Executive summary

Evaluation of the Rural Development Support Program “Opening Up Future Prospects”

Mungo légué ti kékéréké

(DEVRUR II)

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1 Evaluation overview

The Rural Development Support Program (DEVRUR II) "Opening up future prospects" – Mungo légué ti kékéréké – contributes to the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (RCPCA 2017–2021), specifically to its third pillar aimed at "reviving economic activity and increasing production capacity to stimulate recovery and growth." The program's objective is to reactivate socio-economic dynamics in intervention zones that have been significantly affected by successive crises. The establishment of multifunctional agropoles in rural centers and their peri-urban belts is intended to increase agricultural production and processing activities. This was to be achieved through the strengthening of vocational training systems and improved access to energy, financial services, and technology. The expected intermediate changes included better implementation of public policies, stronger synergies among actors, capacity building for stakeholders in their respective roles, and investments dedicated to restarting training centers and the production system.

This project, implemented by Enabel, was initially scheduled for 48 months (November 1, 2020 – October 31, 2024) and was granted a one-year extension until November 31, 2025. Its total budget is €17,950,000.

The evaluation of the DEVRUR II project aimed to support both the accountability of the intervention and its ability to respond to the challenges of operating in a highly fragile context in the Central African Republic (CAR). The evaluation had two primary objectives: (i) to provide an overall assessment of the project based on the OECD-DAC criteria, and (ii) to analyze the project's capacity to address the challenges posed by fragility. The analysis focused on the project's adaptability and on assessing synergies with local actors and their impact on crisis management.

The evaluation approach was designed to meet the specific interests and priorities of both primary and secondary users. The analysis of project outcomes and key success or blockage factors allowed for the extraction of lessons learned and recommendations applicable to similar projects in fragile contexts. This evaluation relied on: (i) promoting a culture of learning among involved stakeholders; (ii) developing a trust-based relationship that encouraged the sharing of information and reflection on evaluation questions, including project adaptability; and (iii) producing practical recommendations for the future.

The evaluation team adopted a flexible approach tailored to the interviewees, their immediate environment, and the nature of the evaluation questions. Multiple data collection tools were used, including document reviews, semi-structured and in-depth interviews, focus groups, working meetings, and field observations. Considerable attention was given to fulfilling information needs throughout the mission, which required engaging a broad panel of stakeholders and observations. Finally, the evaluation team adhered to the OECD-DAC principles and standards for evaluations. The conclusions are based on verified and triangulated information.

The mission took place between January 23, 2025 (planning and scoping meetings) and April 2, 2025 (preliminary findings presentation), with a field phase in the Central African Republic from March 14 to 31, 2025. This enabled the evaluators to engage with the project implementation team, institutional partners—the Ministry of National Education (MEN) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR)—as well as stakeholders and beneficiaries of the agropoles in Bangui, Bossangoa, Berberati, and Bouar.

