

**CLOSING STATEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SUDAN
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**Sudan Country Programme Evaluation
National Roundtable Workshop, Khartoum, 25-26 February 2009**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have great pleasure on behalf of the Government of Sudan to deliver the closing remarks of this important Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) National Roundtable Workshop, co-organised by the Government of Sudan and IFAD.

The main objective of this workshop was to discuss key issues emerging from the CPE and to lay the foundations for the preparation of the evaluation's Agreement at Completion Point. Having participated in the workshop, I feel that we have accomplished our main objective satisfactorily. Finalisation of the deliberations in both the plenary sessions and the working groups have been intensive and constructive, providing solid basis for preparing the evaluation's Agreement at Completion Point and starting the development of the new IFAD-Government Country Strategic Opportunities Programme (COSOP) for Sudan.

Let me take this opportunity to convey how glad I was to see the participation of so many persons representing different partners working in agriculture and rural development in Sudan. Among others, we had the privilege of having with us the State Minister of Ministry of Finance and National Economy and State Minister of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry among us yesterday. From IFAD, we benefitted from the presence of the Assistant President of the Programme Management Department, the Director of the Independent Office of Evaluation, the Director of the Near East and North Africa Division and other IFAD staff and consultants. The Sudan Permanent Representative to the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation was also present.

The CPE has been an important activity for the Government of Sudan, which started in 2008. It has allowed us to assess the results and impact of IFAD-supported operations and to draw lessons learned from both our success stories, but also to identify areas that need improvement in our future co-operation.

I would now like to take the opportunity to summarise some of the key points of discussion that were generated at this workshop, both based on the deliberations in the Plenary sessions and the working groups of yesterday afternoon. I will not attempt to highlight all the issues raised, as the list is long and time is limited. I will therefore draw your attention to some important points.

The participants recognised the importance for the future IFAD-government co-operation to give greater emphasis to and provide more resources to ensure sustainability of activities and achievements. Concrete suggestions for building in exit strategies at design stage and allowing for an eighteen month hand-over period at completion received considerable support from the floor.

The issue of sustainability was also raised with regard to marketing and wider environmental issues. Effective marketing is necessary to realise the gains in addition to food security that can be possible through increased agricultural productivity. At present inefficient marketing systems, both in terms of length and share taken by middlemen, reduce incentives for increased production.

With increased impact of climate change, projects and the programme need to consider resilience and adaptation issues to ensure sustainability into the future.

The rainfed focus of IFAD funded projects was considered a positive aspect of the programme, reaching areas where few other donors are active. The integrated nature of projects, together with the community-based approach taken were also considered advantageous, as the only viable way to bring long-term improvements to remote and underdeveloped areas.

Another topic widely discussed in the plenary and the working groups was related to the institutional arrangements required to support participatory agriculture and rural development, which can lead to desired impacts on rural poverty in a sustainable manner. This includes a better definition of the role and responsibility of various institutions at the federal level, state authorities, local government agencies, and other actors at the local level. This topic merits further reflection and consultation between partners in Sudan and IFAD in the coming period, especially during the planned preparation of the new Government-IFAD country strategy and operations.

Related to the aforementioned, the workshop participants agreed that the Fund can play a role in supporting Sudan in ensuring broader participation of local governance institutions in grassroots development efforts. This would however require further sensitisation and capacity building of the range of organizations at the state and lower administrative levels, including community-based organizations, local government institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations, the private sector and pertinent elected bodies.

The role of IFAD in promoting pro-poor innovations – that can be replicated and up-scaled by others - should be nurtured and strengthened to enable sustainable rural poverty alleviation in Sudan. The country programme evaluation found that various innovations, such as micro-finance (sanduqs) managed by community development committees and introduction of para-workers as mid-wives, agricultural agents and veterinary assistants, were successfully introduced through IFAD operations. However, more attention will be required to support innovation networks, donor co-ordination, and policy dialogue in the future for ensuring a more systematic replication and upscaling of such innovations.

The workshop underlined the importance for ensuring that added resources and attention needs to be devoted to developing robust monitoring and evaluation systems, so that they support management throughout the project life cycle and serve as effective tools for improving project execution, particularly mid-term, and generation of lessons learned. Moreover, attention needs to be devoted to cross-fertilisation of experiences and good practices across the projects and programmes funded by IFAD in the country.

The enhanced IFAD country presence in Sudan was noted and considered a very positive move in taking forward issues, particularly increased policy dialogue and direct supervision activities.

In addition to the points already made, there were other insightful comments which emerged from the discussions held in the three working groups yesterday afternoon. I will not list issues from the working groups here, as they were broadly captured in the three presentations delivered by each working group.

Generally, the recommendations of CPE have been agreed upon by all working groups. The groups provided valuable inputs towards refinement of these recommendations which will now be incorporated in the Agreement at Completion Point. I request the IFAD management to take these recommendations along while preparing the future country assistance strategy for Sudan.

I would like to conclude by expressing a note of thanks. Firstly, appreciation is due to the Honourable Minister of Finance and Honourable Minister for Agriculture and Forestry for their overall support towards the CPE and the organisation of the national roundtable workshop. I would like to thank IFAD's Office of Evaluation for their collaboration in co-organising this important workshop. In particular, I would like to recognize the Senior Co-ordinator and his staff from the CCU as well as Ms Kendra White and Ms Marie-Louise N'Diaye from the Office of Evaluation of IFAD, whose hard work and efforts have ensured a successful outcome of the event. Finally, I thank the chairpersons of the three working group sessions yesterday, and the rapporteurs entrusted with the responsibility to report back to the plenary.

I would like to close this workshop by thanking everyone for being with us, hoping that you will take back good memories of our interactions and debate over these two days. I now declare the Sudan CPE National Roundtable Workshop concluded.