

## **Reflections of the Evaluation Committee Chairperson at the India Country Programme Evaluation National Roundtable Workshop, 7-8 December 2009 New Delhi**

Ladies and Gentleman,

I would like to start by expressing a deep sense of appreciation - on behalf of IFAD Evaluation Committee of the Executive Board - to the Government of India for their warm hospitality and all the excellent arrangements made for this important country programme evaluation (CPE) national roundtable workshop. In particular, I would like to thank the Department of Economic Affairs of the Ministry of Finance for their leading role in the organisation of this workshop.

This is the first time I and my colleagues, apart from the representatives of Nigeria and Sweden, have taken part in a country visit of the Evaluation Committee and attend such a national roundtable workshop. We have found useful to be part of the process, and I am sure my colleagues join me in underlining our appreciation for the constructive and engaging contributions that the participants made during the past one and a half days. I trust that both the IFAD management and the Office of Evaluation have benefited from the inputs received, towards the preparation of the CPE's Agreement at Completion Points, and towards the future partnership between the Government of India and IFAD.

I will like now to share a few of comments – from my own perspective - based on some of the main issues discussed during the workshop.

Firstly, I was pleased to see the constructive engagement and appreciation by both the Government of India and the IFAD management on the high quality India country programme evaluation report. This also reflects the serious attention they devote to the evaluation's findings and recommendations. As Chair of the Evaluation Committee, I am pleased to observe that the evaluation has contributed effectively to debate, reflection and learning on key issues of concern to rural poverty reduction in India.

Secondly, I would like to reiterate the importance of the India country programme, which is the largest both in terms of the number of projects and loan amount provided by IFAD. At the same time, the commitment and ownership of the Government is commendable, which is partly illustrated by the huge volume of counterpart funds allocated by them towards the India country programme. In this regard, one of the points underlined yesterday was the changing context in the last thirty years in India, and the need for IFAD to therefore anchor the new IFAD-Government co-operation in the current reality of the country. For example, the promotion of innovations and participatory knowledge management need to be devoted greater space and resources in the future, as the transfer of

financial resources alone from IFAD to India cannot be the main pillar of the future co-operation.

On another issue, I echo the comments of the Secretary to the Government from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs as well as the Director of the Office of Evaluation in terms of the importance of continued support to tribal people. Having developed a comparative advantage in this area, IFAD could consolidate and build on its experiences in further support of tribal communities in India. There are several challenges, though, that need to be addressed, such as the importance to preserve tribal heritage and ensure that appropriate technologies are developed to ensure appropriate forest management and conservation, where majority of the tribal people reside.

As a Professor of Agriculture myself, I think it is imperative for IFAD to contribute to the development of smallholder farmers in India, especially in rainfed areas and in supporting women who are often responsible for livestock management and horticulture activities. Further strengthening pro-poor research, training and extension is also imperative. Moreover, IFAD could also explore opportunities of supporting co-operative of small farmers, as we heard the Managing Director of the national Cooperative Development Corporation. In sum, the bottom line is that agriculture remains the major source of

livelihoods for a large number of rural poor, and therefore it deserves great attention.

I also would like to pick up the point raised by many participants about the institutional architecture and the usefulness of working with a range of institutions at the Central State and Local levels. In particular, the opportunities for expanding collaboration between IFAD and the technical Ministries at the Central level could also be explored during the new country strategy formulation, as they too play a key role in agriculture and rural development.

Furthermore, I think it is important that IFAD further strengthen its country office in India for better results on the ground. Among other tasks, the country office can play a key role in knowledge management, which is an area the CPE also recommends that more attention needs to be devoted in the future. For example, the country office could document and share lessons and good practices from the country programme in a systematic manner, which can serve to enhance the visibility of IFAD in the country, but more importantly, contribute to replication and upscaling of innovative approaches promoted by IFAD. The country office can also capture knowledge from IFAD-supported projects in other countries that would be of use to the India country programme.

As you may know, the Evaluation Committee will have the opportunity tomorrow to travel to Pune, to visit the IFAD-supported Tejaswini Rural Women's Empowerment in Maharashtra. We are eagerly looking forward to meeting project beneficiaries and holding interactions with various partners in Maharashtra. We shall also have meetings at the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), which has been a collaborator of IFAD in a number of IFAD-funded projects in India.

Before closing, I would like to keep you informed that, as per normal practice, the Evaluation Committee shall prepare a written report on its country visit to India at the end this week and submit it for consideration by the IFAD Executive Board during its session next week. In this way, we shall also have the opportunity to share the highlights of our visit to India with other Board members. This report will be available to the public at large through the IFAD website.

Thank you.