

**Opening Remarks for JS (MI) for National Round Table Workshop on India  
Country Programme Evaluation organized by Independent Country of Evaluation  
(IOE) of IFAD on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

- **Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Government of India, Mr Shobhana K Pattanayak;**
- **Additional Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, Mr Dinesh Sharma;**
- **Associate Vice President, Strategy & Knowledge Department, IFAD, Ms. Josefina Stubbs;**
- **Director, IOE, Mr. Oscar Garcia;**
- **Project Authorities, Representatives of the Central Ministries, and State Governments and invitees from the other institutions;**

It is indeed a great privilege to be a part of this National Round Table workshop on the Country Programme Evaluation organized by Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) of IFAD.

- IFAD has played an important role in our endeavor to **eradicate rural poverty and hunger** by providing financial assistance to member countries in the field of agriculture, rural livelihoods, food security, and tribal & women empowerment. As agriculture continues to be the mainstay of our rural populace and thus, it has a significant bearing on the overall growth of economy and poverty reduction. In fact, the urgency to make agricultural activity economically viable and increase farm income has never been greater at a time when low farm income have continued to aggravate agrarian distress. Therefore, IFAD will have to play an increasingly important role in this area.
  
- Since 1979, IFAD has financed 27 projects in India with an approximate value of US\$ 929 million. Presently, nine projects with a total assistance of US\$ 431 million from IFAD are under implementation in India. Taking into account the need to strengthen

IFAD's stated objectives and help it realise them, that India **had substantially enhanced its pledge for the 10<sup>th</sup> Replenishment cycle.**

- I am glad to learn that IFAD has also institutionalized a **robust system of project scrutiny through its Independent Office of Evaluation.** I had the opportunity to go through the elaborate method of project evaluation that has been put in place by IOE. This is the second CPE for India undertaken by the IOE for the IFAD assisted projects during the period 2010-15. I am sure the feedback and observations issues arising from the CPE will bring in substantial value addition to the objectives and programmes of IFAD in future as the Government of India looks forward to innovation in approach and sharing of international best practices through IFAD's engagement in India.

- While the long drawn evaluation process by the Independent Office must have looked into the projects in terms of the well-defined parameters, I would like to draw your attention to some of the crucial issues at this juncture:

- It will be important to examine whether the **lessons learnt from the previous projects** as well as recommendations from the last evaluation have been integrated with the design for the subsequent projects, and to what extent they have been operationalized. You would perhaps appreciate that learnings from an earlier evaluation as well as outcome of last exercise should become a fulcrum around which subsequent initiatives should be planned and taken forward. I am happy to note that the CPE found a strong element of convergence between IFAD projects and national schemes such as NRLM and MNREGS.

- The CPE has observed that IFAD projects in India have witnessed a very long delay with respect to **"entry into force"**, indicating that the average time -- from approval of the project to entry into force -- was more than 16 months, almost twice the regional average (8.4). This calls for a concerted effort on part of the project authorities and IFAD Country Office in order to shorten this time gap and improve the efficiency of the projects.

- I have said this before, and reiterate here today, that IFAD projects need to develop a **strong market linkage** in order to make the initiatives that they promote economically viable, and develop institutions to make the projects sustainable. I am happy to note that the CPE has observed that the recent projects have acknowledged the need to build strong linkages with market and build institutions at the design stage itself.
- Sometimes, the focus of the project is lost due to **multiplicity of objectives**. Besides, involvement of multiple project execution agencies leads to lack of coordination and **accountability issues**. This is an aspect which has to be addressed primarily by IFAD as well as the project authorities while designing the project. I will also request the project authorities to address all implementation issues brought out by IOE in their report.
- I understand that the evaluation process involved desk review, interviews with stakeholders and direct observation of activities. I am sure that the IOE team had had the chance to **interact with the ultimate beneficiaries** during their field visit in November, and also early this week. This would have perhaps helped them get a perspective from the ground.
- At this juncture, I would also like to emphasize the need to **leverage technology** to make the IFAD projects effective and responsive.
- I am sure IFAD would continue to play an important role in the area of rural poverty reduction, agricultural growth and food security. I am sure this would help IFAD country office in India in strengthening its efforts towards making future projects more meaningful and effective.

Thank You.

