

# IFAD Commends FG over Success of Life-ND Project in the Niger Delta Region

Arising from the Successes recorded so far from the various LIFE-ND interventions in the six out of the nine Niger Delta Oil producing States in the Niger Delta Region through the direct supervision of the Federal Government under the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Associate Vice President of the International Fund For Agricultural Development (IFAD), Dr. Donal Brown has commended the Fedral Government and pledged the readiness of IFAD to extend the Project lifespan as a result of the obvious and measurable impact the project has made and still making in the lives of the beneficiaries in the Niger Delta Region.

The IFAD Vice President made this pledge during a high level meeting between of IFAD and top officials of the Federal Government of Nigeria comprising His Excellency the Vice President of Nigeria, Sen. Kashim Shettima, the Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Sen. Abubakar Kyari, the Minister of State, Senator Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi. The discussions with Dr. Brown was centered around deepening the partnership between the Federal Government of Nigeria and IFAD in support of Government efforts aimed at food system transformation for food and Nutrition security, improved livelihoods of smallholder farmers and processes and inclusive agro industrialization. According to the IFAD Associate Vice President' My mission is not only to strengthen our Partnership but also to look at the future direction of support that IFAD can provide Government. It is also to review IFAD partnership with Nigeria on Food security and agriculture and to think about the future direction and support we can give.' Dr Brown emphasized the importance of a strong partnership between IFAD and the Nigerian Government while highlighting ongoing discussions to design more initiatives aimed at bolstering food production, enhancing value chains and promoting climate adaptation. He particularly commended the successes and promising results in the area of youth entrepreneurs recorded so far in the livelihood Improvement Family Enterprise Project in the Niger Delta Region under the LIFE-ND Project. He expressed his satisfaction with the supervisory

efforts of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security under the leadership of Dr. Abubakar Kyari and the Minister of State, Sen Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi that has inspired the success story of LIFE-ND Project in the Niger-Delta Region. In his words' Most of our programmes like the value chain Development Programme VCDP and the Livelihood Improvement family Enterprise are really performing well.'

In his remark at the meeting the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security Sen. Kyari expressed gratitude to IFAD for massive food security support and due diligence in the existing operations of FGN/IFAD Portfolio. 'The smooth implementation of the Livelihood Improvement Family Enterprise in Niger Delta (LIFE-ND), Value Chain Development Programme (VCPD), Additional Financing (AF) and Special Agro- Industrial Processing Zone (SAPZ) programme underscore the unique quality of our strategic partnership. It is my strong believe that some of the next step in the implementation of the LIFE-ND which include the approval of a one year extension request for \$20 million additional Financing and preparation for LIFE-ND will be given accelerated attention, I would also like to appeal for the release of \$5m ASAP grant to VCDP for climate change adaptation as well as the approval of her request for a two-year extension to enable the programme to improve on its disbursement status. The minister said.

It could be recalled that some years back, Niger Delta Region has been characterized with various problems ranging from kidnapping, Banditry, oil theft, environmental challenges, and militancy as well as youth restiveness. In spite of Government efforts to reverse the trend, the problem had continued to ravage the communities in the Niger Delta. Today, the region has continuously being transformed through various interventions most especially agricultural development programmes. The Federal Government of Nigeria and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) on the 21st of February 2019 approved the disbursement effectiveness of the Livelihood Improvement Family Enterprise Project in the Niger Delta (LIFE-ND). The project is a total of 97.96 million USD with



the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) financing with a loan of 60 million USD, the Niger Delta Development commission (NDDC) 30 million USD and the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) 3.06 million USD while the six participating states 4.91 million USD. The livelihood improvement family enterprise in the Niger Delta, (LIFE-ND) is designed to be implemented in the Nine Niger-Delta states of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers states. However, it is currently being implemented in the six IFAD funded states of Abia, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Ondo States. The three NDDC-funded states of Akwa-Ibom, Imo and Rivers states are yet to commence implementation due to none payment of funds by the NDDC. The project under IFAD-financing is designed to engage 25,500 beneficiary women and youths called incubatees as well as 600 established enterprises called incubators. The target beneficiaries of the project are women and youths between the ages of 18 to 35 years including women headed households with children under the age of 15. The project gender target entails 50% male and 50% female including persons with disability (PWD). The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to enhance "Income, food security and job creation for rural youth and women through agribusiness development on a sustainable basis. LIFE-ND project is intervening in seven priority commodities along the value chain across the six participating states. These include cassava, rice, plantain, oil palm, cocoa, fishery, and poultry. Interestingly, within the past four years period of LIFE-ND operations, over 15,000 Business Entrepreneurs have emerged with most of them now bonafide employers of labour, courtesy of LIFE-ND. For instance, some beneficiary incubates and incubators of a fish farm centre in Akpabuyo LGA of Cross River state commended the LIFE-ND project for bringing hope to the hopeless in their community and expressing happiness that those who have so far benefited from the project interventions have already become employers of labour. More so, the LIFE-ND project has also launched an Agri- business innovative forum (LABIF) aimed at boosting job and wealth creation on a sustainable basis in the region. This achievement invariably contributes to the gross domestic product of the country. The forum also affords LIFE- ND beneficiaries the opportunity of showcasing their products to the world through various market outlets at competitive prices. According to the National project coordinator of LIFE-ND, Dr Abiodun Sanni, the project has given support to over 26,155 enterprise beneficiaries out of the targeted 25,500 across the six participating states of Abia, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Ondo. It has also injected over 30 million US dollars into the national economy. During the media engagement, the beneficiaries of the project revealed how the project had opened their horizon to many opportunities in the agricultural sector thereby enhancing their capacity and strengthening them to be able to effectively manage their respective businesses and network for greater opportunities. In addition, youths in the Niger Delta region have started counting their gains with the intervention of LIFEND in their communities. For instance, over 17,000 Mt of Rice have been produced in three states of Abia, Cross River, and Edo. On cassava production, over 75,000 Mt of produce have been contributed to the food basket of the nation by the six states. Bayelsa state have also contributed over 4500 Mt of plantain

Overall LIFE-ND has contributed over 110,930 Mt of Agricultural produce to the National economy thereby realizing over 30 million USD as national income. In this regard, the project has helped to ensure food security, job creation and increased income to the economy of the country and the region in particular. The first phase of six year of the project is expected to end in March 2025 while the second phase of six years is expected to continue simultaneously. So far the Project has exceeded its projected target of 25,500 household beneficiaries for the first phase which currently stands at 26,155 translating to 1.02 percentage increase and this is expected to increase within the next one year.

produce while a total of over 1200 Mt of cocoa produce were realized in Ondo State. Support given to oil palm processors in Abia and Delta states realized over 730 Mt of produce. Considering the high potential in poultry and fisheries businesses, couple with the nutritional value of these produce to the dietary intake of beneficiaries households members, LIFE-ND has massively contributed over 5000 Mt and 7500 Mt of poultry and fisheries products respectively into the National economy by the six participating states. Overall LIFE-ND has contributed over 110,930 Mt of Agricultural produce to the National economy thereby realizing over 30 million USD as national income. In this regard, the project has helped to ensure food security, job creation and increased income to the economy of the country and the region in particular. The first phase of six year of the project is expected to end in March 2025 while the second phase of six years is expected to continue simultaneously. So far the Project has exceeded its projected target of 25,500 household beneficiaries for the first phase which currently stands at 26,155 translating to 1.02 percentage increase and this is expected to increase within the next one year.