collaboration with universities in Sudan and with operational agencies, deepening understanding of the wider context, providing insights into, and informing programming³¹.

Learning:

- For any future large-scale resilience programme, consideration should be given to including an operational research component that is firmly linked to operational programming, and that can advance understanding of resilience programming in a context of protracted crisis.
- The RIMA II-based Panel survey should be continued on an annual basis and the data used for monitoring purposes as well as broader research / questions, with greater rigour and tighter quality control to address some of the shortcomings of how the data are interpreted, highlighted in this MTE.

3.4.2 Efficiency of the partnership model

EQ: How efficient is the partnership model of the SAFER project?

Where the partnerships have worked well, and each partner has worked to maximise its comparative advantage and the potential synergies between different types of agencies, then the model has worked efficiently. Examples of this include (1) USAID identifying a strategic priority of tackling fall army worm, seeking permission to run trials, and FAO and IPs facilitating implementation on the ground; and (2) FAO providing technical expertise and training to IP staff who can then apply that at local level, drawing on their in-depth knowledge and facilitation at community level. Indeed, the model is at its most efficient when the selected IP already has a presence in the selected area and is able to draw upon its existing relationships, knowledge and understanding of the local context, as well as its existing infrastructure in terms of offices and staff. This was the case for four out of the five IPs.

Learning: short-term resilience projects should be implemented by agencies that already have a strong presence in the area and a sound understanding of the local context, local communities and their livelihoods.

One of the greatest causes of inefficiency has been FAO taking on procurement of all inputs, as described in section 3.3 above, and delivering them late, especially items that the IPs could

³¹ See <https://fic.tufts.edu/research-item/taadoud-transition-to-development-project-sharp/>

have procured themselves in a more timely fashion. This has been particularly problematic where the IPs have delivered training on the use of those inputs, sometimes months before the inputs arrive. Some IP staff expressed frustration over delays in projects that were jointly implemented with FAO, for example the construction of infrastructure, describing the feeling of ‘being held to ransom by the pace of FAO’. While LOAs penalise IPs for delays in implementation, there are no such penalties for delays that FAO is responsible for, reflecting the somewhat asymmetric contractual relationship. These inefficiencies have been exacerbated:

- a) when the division of roles between FAO and its IPs are unclear, for example in mobilising support for infrastructure construction
- b) when communication has been slow or broken down between FAO and IPs (including over when inputs would be delivered, or when trainings would be held)
- c) and when IP staff have received uncoordinated requests or visits from different FAO staff

Each of these issues was raised by IP staff during the MTE.

There have also been few opportunities for learning across IPs. Within the partnership model knowledge transfer has tended to be one-way, of technical knowledge from FAO to its IPs, missing opportunities for them to learn from each other, or for FAO to learn from the IPs. Thus, for example, STO’s adaptation of the project design to work with producer groups as the entry point, supporting them to graduate to enterprise groups was not shared with or followed by other IPs, nor was STO’s approach of working with Lead Farmers for agriculture extension, while ACTED and VSF-G used Community Facilitators (young, inexperienced school-leavers/drop-outs) who were not as effective in training farmers, especially given the limited training provided to them through SAFER. A number of staff of the NGO IPs say they have never met any of the other IPs.

There was an assumption that all IPs required similar levels of training, despite having variable experience, skills and capacity. Greater responsiveness to these issues would have contributed to more efficient ways of working. The evaluation team also questions whether FAO has made the most of learning across its various resilience programmes, although exploring this in any depth was beyond the resources and scope of the MTE.

Learning:

- The partnership model – particularly the FAO-IP partnership – must draw more on recognising and exploiting the comparative advantage of each partner, encouraging a relationship of peers which can learn from each other
- The process for knowledge transfer and learning should be more dynamic and inclusive, for example through facilitating exchange visits and highlighting innovations and successful adaptations between one IP and another.

3.5 Sustainability

3.5.1 Measures and institutional arrangements to promote sustainability

EQ: How effective are the measures / institutional arrangements that the SAFER project has put in place to promote sustainability?