2 Findings

2.1 Findings by OECD-DAC criteria

Relevance	C	The DEVRUR II Rural Development Support Program aligns with national policy orientations and priorities, as well as those of the European Union within the framework of the Bêkou Fund. The agropole approach anticipates the implementation of the National Policy on Decentralization and Territorial Development (PND-DT), which aims to promote integrated and equitable local development. At its core is a central concern also found in national policies: the "recovery" of cohorts of unskilled youth left behind during the crisis years. The agropastoral component of the project was initiated late due to the lack of financial institutions, the withdrawal of the operator responsible for Operational Strategy 3 (IRAM), and challenges in operationalizing the agropole concept, stemming from a formulation process that was too short.
Coherence	B	During the preparation phase, internal dialogue within the Bêkou Fund ensured coherence between the component projects (though this mechanism ended in 2019). Relationships with sector-specific projects implemented by IFAD[1] (PEAJ[2], PRAPAM[3]), AfDB[4], FAO[5] (PARSANKO[6]), and AFD (MtaM[7] Project implemented by Mercy Corps) were maintained. One of the agropoles' designated roles was to facilitate dialogue among different stakeholders. This effort toward sectoral coherence was also supported by close relationships with central (MEN, MADR, MESA[8]) and decentralized government services (ACFPE[9], ACDA[10], ANDE[11]) involved in the agropoles.
Effectiveness	B	The DEVRUR II project significantly improved the quality of both public and private vocational training systems in the targeted regions of the Central African Republic. This included 5 public Vocational Training and Literacy Centers (CFPPA), 4 private institutions, and 5 blacksmithing workshops—all of which were renovated or reinforced (buildings, workshops, farms, solar installations) and equipped (pedagogical tools, etc.). Pedagogical capacity building was conducted through coordinated dialogue with MEN, the training center teams, and a strengthened ACFPE, which supported apprenticeship and insertion systems (incubators, insertion clubs). A competency-based approach was implemented with strong involvement from the private sector in defining reference frameworks. The centers became significantly more attractive, shown by increased student intake capacity, higher enrollment—particularly among girls—and improved training completion rates. Four insertion

1 International Fund for Agricultural Development
2Livestock and Youth Support Project
3 Project to Strengthen Productivity and Market Access for Agropastoral Products in the Savannahs
4 African Development Bank
5 Food and Agriculture Organization
6 Project to Support Resilience and Food and Nutrition Security in the Prefectures of Kemo and Ouaka
7 Maingo ti a Masseka (nom propre, à laisser tel quel sauf si une traduction officielle existe)
8 Ministry of Livestock and Animal Health
9 Central African Agency for Vocational Training and Employment
10 Central African Agency for Agricultural Development
11 National Agency for Livestock Development

		incubators were recently launched across six institutions. These “apprenticeship” mechanisms still require consolidation. Support was also provided to agropastoral value chain promoters in the six agropoles through training (entrepreneurship, technical, and managerial) offered by ANDE and ACDA, and through in-kind grants. By October 31, 2024, 1,415 promoters had received in-kind grants. These efforts led to increased production and sales volumes. Nine cooperatives (6 animal feed units, 3 honey processing units) were recently created (end of 2024). These cooperatives’ business projects remain under development and must be consolidated (business plans, cash flow planning, HR needs, etc.). Despite the fragile CAR context and implementation challenges, the program’s effectiveness is satisfactory. This is largely due to: (i) the strengthening and recognition of vocational training services within MEN, (ii) the rehabilitation, equipment, and proper management of vocational institutions affected by years of insecurity, (iii) the improvement of teaching teams and training quality, which enhances the appeal of the curricula, supplemented by activities linking learners to the labor market (insertion clubs, incubators), (iv) the current interest of out-of-school youth in acquiring trades that facilitate their professional integration. The development of apprenticeships in partnership with ACFPE (blacksmithing) is also very attractive to youth. Support activities for agropastoral businesses helped revive several sectors (short-cycle livestock, beekeeping, etc.).
Efficiency	B	The DEVRUR II project’s total budget is €17,950,000. As of October 31, 2024, 79% had been committed, reflecting standard budget execution. The absence of financial services necessitated adjustments to the strategy, results framework, and budget allocation. The one-year no-cost extension agreement was signed at the end of February 2024 after approximately 18 months of negotiation. The project faced numerous difficulties in its early years: security issues, team recruitment delays, challenges mobilizing professional service providers and vehicles, fuel shortages, etc. Actual project implementation effectively took place over 3 years, and is deemed efficient, considering delayed outcomes.
Sustainability	B	DEVRUR II minimized substitution risks by working through and strengthening national partner institutions. Despite typical operational difficulties in government services, these actors were able to fulfill and reinforce their roles in coordination, steering, oversight, and service delivery. The relationships built between promoters and service providers (government services, cooperatives, platforms) are expected to endure beyond the project’s end and help sustain local economic development dynamics. Training center teams developed economic models, acquired management tools (institutional projects, management tools), and greatly enhanced their pedagogical capacity—through both training and the infrastructure and equipment provided.

