

IFAD/Government Workshop on IOE's Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation for Eswatini - Donal Brown Statement

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Time allocated: 5 minutes

- Hello and good afternoon to you all.
- I am very happy to be with you all today to discuss the Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation for Eswatini, a country where IFAD has been working hand-in-hand with the government since 1983.
- I always look forward to reading the CSPEs conducted by our Independent Office of Evaluation, as they really delve into the meat of our work to provide rich and constructive insights that hold us to account and help us to improve.
- This CSPE for Eswatini is no exception, and comes at the perfect time as we finalise IFAD's new Country Strategic Opportunity Programme for the country for 2022-2027, as well as a new investment project scheduled to start in 2023.
- In this regard I am pleased to note that the recommendations from this CSPE have been well-integrated into the country strategy document which is currently in draft form.
- While Eswatini has recently achieved strong progress in reducing poverty, there are still several challenges faced by rural people in the country, including:
 - o increasing vulnerability to climate change, especially drought;
 - o low agricultural productivity and diversity;
 - o limited access to financial services;
 - o and high post-harvest losses.
- Not to mention the specific challenges faced by women and youth, and the need to continue the recovery from the economic damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- It is these challenges that the lessons from this CSPE will help us to solve.

- I was happy to see the extensive scope of the report, spanning two decades and four lending operations totalling US\$41m of IFAD investments, and a total portfolio value of US\$352m.
- In terms of the findings of the report, a couple of things struck me in particular.
- The first is the clear progress that we have made together over time in several areas including:
 - o speed of project start-up;
 - o inclusive targeting, especially of women and youth;
 - o partnerships;
 - o and our ability to adapt projects during implementation to solve issues.
- **Second** were the comments around the complexity of some of the project designs. The CSPE correctly notes that we shouldn't shy away from complexity when needed, but the key take-away for me is that we must ensure all project activities are well aligned as part of a coherent strategy. It would be great to hear the thoughts of others on this in the discussion.
- **Third**, are the clear issues with M&E and the low rating for partnerships.

- On **partnerships**, while the CSPE does highlight recent improvements, we must try to continue this trend, building on recent progress through initiatives such as the recent well-performing grant with the International Potato Center, plus the strong progress we have made on policy dialogue in the rural finance sector.
 - On **M&E**, we must work with the government to find solutions to ensure, among other issues, that we have adequate M&E capacity in Project Management Units, and that baseline, midline and endline data collection is conducted systematically and effectively.
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- I am very proud of what we have achieved so far in Eswatini through our fruitful relationship with the government and other partners.
 - But we must always try to do better, and I will personally work to ensure that the recommendations from this CSPE are implemented as we move forward.
 - I will also be listening carefully to the statements and discussion this afternoon as we review the findings from the report.
 - Thank you again for joining us today, and I look forward to an interesting discussion.