South Sudan is an extremely challenging context for ensuring the sustainability of any resilience-oriented or wider development programming once project funding and implementation has ended. The highly volatile political context and range of shocks, especially conflict, are major factors. Although the aim of resilience programming is to build the capacity of communities to withstand such shocks, the low level of development and fragility of the institutional context make this a difficult task once project support has ended. Very weak government capacity at state as well as federal levels is a major issue, which cannot be addressed simply through training and involvement of government officers at local level (references to be added).

A number of key informants interviewed for this MTE have emphasised the important role of the private sector in this context, to provide agricultural and livestock services that government is unable to provide. This is the strategy that the project has adopted, most evidently in its support to, and training of CAHWs. The model of ensuring the financial independence and viability of the CAHWs through cost recovery is not new in South Sudan. However, the SAFER project has worked to reinforce this model, strengthening the cadre of CAHWs in the locations it is being implemented, through training (including business planning skills training), and funding for cold chain facilities. The effectiveness of these activities varies between locations and between IPs. Some have been unclear about how the cost recovery model is supposed to work, while in Bahr El Ghazal the project has supported the CAHWs to organise themselves into associations. USAID policy prohibits drugs and vaccines being supplied through SAFER, so instead FAO has used the synergy with the ELRP to ensure the provision of inputs.

The prospects for sustaining the FFS for agriculture extension services, however, are less promising. The experience of previous FAO projects indicates that FFS rarely continue beyond the life of the project that supports them³². This challenge was highlighted in the 2016 FAO country programme evaluation which recommended that FAO develop a programmatic approach in collaboration with partners and government, on how to promote and institutionalize FFS (as well as agro-pastoral field schools), and develop guidance on FFS, although it is not clear how this was followed through.

Appointing two strong national NGOs as IPs, building their capacity and expertise through the project, is an important contribution to strengthening the wider institutional context for resilience and development work in South Sudan. It sets a positive example for other international agencies and for the PfRR.

A major issue influencing the sustainability of the project's outcomes is whether the group structure through which SAFER has been implemented at community level will survive when external support ends. There are a number of factors affecting the longevity and sustainability of the groups:

- (1) groups that existed before the project started and that were well-established before receiving external assistance are more likely to continue when the project ends. Prioritising these groups for inclusion in the project was therefore a sound decision for long-term sustainability
- (2) groups that have registered as cooperatives are more likely to continue, both as a demonstration of the group's longer-term commitment, cohesion and vision, and because they have a formal status that brings certain benefits such as access to loans,

³² Personal communication, FAO staff member.

having a bank account, and formally applying for land. Some IPs have supported the more successful groups to register as cooperatives, especially in WES where 67 SAFER beneficiary groups have registered with the State Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development. In other locations the numbers are much lower: nine in Jonglei, one in Aweil and one in Jonglei

- (3) where there are longer-term commitments of mutual benefit that are likely to bind the group together, such as VSLAs
- (4) where the group has been significantly capacitated and empowered by the project, for example graduating from producer to enterprise groups as in WES, able to market their surplus production.

Land tenure is another major factor affecting sustainability, especially for groups engaged in crop and vegetable cultivation. In WES, for example, just over 55% of the crop producer groups are farming land owned by some, but not all members. The long-term implications of this are not clear, for example if a land owner dies, or when the project ends if a landowner decides to reclaim their land. Where the group has acquired or been allocated land (usually from the chief) in the group's name, this will contribute to the sustainability of the group structure, especially if this is clearly registered. But at least in WES this was said to be a minority of cases. If it is possible to follow-up a sample of groups in each geographical location at least one year after the SAFER project ends, this could greatly inform future programming in terms of learning about which have survived and which have not and the contributing factors.