		The blacksmithing workshops are now equipped and run by associations led by master blacksmiths who can train apprentices, issue certificates, and support their professional setup. The Professional Competency Certificate (CCP) is now recognized in the formal training catalog and is being implemented in all CFPPA centers. The training center construction standards developed by the project have also been validated by MEN. However, the agropole approach was not fully understood or adopted. Its main weakness is that it is not anchored in a formal administrative entity (e.g. prefecture or region), which would allow for continuity through decentralized governance mechanisms. Nor is it linked to a production basin encompassing all relevant actors[12]. The "strength" of the cooperatives varies depending on leadership quality and local market contexts. They need appropriate management tools (business plans, cash flow planning) to better prioritize and organize their activities.
Impact	B	The appeal of vocational training for young people is tangible. Enrollment rates in training centers have significantly improved, and dropout rates during training have sharply decreased. Young people and their families are investing in their futures. Certain technical fields—such as electricity, mechanics, and agri-food—are particularly attractive to girls, whose numbers in the CFPPA centers have increased. Their representation at the National School of Livestock in Bouar (ENEB) has also seen a notable rise. The project took care to ensure gender equity among the beneficiaries of grants and overall support. This has resulted in a qualitative improvement in women's participation—not only in the economic sphere but also in organizational life (cooperatives, platforms, groups), including in leadership roles. The dynamics within short-cycle livestock, beekeeping, fish farming, and market gardening value chains appear promising, though they vary from one agropole to another. Cooperatives are evolving within positive dynamics, particularly in mobilizing their own resources to finance their services. Access to training, the development of economic activities, and the presence of dialogue tools are all contributing to a climate of peace that allows young people to envision a better future.

2.2 Findings by Specific Evaluation Question

2.2.1 To what extent and how did the project adapt its actions to changes and constraints linked to a highly fragile context, to ensure the project's relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability?

The constraints encountered during the project's preparation phase were, overall, correctly anticipated. Measures to improve public procurement management were implemented early on to reduce delays in processing. The first self-evaluation missions revealed that the field situation had significantly changed during the uncertainty period of 2019–2020. Various adjustments were made - especially in response to security conditions and the lack of local financial services—requiring a full revision of the intervention

12 This is why the dynamics within short-cycle livestock value chains (poultry farming, pig farming, fish farming) offer the potential for sustainable results.

strategy. From the end of the first year of implementation, it became evident that the project's results framework, budget allocation, and implementation timeline would need to be adapted.

In particular, the condition of the vocational training system, the absence of financial services, and the extreme fragility of agropastoral markets called into question the agropole approach. An operational response was introduced at the end of 2022. The dialogue mechanism that was put in place helped improve the implementation of Operational Strategy 3 (OS3), but only reached a limited number of young people - the project's main target group. The main difficulties encountered with OS3 stemmed from the lack of clarity around the agropole concept, the absence of financial services, and the withdrawal of the Institute for Research and Application of Development Methods (IRAM). These last two issues were not anticipated in the risk matrix. Redesigning the approach for OS3 triggered extensive internal debate, which considerably delayed the signing of Amendments 1 and 2 to the initial convention (signed in February 2024).

In terms of vocational training, efforts focused on agriculture-related trades within the CFPPA centers and the Don Bosco Center. The CCP (Professional Competency Certificate) and the certification of apprenticeships improved the attractiveness of these training centers. Institutional support to the Ministry of Education and the strengthening of various vocational training entities (the Directorate for Technical and Vocational Training—DGEFTP, Inspectorate General, the 5 CFPPA centers, trainers, and administrators) made it possible to establish a clear political, strategic, and operational framework applicable across all CFPPA centers, complete with its own budget.

