

Dr Shobhana Kumar Pattanayak

Question 1

Why do your qualifications and experiences make you a suitable candidate and what values would guide you as the President of IFAD? Describe also your management style, how you would work with your ideal senior management team and ensure a good work environment within the organization.

Today the world needs comprehensive and novel solutions for its problems of food security and nutrition, income inequality, extreme poverty and fragilities. This makes a compelling case for international organizations such as IFAD to become the provider of economic opportunities to rural populations through their lean operational structure and agility, deep knowledge of rural communities and particular emphasis on marginalized population groups.

Keeping these prospects in mind, I aspire to lead the Fund by building on its exceptionally positive reputation as the global leader in rural poverty eradication through sustainable agriculture and rural transformation. In order to fulfill this ambition, I intend to lead the organization towards the path of innovative financing and continued operational effectiveness.

I have more than 35 years of hands-on experience of working at the local, national and international levels on issues related to sustainable and inclusive rural transformation, with a focus on smallholder agriculture development. Having served as the President of Executive Board of World Food Programme (WFP), Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare in the Government of India and as a member of the IFAD Executive Board, I am now deeply familiar with opportunities and challenges faced by the rural poor and the important role IFAD has to play in supporting such communities to improve their food security, nutritional levels and incomes - in the broader context of climate change. As President of IFAD, I will be guided by the values of **"leaving no one behind"** and ensuring access to food as a basic human right across all regions and communities.

My management style revolves around providing intellectual and strategic leadership and direction, while at the same time empowering and delegating authority to translate my vision into

time-bound actions. It involves building partnership with all key stakeholders to realize common goals. In the IFAD context, this would require strong co-operation, dialogue and coordination with Member State representatives, in particular with the Executive Board and other Governing Bodies. Without neglecting other important factors, my management style shall pay deepest attention to evidence and merit-based decision-making.

Working with my senior management team would entail creating an atmosphere for free and frank expression of views, alternative approaches and for challenging status quo with a view to re-validating or updating them as well as fostering a culture of collegiality and accountability.

A good working environment is critical for success, which will need to take into context the fact that just less than 50% of the organization's workforce are stationed in decentralized offices. One of the central ingredients to building such an environment would be ensuring appropriate work-life balance across the organization, with a focus on reciprocal respect, transparency in decision-making, a drive for results, and professionalism.

Having served on the governing bodies of all the three Rome Based Agencies, I have developed skills to **build, bond, develop and expand relationships** among various stakeholders in a multicultural environment and it has provided me opportunities to exercise my ability to **resolve conflicts and build consensus** among them.

Question 2

What are the lessons you have learnt related to strategic thinking and in formulating development strategies and plans, and how will you use them to advance IFAD's mission?

Having also served as Chairman of the Evaluation Committee and the member of the IFAD Executive Board, I have come to appreciate the importance of thoroughly internalizing lessons from the past for improving developmental effectiveness.

A fundamental lesson specifically related to strategic thinking is to build on international good practices and foster innovation. In formulating development strategies and plans, a key consideration is to ensure that such strategies and plans are context specific, properly customized to the prevailing policy and institutional environment, and that their goals and strategic objectives are realistic and achievable. They should be underpinned by a robust theory of change, time-frames

and the resources needed to achieve them clearly defined. Moreover, it is important to devote special attention to the implementation of the stipulated policies and strategies. Generally, even though policies are well-formulated and approved on paper, their on-ground timely implementation and administration is absent. It is also fundamental that strategies and plans have a coherent results management framework with key performance indicators that can be easily monitored and evaluated. Regular reporting is fundamental to make mid-course adjustments, to ensure desired outcomes and impacts can be achieved at the end.

In advancing IFAD's mission, strategic thinking and the formulation of strategies and plans should start with a thorough analysis and documentation of past lessons. They should be proactively operationalized in design and implementation, which requires strengthened *ex-ante* quality assurance methods and systems. It is also necessary to complement these activities with a wider country programme approach through enhancement of non-lending activities of IFAD, including policy engagement and knowledge management that would help in increasing the volume of South-South exchanges, spurring innovation, and promoting investments in rural areas and in uplifting rural people.

Question 3

What is your vision for IFAD? How would you strengthen its role and effectiveness as part of the international aid architecture, particularly in the context of COVID-19, economic shocks, climate change and biodiversity erosion? And in contributing to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, especially the elimination of hunger, malnutrition and poverty, including in the most fragile contexts?

If I am elected to be the President of IFAD, my vision for IFAD will be oriented towards increasing its impact and effectiveness, which would entail enhanced focus and attention for delivering quality programmes and activities that could achieve sustainable results on the ground and better value for money. Central to my vision are improvements in smallholder agricultural production and productivity in rural areas, with a sharp focus on transforming the lives of poor rural particularly disadvantaged groups such as women, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, pastoralists, people with disabilities, rural youth and others. In this regard, strengthening community-based agriculture entrepreneurship or micro-management practices will help

increasing the business acumen of small farmers, who seek to eliminate their vulnerabilities related to bad crop years and other risks.

Strengthening IFAD's role and effectiveness in the international community requires - in my opinion - a conscious and collective effort to streamline and focus on its core mandate, as stipulated in the Agreement Establishing IFAD.

I have worked on several projects in India, which is known as the power-house of agricultural activity and has a large number of complex agro-climatic situations. I have realized that understanding the intricacies and delineation of agro-climatic zones (based on soil, water, rainfall, temperature, etc.) is the first essential step towards policy formulation. Thus, in order to maximize agricultural production from the available resources and prevailing climatic conditions, need-based and location specific technologies are required to be generated.