Clarity of land tenure affects sustainability of the infrastructure SAFER has constructed as well. Agreement must be reached with government and the local community to ensure local ownership and sustainability. The effectiveness of the respective management committee is a major factor. Where these have been formed hurriedly after the infrastructure has been constructed and there has been rapid hand-over from the project to the committee, as has happened in a number of cases, for example for market sheds³³, the sustainable functioning of that infrastructure is at risk. Where the project has been able to tap into and work with existing committees, and/ or has consulted and engaged stakeholders throughout the design and construction of the infrastructure, the prospects for sustainability are more assured. Where the infrastructure component of the project has triggered policy change, as in the case of the slaughter slabs in Jonglei state (see Box 1 above), the prospects for sustainable change are much greater.

3.5.2 Sustainability of the SAFER outputs and outcomes

EQ: What are the prospects for and constraints to the sustainable and continued use of delivered project outputs and outcomes?

This is highly dependent on the longevity and sustainability of the measures and institutional arrangements described above. Specifically, for sustaining the individual project outputs:

(1) Enterprise groups and market linkages – output 1

This has been most successful and is most likely to be sustained where enterprise groups have good access to market opportunities and market links have been well-established through the project. Examples of this include ACTED making a specific link between a

³³ The market shed in Wulu town in West Lakes is a case in point

fish enterprise group in East Lakes and a trader in Juba. But there are few examples of this kind. Instead, IPs are usually struggling to make market connections where these do not already exist, for example for honey. The links established between crop enterprise groups and WFP as a market outlet, and/ or with ELRP seed fairs (see section 3.6 for further details) are positive and may continue after SAFER ends, at least for the short to medium term. But dependence on humanitarian programming for market outlets is clearly not a sustainable long-term strategy, and enterprise groups must also find other market outlets.

(2) Producer groups and improved agricultural practices – output 2

The prospects for sustaining outcomes for output 2 are probably stronger than for output 1, particularly improved agricultural practices and increased yields where these are not dependent upon externally provided inputs. Examples include improved planting and weeding practices, seed-saving, irrigation for vegetable production, use of short-maturing drought tolerant varieties, and animal traction using ox ploughs. Where some of these practices have resulted in much higher yields, as in WES, the motivation to continue using improved agricultural practices is high, as long as the group can use the increased production for their own consumption or find market outlets. However, the project has made limited progress in strengthening systems for providing agro-inputs (with the exception of CAHWs), for example improved farming implements such as hoes. Where increased production is dependent upon the free delivery of these inputs, the benefits will taper off with the end of the project.

(3) Natural resource management – output 3

While some activities such as establishing and supporting tree nurseries may continue to provide environmental benefits after SAFER has ended as long as the groups can sustain them, changing environmental practices through changed behaviour, for example around tree cutting or catching fish in WES, is less likely to be achieved over a relatively short time period. Indeed, some of the NRM committees responsible for raising local awareness of sustainable NRM practices will only have been in existence for a year by the time the project ends. A rather different and longer-term approach is needed to sustainably address NRM and reverse environmental degradation.

A major constraining factor to sustaining the project's outputs and outcomes is the short timeframe of the project, with only two years of engagement at the community level. For value chain activities, for example, some enterprise groups will have received business development training and inputs as part of a customized package in the last few months of the project's life. There will therefore be limited or no time to provide any ongoing or additional support.

Learnings:

- Building resilience sustainably at local level requires longer-term engagement than two years. For a short-term project like SAFER, being embedded in a wider multi-sectoral framework like the PfRR that tackles resilience from different angles over a number of years is likely to have greatest sustainable impact.
- Achieving long-term and sustainable change requires a systemic approach, paying attention to institutional structures and processes, for example for the provision of agro-inputs, as well as technical inputs and training at individual or group level

3.6 The humanitarian-development nexus

Although there was no specific evaluation question on the humanitarian-development nexus, as the project was designed to ‘fill the nexus’³⁴, (also central to FAO’s resilience strategy) this section evaluates the extent to which it has done so and the challenges faced.