Agropastoral promoters, clearly identified and targeted through in-kind subsidies, made effective use of the support. Through dialogue mechanisms, they helped give rise to cooperative organizations and platforms that are now expected to manage certain functional services after the project's completion. These organizations (including community-based market gardening groups) must refine their business models and development strategies to safeguard members' investments and ensure sustainability of project-supported gains.

The Ministry of Education has taken ownership of the approach and strategy developed with the project in the five concerned agropoles and is considering its expansion to all vocational streams and centers. The process initiated within the agropoles is helping structure value chains and foster the emergence of service provision offers carried by cooperatives and grassroots organizations, in which women play a significant role. The economic model of these initiatives needs to be further clarified to promote the scaling-up of current investments.

2.2.2 To what extent and how did the dialogue and synergies established with institutional partners and other local actors contribute to achieving the project's results?

The project's approach was to rely on and strengthen existing actors in their respective roles, while also considering the interventions of other partners. The synergies developed with the Ministry of National Education (MEN), public agencies, and the Chamber of Agriculture were based on programming and planning tools, accompanied by budgetary frameworks that clearly defined the terms of partnership (responsibilities, mutual commitments) and the expected results. These arrangements contributed to positive results—particularly with MEN and the Chamber of Agriculture—though results varied between agropoles when it came to collaboration with public agencies.

Indeed, these collaboration models depended on ongoing dialogue and shared decision-making. The usefulness of the agropole mechanism is likely to fade once the funds it managed are fully executed.

Nevertheless, the value chain mechanisms that have been put in place should, in the future, enhance synergies among their professional actors and ensure the development of the services they need.

Synergies with other programs were mainly built through direct exchanges. The capacity of the vocational training platform—as well as that of the agropoles - to promote interaction among actors and improve coordination of interventions remained limited.

The purpose of a project is not necessarily to create synergies from scratch but rather to embed itself within existing systems that facilitate them. This idea was broadly followed during the implementation of Operational Strategies 1 and 2 (OS1 and OS2). MEN continuously fulfilled its role as contracting authority, based on a process of early dialogue and joint planning. A similar approach was taken with public agencies (through grant agreements) and with the Chamber of Agriculture (through an operational agreement), though this occurred over a shorter timeframe and primarily concerned the implementation of OS3.

These approaches contribute to the sustainability of the interventions—provided there is a degree of stability among leadership and staff, as well as a commitment from these institutions to fulfill their mandates in the long term.

The dialogue mechanisms established were mainly intended to guide the project's strategic decisions, both at the national level (Steering Committee) and the regional level (Agropole Committees). These bodies facilitated information-sharing, though synergies were more meaningfully pursued through dialogue with the ministries, particularly via focal points.

Sustaining this dialogue is challenged by three main factors:

(i) high staff turnover in the public sector;

(ii) weak organization of the non-state sector, which undermines the legitimacy of representation and, consequently, decision-making;

(iii) avoidance of conflictual situations that some decisions might generate.

Lastly, it is important to recall that the internal dialogue mechanism within the Bêkou Fund was suspended in 2019 and has never been reactivated since.

2.2.3 What are the unintended effects of the project (positive or negative) that can be observed?

Access to quality vocational training for young people who have dropped out of the school system reduces their likelihood of resorting to illicit survival strategies or joining armed groups. This contributes to maintaining peace in the agropoles supported by the project. This effort to stabilize youth opens up a range of prospects that can be considered indirect effects of the project's action - either already observed or emerging - such as: the timid return of banking services, improved transport and communication conditions, and the development of cultural and sports activities for young people.

The main internal migration movements - especially among youth - are linked to the expansion of the mining sector. By developing tools for vocational training and support for insertion aimed at poorly educated youth (those most likely to adopt opportunistic behaviors), the project has made it possible to stabilize some of these individuals, albeit on a limited scale. The increase in enrollments and the reduction in dropout rates (mining work is often cited as a reason for dropping out) are clear indicators of positive behavior change.