Given the evolution in the international landscape since the establishment of IFAD in the 1970s, and taking into account the Agreement Establishing IFAD, I would like to see IFAD focus in areas of its core capabilities, track record and specialization. This includes, *inter-alia*, a narrower focus on investments in climate-smart technological advancements for improved productivity, leveraging digital technologies in rural areas, strengthening financial inclusion and facilitating access to capital, promotion of last-mile small rural infrastructure, access to input and output markets, and capacity building of local institutions including community-based organizations and NGOs.

Partnerships will play an important role, with the UN system at large, especially with the Rome Based Agencies (RBAs), ensuring complementarity of action at all levels. Partnerships with international and regional financial institutions will be essential to mobilize co-financing and co-ordination of intervention for better results at the country and regional levels, and greater attention will also be required to private sector development and engagement in rural transformation. Although IFAD has recently introduced a dedicated private sector programme with non-sovereign operations, this would need to be scaled up and better integrated into wider country programme approaches.

While all 17 SDGs are interconnected and considering its mandate, IFAD will need to focus on a narrower set of SDGs, especially SDGs 1 and 2. The SDGs should provide the overarching

framework for IFAD policies, strategies and actions, especially at the country level. Given IFAD's resource-base is relatively limited, it would need to also focus on advocacy and policy work to ensure greater amounts of international and domestic resources are invested in support of SDGs 1 and 2.

With specific regard to fragile contexts, thorough fragility analysis should underpin IFAD interventions, and programme designs need to avoid complexity to ensure successful implementation and outcomes. Given my first-hand experience of working in several conflict affected areas in India, including states affected by left-wing insurgencies, I am able to better interpret the challenges of the current geo-political situation. Innovative institutional arrangements will be required, especially in those situations with limited Government capacities and outreach. This could involve partnership with development organizations (e.g., WFP) that have humanitarian mandates and are better prepared for implementation in conflict-affected situations, without IFAD getting involved in humanitarian work. New initiatives like Crisis Response Initiative (CRI) will specifically mitigate the crisis of poor countries facing economic shocks, war, climate change etc., and need to be strengthened.

Question 4

As President, how would you ensure IFAD's continued financial sustainability and mobilization of more resources (particularly to the poorest countries and in light of economic constraints), to allow IFAD to fulfil its mission and exert its comparative advantages? How could IFAD further strengthen its cooperation with low- and middle-income countries?

IFAD's financial sustainability and resource mobilization is critical to ensuring the Fund can deliver on its mandate and contribute to the SDGs. There are three key elements that I would focus on, as a way also to strengthen cooperation with low and middle-income countries. These include:

- (i) Focus on mobilization of core resources through periodic replenishment consultations. In spite of economic constraints in its member states, core resources need to remain the bedrock of IFAD's financial base. In addition to the voluminous resources provided by traditional donors, there are untapped potential for mobilizing resources from emerging economies. This will however require deeper attention to partnerships and cooperation across the three Lists (A, B and C) of IFAD member states and a more succinct vision

and policy priorities for the organization, agreed during each replenishment round. It will also require reform in IFAD's governance architecture, so that each List has adequate opportunities to contribute to the Fund's policy setting and oversight. While governance reform of any multilateral organization is a major challenge, after more than 40 years of existence and with the changing global architecture since the 1970s, the next IFAD President would need reconsider IFAD's governance to ensure the Fund's continued relevance and effectiveness.

- (ii) IFAD has ample opportunity to mobilize additional funding for programmes as co-financing from other development organizations, in particular the World Bank and regional development banks. Apart from the traditional players (e.g., AfDB, AsDB, IDB and World Bank) with whom IFAD has partnered in the past, the AIIB, EBRD, EIB, NDB and others are new (relatively recently established) development banks that have enormous amounts of financial resources, which so far have largely remained untapped by IFAD. There are also other development financial institutions that offer opportunities for co-financing, but have not yet formed an integral part of IFAD's co-financing strategy (e.g., Fonplata in Latin America, Black Sea Trade and Development Bank, and several others). A strategy that favors greater co-financing – including from the private sector - would allow IFAD to expand its overall programme of work and help scaling up of successful pilots for better results on the SDGs. Similar initiatives can be initiated with Global Environment Facility (GEF), Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Adaptation Fund (AF) to leverage global climate funds to address issue of climate change and biodiversity erosion. South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation can be explored in a robust manner with active involvement of member states.

- (iii) Borrowing from sovereign sources is a reality. IFAD has been successful in mobilizing loans from governments and other government-related institutions. This should continue to be part of IFAD's resource mobilization strategy in the future. I would pursue dialogue with member states around eventual borrowing from non-sovereign

sources. But any such borrowing should not be at the expense of moving IFAD away from its core mandate and focus, as articulated in the Agreement Establishing IFAD.

- (iv) Safeguarding of IFAD's financial sustainability calls for a deeper assessment of the Debt Sustainability Framework (DSF). Even though it is understandable that IFAD's support is critical for countries in debt distress, however, it has become a huge burden on IFAD's resource base. I believe we must explore alternative ways and innovative instruments of providing relief to these countries without compromising IFAD's financial sustainability.

Overall, the expertise I gained in working with national and international organizations, combined with my active years of involvement in IFAD previously, will come in handy towards successfully achieving a mutually benefitting position for establishing programs, partnering with various financial institutions and financial regulation of complex policies. I aspire to ensure that all member states benefit equally and satisfactorily of IFAD's resource disbursements as well as agriculture and rural development programs.