At the programmatic level SAFER has developed some positive synergies between humanitarian and development/ resilience programming, most of which have been described above. Encouraging SAFER-supported enterprise groups to supply seed fairs, both ELRP-funded seed fairs and seed fairs organised by the SAFER project is one such example. This has proved very lucrative to some producer/ enterprise groups: with the proceeds from one seed fair near Yambio, one successful crop production/ enterprise group had been able to buy two bicycles for the group, raise money for agricultural labour for the next season and pay a dividend to its group members. The economic and long-term advantages of encouraging a nascent local market in seed rather than FAO importing and distributing large quantities of seed are considerable. Linking surplus-producing enterprise groups with WFP’s SAMS project is another example of positive synergies, working across UN agencies. These synergies may be enhanced where WFP has made a strategic decision to implement its SAMS programme through the same NGO implementing SAFER, through STO in WES.

In the highly volatile context of South Sudan, with large numbers experiencing acute food insecurity from one year to the next, ways of stimulating local production and markets in more stable and productive areas of the country, as a source of supply for humanitarian programmes for the more vulnerable, is a positive example of what the nexus can mean in practice.

This volatility also means that resilience programmes should include a humanitarian component, or at least a high degree of flexibility to shift direction to meet humanitarian needs if the context changes. Adding emergency output 4 to the SAFER project demonstrates one way in which this can be done.

Yet the SAFER experience also throws into sharp focus the challenges of implementing a more developmental resilience-oriented programme alongside large-scale humanitarian programmes. In a country like South Sudan which has been the recipient of decades of humanitarian assistance, changing the mindset at all levels, from one of welfare and hand-outs to one of productive engagement, enterprise and partnership is hugely challenging. This is about communities engaging differently with agencies, agencies playing a different role to support and stimulate sustainable development at community level thinking and acting more systemically, and government stepping in to fulfil its role, for example in service provision. While some SAFER project stakeholders describe being aware of the challenge of changing mindsets at community level, and dealing with it from the outset, breaking out of the welfare syndrome is a long-term process.

It has been particularly complicated where humanitarian programme are being implemented alongside SAFER, in the same geographical areas and even in the same communities. WFP’s cash-for-assets programme has caused the most friction with SAFER. Providing cash for farmers to farm their own land, or to manage their fish ponds, it has been a major disincentive

³⁴ As described in the Project Document

to SAFER producer groups which are expected to provide their own time and labour without payment while the project provides other inputs including training. One frontline IP staff member gave a heartfelt description of how hard it had been to persuade SAFER-supported groups to engage when they were not recipients of cash or food, and how much time this engagement with individual groups took each week, especially when the inputs they should have received through SAFER had been badly delayed. Another IP staff member described how ‘emergency and development projects (implemented alongside each other) are tearing communities apart’.

A major nexus challenge is how to manage the graduation of individual households, or indeed communities, from humanitarian to developmental assistance, especially in a context of protracted crisis where it may not be a one-way linear process. Where the same NGO is implementing both the humanitarian programme and SAFER, it may be able to provide the granularity of analysis and targeting to provide humanitarian assistance to some households and development support to others, all within the same community. This was the case with STO in WES: households participating in SAFER were not eligible to be recipients of the ELRP. Nevertheless the evaluation team came across one case where a household member was part of a SAFER group supplying the seed fair with maize, and was also a recipient of a seed voucher through the ELRP. Ensuring watertight distinctions is immensely challenging. WFP staff described how they have also struggled with their targeting strategy for humanitarian and resilience programming, for example households benefiting from the ‘cash-for-assets’ emergency programme may also benefit from the SAMS, thus selling part of their harvest back to WFP.

Learning:

- In a context where humanitarian assistance is being provided alongside resilience-oriented development, how to address the mindset shift that is needed at all levels should be factored into design and implementation, recognising that this is likely to be a time-consuming and continuous process

4. Conclusions

The successful implementation of SAFER has demonstrated that it is possible and appropriate to implement resilience-oriented development programmes in parts of South Sudan, even during periods of conflict and insecurity. Implementation while communities are experiencing shocks, whether natural disasters or conflict, is the reality in South Sudan that needs to be factored into project design and implementation. Successfully partnering national NGOs has also been a very positive feature of the project, contributing to strengthening the institutional context for development.