The DEVRUR II project has managed to adapt to a fragile politico-security and institutional context. The negative effects of its action, although limited in scope both geographically and sectorally, mainly stem from the creation of certain disparities in access to services and markets due to the project's geographically confined area of intervention. While the project's closure could temporarily amplify these disparities in the short term, the value chain structuring approach and the development of professional organizations are expected to mitigate them over the medium term.

2.2.4 How does the project integrate principles of sustainable environmental management, particularly in its rehabilitation and construction activities, and what impact might these measures have on reducing environmental risks?

The rehabilitated infrastructures were designed in accordance with strict standards regarding well-being, hygiene, and safety. These facilities were equipped with solar installations to cover essential energy needs without relying on fossil fuels.

Training sessions were organized for vocational center trainers on the technical requirements, installation, and management/maintenance of solar systems. The design and sizing of rehabilitation and construction works (buildings and workshops) were carried out jointly with MEN, the CFPPA teams, the leadership of private centers (Don Bosco, the Agricultural and Rural Training Center, Be Oko Mambre), and the heads of blacksmith associations.

Construction contracts were only launched after landownership documents were verified. The architectural plans conformed to building, environmental, sanitation, and safety standards.

The development of institutional projects and business plans (for forges and FMABEs) considered infrastructure management and maintenance requirements, as well as proper waste management practices.

The rehabilitation and construction measures adhered to demanding standards. MEN has validated these construction standards, which are expected to be applied across all CFPPA centers in the country. The centers' managers have acquired the knowledge and tools needed to ensure hygiene, safety, and environmental compliance in their facilities. These competencies should allow them to anticipate the main risks associated with growing student populations (e.g., sanitation and hygiene) as well as production-related activities (e.g., waste management, handling of hazardous materials, etc.).

2.2.5 How does the project integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls?

The DEVRUR II project incorporated the gender dimension at all stages of implementation, beginning with its design. Initial challenges - such as male dominance in partner institutions and organizations, in vocational training structures, and in various dialogue bodies - were addressed through a proactive (though not confrontational) approach by the project team.

This resulted in a balanced targeting of grant beneficiaries and the inclusion of criteria to ensure female representation within decision-making bodies of cooperatives and community-based organizations (CBOs).

The project adopted a range of measures aimed at promoting gender parity - not only in access to vocational training and economic development opportunities in traditionally male-dominated sectors, but also in terms of women's representation and influence in managing organizations and facilitating dialogue

platforms (e.g., sectoral platform management committees). These actions have contributed effectively to strengthening the empowerment of women and girls.

3 Conclusions

1. **Youth integration in agriculture: a challenge amid growing disengagement**

Professional and economic integration of young people appears to be more accessible and inclusive—especially for young women—in adjacent sectors than in agriculture itself. Interest in agricultural professions is low among both young men and women due to the significant constraints linked to setting up a viable activity. Some "young champions" initiatives were piloted under Operational Strategy 3 (OS3) and should now be documented and shared. These experiences may help shape future policies for youth training and integration into agriculture, while also informing the country's food sovereignty strategies.

2. **Financial autonomy of public and private training centers: a key issue**

Managing public training centers with secured budgetary resources (CFPPA[13], ENEB) seems less problematic than managing private centers, whose funding depends primarily on projects and their own revenues. The issue of financial autonomy for training institutions is inseparable from the mobilization of secure public resources (primarily from the state budget, including projects). Without this, training quality is at risk of deterioration. A standardized and validated framework for financial autonomy must be developed to ensure institutional sustainability and should be adopted by the relevant ministries and their partners.

3. **Youth integration in agriculture: a real challenge**

The approach to the agropastoral sector within the agropole framework was implemented late. Grant recipients helped spark organizational dynamics, notably the emergence of officially registered cooperatives (e.g., feed mills, honey units). These cooperatives are responsible for providing services for their members, provided that minimum viability conditions are met. However, some cooperatives' economic models remain unclear. Strategic decisions must be grounded in business plans, cash flow management tools, and risk management frameworks that still need to be developed and implemented.

