

**Republic of India**  
**Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation**  
**Final Workshop**  
**07 October 2024 – Delhi (India)**

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

- Distinguished representatives of the Government of India,
- Representatives of IFAD and its partner institutions, national and international,
- Dear colleagues,
- Ladies and gentlemen.

It is my pleasure to participate in this in-person national workshop, organized by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD in collaboration with the Government of India and the IFAD India Country Office. This workshop follows the finalization of the India country strategy and programme evaluation, implemented in 2023. The workshop provides the opportunity to share the main findings and discuss the implications of recommendations with the Government stakeholders, IFAD representatives, as well as other key stakeholders of the IFAD supported strategy and programme in India.

I would like to start by expressing my appreciation to the Government officials and relevant stakeholders for their collaboration on this evaluation. Our appreciation goes to the project teams and partner organizations for sharing insights, contributing to gather information during the field mission, and responding to numerous requests for data and information from the evaluation team. I would also like to recognize the contribution of: Mr Ulac Demirag, IFAD country director;

Ms Meera Mishra, Country Programme Coordinator, and the entire team of the India Country Office.

Finally, I would like to thank the evaluation team, led for most of the evaluation period by Ms Fumiko Nakai, former IOE staff, and later by Dr Kouessi Maximin Kodjo, IOE – Lead Evaluation Officer; as well as the team of national and international consultants, in particular Dr Pamela White and Ms Nimisha Mittal. Ms Cristina Spagnolo provided efficient administrative supports to the team and to organizing 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, thematic and corporate matters, to assess the results achieved and to generate lessons to enhancing the impact of IFAD-supported operations.

India became a member state of IFAD in 1977, and the first IFAD-financed project began in 1979. IFAD opened a country office in Delhi in 2001. India is not only the largest recipient of IFAD’s investments (US\$1.22 billion towards a total portfolio cost of US\$3.87 billion for 32 projects), but also a significant contributor in terms of contributions to replenishment of IFAD financial resources.

The evaluated portfolio (2016-2022) amounted US\$2.46 billion, with IFAD financing of US\$737 million, for seven completed and six on-going projects, over an evaluated period of 2016 to 2022. At the end of this period, India was estimated to have become the most populous

nation in the world, reaching a population of 1.426 billion people. During the evaluated period, like the rest of the world, India was negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

The current Country Strategic Opportunities Programme (COSOP) was prepared in 2018 together with the Government of India and other stakeholders, taking into consideration the findings and recommendations of the previous 2016 country programme evaluation.

The evaluation found to be relevant the geographical targeting applied by IFAD, which focuses on disadvantaged areas. Indeed, IFAD is acknowledged as a trusted partner that support smallholders and persons disadvantaged by caste, ethnicity, gender and remoteness. IFAD financed programmes have been paramount in community mobilization (with support to Self-Help Groups). The portfolio projects also contributed to enhance the sustainability of agricultural production systems and to increase the access of smallholders to financial services. Community level cadre played active roles for providing agricultural extension advice or facilitating loan applications with banks. Women's participation has been significant in all projects, and the programme enabled the increase of economic opportunities for women and their access to resources, thus contributing to raise the status of women within the communities. The national and state governments showed strong commitment and ownership by providing significant additional funding to the projects.

On the other hand, some areas deserve attention, as for instance:

The IFAD supported programme has not applied a full value-chain

approach to support agricultural development and this led to insufficient post-production actions, for instance in relation to storage, processing and access to markets through partnerships with private actors. Regarding aspects of natural resources management, although there were actions for soil and water conservation, efforts were insufficient on aspects to promote water efficiency and effective post-harvest management. Moreover, they are efficiency issues, raised by the previous country programme evaluation, which remain pertinent, and prevent achieving better effective results.

As evaluators, we have provided an impartial assessment of IFAD's country strategy and programme in India. With this event and with your contributions, we can gain a better understanding of future opportunities and ways to overcome constraints preventing the achievement of remunerative, sustainable and resilient smallholder food and agricultural production systems in India. This will feed into the preparation of the future Country Strategic Opportunities Programme.

I thank you for your attention.