The scope of the project design for SAFER is broadly relevant to building the resilience of rural populations, from livelihood diversification to strengthening current livelihoods, to promoting sustainable natural resource management, but with a number of caveats. First, it has been heavily oriented to crop-based livelihood systems. This is indicative of a long-term crop bias in South Sudan, for example in the way food security is understood. But it has limited the relevance of the project to more livestock-based livelihood systems. Second, in an apparent contradiction with the aim of diversifying livelihoods and spreading risk, it narrowly targeted one commodity per enterprise group, and also encouraged producer groups to focus on a small range of crops, or on one type of livestock. Third, it was overly ambitious in terms

of what could be sustainably achieved in a three year project in which there only two years of engagement at community level, for example diversifying livelihoods. Fourth, the design is focused on individual outputs without enough consideration of how they are connected. It could have benefited from a more systemic approach/ way of thinking.

Nevertheless, in an extremely difficult operating environment SAFER has achieved some important outcomes. Through increased production and productivity some groups have achieved substantial increases in income (as indicated in Boxes 1 and 2). From data made available to the MTE for two IPs³⁵, women have represented approximately 50 to 60% of project participants. There are positive examples of SAFER collaborating with other agencies to achieve wider impact. And some of the infrastructure has quickly encouraged positive changes in practice and even policy, for example the slaughter slabs in Jonglei (described in Box 3), and is associated with high demand, for example the milk bars.

The SAFER project is based on a model of predominantly technical solutions. It is highly dependent on the provision of externally-sourced inputs and training in improved agricultural practices. As a result FAO's consistently poor record of delayed delivery of inputs has seriously compromised the project's effectiveness, where inputs arrive too late for the agricultural season (especially seed), and many months after training in the use of those inputs (for post-harvest handling and storage, for example). Not only does this raise a fundamental question over the appropriateness of an input-based project model, it also indicates the need for a major strategic rethink of FAO's role in procurement and delivery, more than three years after the 2016 evaluation that highlighted similar shortcomings.

The social dimension of resilience has been much weaker in the SAFER project. Although the project works through groups, it has paid less attention to building social capital within the groups: greater use of VSLAs could have contributed here. Nor has it paid attention to the relationship between groups targeted by the project and the wider community. Setting up NRM committees and some of the public infrastructure constructed are the few community-wide activities implemented by SAFER (with some good practice examples – see, for example, Box 5 on one of the NRM Committees).

Some of the constraints that the project has faced are a consequence of how the project design has been translated into implementation. Although the Project Document emphasises working through groups, it also refers to the role that lead farmers and facilitators can make at community level. But in practice the project has worked almost entirely through groups which means it has missed opportunities for working with lead farmers to support the wider community, or with individual households. More fundamentally, the project has adopted a 'one-system fits all' approach to implementation, using exactly the same modality for very different geographical areas, different livelihood systems and different cultures. As this MTE has shown, the collective group approach is not appropriate in all contexts for all production and enterprise activities. This could undermine the long-term sustainability of the project where newly-formed groups do not hold together beyond the end of the project.

Where there have been adaptations to project implementation, these often seem to have happened in spite of the project, rather than because adaptation and innovation were actively encouraged. This is partly due to the highly prescribed monitoring and evaluation framework for SAFER, focused on outputs that could be measured numerically (although some of these

³⁵ ACTED and NRC

could more accurately be described as ‘outcomes’). This tended to drive the project along a narrowly prescribed track which did not encourage FAO or field staff to look for, or grasp new opportunities as they arose. Where IPs did make appropriate adaptations these are to be welcomed, for example STO’s sequencing of production to enterprise groups. However, the highly contractual nature of FAO-IP relationships, enshrined in LOAs, provided little incentive, nor for the project to benefit from wider IP experience in implementing other resilience programmes. On the other hand, USAID as the donor did engage strategically with the opportunities SAFER offered, in particular using it as a springboard for promoting the PfRR, and as a vehicle for trialling how to combat fall army worm.