4. **Attracting financial services to the agropastoral sector**

In the absence of a functional banking and microfinance network, the project had to adapt its approach. It developed a range of techno-economic benchmarks and business models that could be directly used by financial institutions. In addition to these tools, DEVRUR II can share its experience in business planning support, designing financing protocols, and building financial partnerships.

5. **A future for the agropole approach?**

The agropole approach provided a specific system of in-kind financing to compensate for the weaknesses of the financial sector. It was a project-specific mechanism under DEVRUR II, in which stakeholders actively participated, but there is no justification for continuing it in the absence of new funding. However, the structures that emerged from this model (platforms, cooperatives) should continue delivering services to their members. Sectoral dialogue—set up during the project—remains essential for developing the agropastoral sector, including defining service strategies, strengthening value chain structuring, and maintaining engagement with the state. The approach also aligns with the mandates of decentralized structures within the Chamber of Agriculture.

13 Exclusively the salaries of the trainers and the administrative team

6. Capitalization to inform policy

The DEVRUR II project played a key role in the recognition and revitalization of vocational training in the Central African Republic. It has created genuine economic integration opportunities for thousands of young men and women who dropped out of school - contributing significantly to peacebuilding. These results, currently being capitalized, must be consolidated - particularly by MEN and ACFPE - and shared with other partners to establish a clear political and strategic direction.

7. Investing more in project formulation processes

The challenges encountered during project implementation were largely due to assumptions that did not hold true at project startup. The two-phase formulation process - first a general framework in the European Union's Action Document, followed by Enabel's own operational and budgeted framework (based on the initial results matrix) - showed limitations. These limitations were due in part to the quality of earlier project documentation that shaped the intervention's framing, but also to a formulation period that was too short given the fragile security context and institutional environment in CAR.

In complex contexts like CAR, where Enabel had limited prior experience, more time should have been invested in formulation to refine strategic choices, scope interventions, and build partnerships before the EU validated the funding request. This time would also have allowed adjustments to the results framework. That step was skipped, and Enabel had to manage the consequences - especially for OS3 and following IRAM's withdrawal.

Despite major implementation challenges, DEVRUR II has left behind durable legacies, carried by institutional actors who are now considering scaling up the results. The key outstanding question is which approaches will best support the renewal of a rapidly aging generation of agropastoral producers.

4 Recommendations

Recommendations	Related conclusion	Target Actors
R1. Consolidate the economic models of cooperatives and market gardening CBOs to clarify the terms of their financial autonomy and secure their services to members.	3	DEVRUR II – OS3 team, Chamber of Agriculture, ACFPE
R2. In collaboration with the involved ministries (MEN, MEFTP, MESA) and training center stakeholders, draft a guidance note outlining the conditions for the financial and operational autonomy of training centers and forges, including their respective responsibilities, to secure their long-term functioning.	2	DEVRUR II – OS2 team, MEN, ACFPE, training center managers
R3. In partnership with MESA and MADR, develop a policy note on the vocational training and professional integration of young men and women in the agropastoral sector, to help define strategic and political orientation lines for the Central African Republic.	1	DEVRUR II – OS1 & OS3 teams, MESA/ANDE, MADR/ACDA, ACFPE
R4. Initiate a dialogue with the Chamber of Agriculture to explore opportunities for leveraging the agropole approach within the decentralization process. If relevant,	5	DEVRUR II – OS3 team, Chamber of Agriculture

