

**Pakistan Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation
Virtual National Workshop, 2 June 2021**

**Introductory Statement by Mr Indran Naidoo, Director of the
Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD**

- Ms Samar Ihsan, Senior Joint Secretary, Economic Affairs Division,
- Distinguished representatives of the Government of Pakistan and the provincial governments, representatives of IFAD, partner institutions and international organizations,
- Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to be part of this virtual national workshop, organized by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD in collaboration with the Government of Pakistan and the Asia and the Pacific Division of IFAD. This workshop follows the finalization of the country strategy and programme evaluation and provides an opportunity to share and discuss the main findings and recommendations with the Government, IFAD and other stakeholders and partners.

I would like to start by expressing my appreciation to the Government of Pakistan and the governments of Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, Punjab and Azad Jammu and Kashmir for their collaboration on this evaluation. Our appreciation goes to the project teams and partner organizations for sharing insights, supporting field visits, and patience in responding to numerous requests for data and information from the evaluation team.

I would also like to recognize the support of the IFAD Programme Management Department, in particular: Mr Donal Brown, Associate Vice-President; Mr Nigel Brett, Director of IFAD's Asia and the Pacific Division; Mr Hubert Boirard, IFAD country director for Pakistan; and Mr Fida Muhammad, country programme officer. Unfortunately, Mr Brown, Associate Vice-President was not able to join us today. I acknowledge, with much appreciation, the presence of Mr Alvaro Larlo, Associate Vice-President, Financial Operations Department, representing IFAD's senior management.

Finally, I would like to thank the evaluation team, led by Ms Fumiko Nakai, Senior Evaluation Officer, who was ably supported by Mr Eoghan Molloy, Evaluation Officer, also from my office, and a team of national and international consultants. Ms Maria Cristina Spagnolo, Evaluation Assistant, provided efficient administrative support to the team and to the organization of today's event.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first highlight the importance of the independent evaluation function. The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD undertakes impartial and evidence-based evaluations of projects, country programmes and corporate policies, to assess the results achieved and to generate lessons to enhance the impact of IFAD-supported development interventions on people's lives.

Over the past two decades, Pakistan has made significant progress in reducing the poverty level. However, about one quarter of the population still lived under the national poverty line in 2015 and about

39 per cent faced multidimensional poverty in 2016, with wide disparities. According to the 2018 data, more than one third of the population faced food insecurity. Frequent extreme weather-related events and water stress also pose threats to the efforts for sustainable development.

Since 1979, IFAD has financed 27 projects in Pakistan with US\$780 million, for a total project cost of US\$2.6 billion. After four decades, the partnership between IFAD and the Government remains pertinent, to make rural economies more inclusive and sustainable to reduce poverty and hunger. It is my sincere hope that this evaluation, which covered the period from 2009 to 2020, contributes to improving the effectiveness of the strategic partnership between the Government of Pakistan and IFAD.

I now would like to highlight a few key findings from the evaluation.

The evaluation found that, with a strong poverty focus, the portfolio had positive impacts on the living conditions and livelihoods of the rural poor. The investment in basic infrastructure such as drinking water schemes and draining and sanitation improved people's health and hygiene. Better roads enhanced access to services and markets, saving transportation cost and time. The provision of productive assets, mostly livestock, and skills training improved livelihoods and resilience of beneficiary households. Support for community institutions has contributed to the effectiveness and sustainability of community-level infrastructures, although the approach has largely remained project-centred. Furthermore, the portfolio had important

achievements in women's social and economic empowerment, in light of the challenging gender context in Pakistan.

On the other hand, there are some areas that deserve attention. Let me highlight a few of them, as my colleague Fumiko Nakai will deliver a more comprehensive presentation later.

Firstly, the programme needs to reflect more carefully how best to leverage sustainable changes in the local economy around agriculture and food systems that would benefit the rural poor. During the evaluation period, the lending portfolio has become skewed towards asset transfer and skills training targeted at individual households. While these interventions had positive results on livelihoods, project strategies reduced focus on addressing structural constraints, such as regulatory framework. The programme should also integrate more deliberately the aspects of climate resilience and natural resource management, in particular with attention to water use efficiency.

Secondly, given the relatively small resource envelope compared to many other development agencies, it is important that IFAD, in consultation with the Government, articulate a strategy to promote innovations and scaling up for greater added value and impact.

Lastly, IFAD needs to broaden and strengthen partnerships with other development agencies. This may be for knowledge exchange, collaboration in analytical work and policy engagement, or better capitalizing on the lessons of others. IFAD should also explore opportunities to diversify non-governmental partners for different purposes beyond contracting as service providers.

As evaluators, we have provided an impartial assessment of IFAD's programme in Pakistan. Now, with your support, we can gain a better understanding of future opportunities and ways to overcome constraints to promote inclusive, sustainable and resilient transformation of the rural economy.

I thank you for your attention.