The project has developed important synergies with humanitarian programming, particularly in creating market outlets for enterprise groups through WFP’s SAMS and through the ITFs for seed sales (see Box 1). A wider issue for all agencies implementing resilience programmes is the challenge of implementation through development modalities alongside ‘free’ humanitarian assistance. This has been highly problematic for SAFER frontline field staff. The wider impact on communities is not yet well understood although there are indications of its potential divisiveness which would run contrary to the social cohesion and strengthening of community safety nets inherent in more resilient communities. This issue goes beyond the remit of any one project, but is important for agencies to address collectively. The PfRR would be an ideal platform for doing so.

RIMA II has been the SAFER project’s main method for measuring any change in resilience through its RCI. It has an important role to play and has been welcomed by the donor in particular. However, there has been an over dependence on RIMA which is not a straightforward tool (and is not yet accessible to IPs, as acknowledged by some FAO staff members), and has resulted in overly optimistic and untested claims of attribution to the SAFER project. It appears to have crowded out other simpler measures of resilience, for example a simple increase in number of livelihood sources as a measure of livelihood diversification, and more ongoing qualitative assessment³⁶. While the quest for the best way of measuring resilience continues, complementing RIMA II with other more accessible ways of monitoring outcomes and impact would be helpful.

FAO is a key player in building resilience in South Sudan, especially in rural areas. It is currently implementing a number of resilience programmes funded by different donors, in different geographical areas and for different livelihood groups. It is well-placed to play a leading role in South Sudan, deepening understanding of resilience and synthesising and promoting learning to inform programming. FAO is playing a leadership role in resilience analysis and measurement, particularly through RIMA and through hosting RAMMU. The scale and scope of SAFER offers fertile ground for learning, and this MTE has a clear learning purpose. However, the project would have required a different and better-resourced model of knowledge exchange and learning, with a dedicated research and learning component and with different skill-sets to fulfil this wider potential. It was not clear to the evaluation team that learning is being maximised across FAO’s different resilience programmes. Yet FAO and SAFER’s profile in the PfRR offers it a platform for contributing to, and promoting learning across agencies.

³⁶ Although RIMA II does include a qualitative component, this has not been reported upon separately so it is difficult to assess its usefulness

5. Strategic learning and Recommendations

This section captures the strategic learning from this MTE of the SAFER project, and turns these into a series of recommendations for future resilience programming.

1. **While a multi-locational resilience project may have common themes, it must be adapted to the local context in terms of livelihoods, culture, and therefore orientation of activities, to ensure its relevance.** The approach adopted must therefore be based on widespread consultation at local level . Recognising that this is not always possible to do in advance, as with the SAFER project, building in an inception phase of two to six months will ensure there is time and resources for such local level consultation and for adapting the project approach to the local context to ensure it is well-informed and appropriate. This will help to ensure a more balanced approach to supporting local livelihoods, avoiding an overly crop-oriented focus.
2. **A strategic rethink is needed of FAO's role in promoting resilience in South Sudan,** beyond the provision of externally provided inputs, which incur inevitable delays, to greater emphasis on the provision of technical expertise and quality control, paying more attention to the social dimension of resilience within and between communities. This strategic rethink should be done in close consultation with FAO's Resilience Unit in Rome/ the region, taking account of the development of new UK Guidance on Resilience.
3. **Resilience programmes must be designed to accommodate a high degree of flexibility, to adapt to the dynamic context of South Sudan and to grasp new opportunities as they arise, and must build in incentives for adaptation and innovation.** This requires moving away from a highly prescriptive logframe and M&E framework dominated by counting outputs, to one that looks for evidence of a responsive, adaptive and learning culture, within the project generally and within participating agencies, from FAO to its IPs. Resilience projects should encourage and facilitate more participator learning processes at community level.
4. **Resilience programmes must be conceptualized, designed and implemented more systemically,** for example approaching efforts to increase production (from crops, to livestock to fisheries) from the perspective of the market system and potential; addressing the provision of seed from the perspective of strengthening South Sudan's entire seed system from production to marketing to access; paying more attention to the linkages between rural (production-based) livelihoods and urban (market-based) livelihoods and how these can be strengthened for mutual benefit.
5. **Support to building the resilience of seed systems must be clear about the objectives/ aims of different types of seed interventions, based on a good understanding of local needs.** In general, greater attention is needed to support diversification of both crops (notably vegetables) and varieties, paying particular attention to the need to match varieties to local agro-ecologies. The emergence of market-based seed systems should not only address seed access (e.g. through the use of vouchers and seed fairs where seed is locally available) but also seed supply (through identifying seed providers where seed is locally available, and through procuring seed from local seed companies for areas where there might be low availability of seed of particular crops).