Recommendations	Related conclusion	Target Actors
support the launch of a regional chamber in one intervention zone to facilitate regional deconcentration.		
R5. Support MEN and ACFPE in sharing the outcomes of project support—particularly the blacksmithing model—with other partners to facilitate scaling up.	6	DEVRUR II – OS1 team, MEN, ACFPE
R6. Develop techno-economic benchmarks and business models for the banking sector, building on the tools and results from agropastoral promoter support, to foster the design of appropriate financial products.	4	DEVRUR II – OS3 team, MADR/MESA, BGFI and others
R7. In complex contexts, allow sufficient time for project formulation to validate assumptions, assess risks, verify the relevance of the results framework (as outlined in the contribution agreement), and clarify and formalize the operational and financial terms of strategic partnerships before signing the agreement with the European Union. This helps reduce delays and difficulties at project launch.	7	European Union, Enabel

5 Lessons learned

Lesson 1: Supporting MEN in defining and implementing a strategy to strengthen its decentralized vocational training system

The approach made it possible to intervene at several interdependent institutional levels. The Directorate in charge of vocational training (DGEFTP), initially weak at project start, was supported in a way that enabled it to lead the entire change process. This was achieved through continuous dialogue, joint monitoring of actions, and reinforcement of complementary strategic departments within MEN (Inspectorate General, exam division), as well as by "rebuilding" existing training centers (strengthening and training of teaching teams and management staff, rehabilitation of infrastructure and equipment).

On the regulatory side, training reference frameworks were revised in collaboration with the private sector - particularly for the CCP diploma, which is awarded after two years of training for young people who have left school, and opens access to the Professional Aptitude Certificate.

This systemic approach to capacity building places stakeholders in their respective roles, considers their interdependence, and focuses both on individuals and on how their organizations function - including required institutional measures. It is highly effective, especially considering that systemic change is a slow process requiring coordination.

The approach has two main objectives:

- To enable MEN to revalue vocational training within the ministry, define and deploy a proven rehabilitation strategy for the system, and scale up initial interventions.
- To allow young people who have left the school system to access quality vocational training and employment opportunities.

Key takeaway: Strengthening the public sector requires a clear vision of the desired system-level changes. This vision must be based on a detailed diagnosis, permanent dialogue, and a shared logic for implementing reform.

Lesson 2: Developing apprenticeship practices by building on organized professional sectors

The approach relied on a professional sector that was already organized (blacksmiths) and engaged in "informal" apprenticeship practices.

The challenge was to motivate these professionals—who already attracted youth—to adopt a formalized apprenticeship process leading to certification. The strategy was deployed at four levels:

1. Supporting blacksmiths in professionalizing their trade (improving tools and infrastructure),
2. Strengthening their technical and teaching capacities,
3. Improving the functioning of associations managing the workshops,
4. Enhancing financial management of the forges.

The aim was to formalize informal apprenticeships by improving working conditions, providing better supervision, introducing certification, and improving young people's post-training integration.

The major challenge was the mobilization of ACFPE, whose role was to oversee the apprenticeship system, issue certificates, and support youth integration.

Key takeaway: Relying on an already structured sector that favors hands-on learning allows for rapid, sustainable, and locally relevant results.

Lesson 3: Developing young people's apprenticeship in agricultural and livestock professions with professional mentors

Youth integration into agricultural professions remains difficult due to poor access to startup capital (land, training, finance, advisory services) and rejection of the physically demanding work associated with traditional farming, as experienced by their parents.

Training for young people is often technical and does not reflect the real-life management of an agricultural business. The strategy involved identifying young people genuinely interested in agricultural careers and pairing them with professional mentors willing to take them on as interns.

The dual objective of this strategy:

1. Allow interested youth to gain hands-on experience in "modern" farming operations that align better with their life goals;
2. Support youth at the end of their internships with a grant—if eligibility criteria are met—to launch their own activity, and provide coaching during this "takeoff" phase.

Key takeaway: Facilitating the **transmission of knowledge, practices, and business models** through a learning-oriented approach - within a logic of production and management modernization—improves young people's integration into the agropastoral sector. Engaging youth is essential for developing the rural economy, creating employment, and ensuring national food sovereignty.