6. **Effectively building resilience requires a multi-sectoral approach beyond agricultural production and marketing, and must therefore be done in collaboration with other agencies**, addressing issues such as basic service provision and improved infrastructure. The PfRR offers a vehicle for promoting this approach.
7. **Community-based resilience programming should promote a more inclusive approach, for example:**
 - with greater inclusion of people living with disabilities
 - encouraging greater involvement of youth, recognising that this may require a different approach and a broader range of options beyond traditional agriculture. (This in turn may require collaboration with other agencies)

NB. supporting more all-women groups may be a more effective way of promoting gender equality than mixed groups of men and women where men tend to dominate, although this requires further investigation to confirm
8. **FAO should rethink and customize its approach to partnership with its IPs**, to benefit from the respective experience of the different agencies, to maximise comparative advantage, and to design training and capacity development according to the capacity and skills of each respective agency. This echoes one of the recommendations of the 2016 FAO South Sudan evaluation.
9. **FAO has a potentially important leadership role to play in building and contributing to understanding and learning about what resilience means in South Sudan, how to strengthen resilience in a context of protracted crisis, and ensuring alignment with local people's priorities and needs.** To fulfil this role requires a strengthening of the necessary skillsets and expertise within FAO South Sudan, creating space and making resources available to achieve this. In future resilience programming this should be done through developing an operational research component in association with research organisations, and through close collaboration with FAO's Resilience Unit in Rome and in the region.
10. **How to manage the transition from humanitarian assistance to resilience-oriented development support, within communities and across geographic areas, should be a topic for cross-agency and cross-programme learning**, recognising the challenges of doing this smoothly, exploring the tensions that may be created within communities, and the fact that it may be a circular rather than linear process. Whether and how it is possible to do this, and whether targeting must be geographic (ie geographically separating humanitarian and development programming), or can be socioeconomic (ie targeting vulnerable households with humanitarian assistance and at the same time providing developing support to better-off households within the same community) requires deeper investigation.

Acronyms

ACTED	formerly 'Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development'
AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
APFS	Agro-Pastoral Field School
BRACE	Building Resilience through Asset Creation and Enhancement
CAFAG	children associated with armed forces and armed groups
CAHW	community-based animal health worker
CBPP	community-based participatory planning
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
ELRP	Emergency Livelihood Response Programme
EQ	Evaluation question
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAO-R	Food and Agriculture Organization Representative
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FFS	Farmer Field School
FGD	focus group discussion
FSL	food security and livelihoods
FSNMS	Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring Survey
GFD	general food distribution
IP	implementing partner
ITF	input trade fair
KII	key informant interview
LOA	letter of agreement
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MTE	mid-term evaluation
NBeG	Northern Bahr el Ghazal
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NRM	natural resource management
NRMC	Natural Resource Management Committee
PfRR	Partnership for Resilience and Recovery
PIRS	Performance Indicator Reference Sheet
PWD	people with disabilities
RAMMU	Resilience Analysis Monitoring and Measurement Unit
RCI	Resilience Capacity Index
RFP	Request for Proposals
RIMA	resilience index and measurement analysis
SAFER	Sustainable Agriculture for Economic Resiliency
SAMS	Smallholder Agriculture Market Support
SPEDP	Sudan Peace and Development Education Programme
SSP	South Sudanese Pound
SSSA	Seed System Security Assessment
STO	Star Trust Organisation
TOR	Terms of Reference
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
USAID	US Agency for International Development

USD	United States Dollars
VSF-G	Veterinaires Sans Frontieres Germany
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association
VTC	Vocational Training Centre
WES	Western Equatoria State
WFP	World Food Programme