

**STATEMENT OF MR Oscar A. Garcia,
DIRECTOR OF THE INDEPENDENT OFFICE OF
EVALUATION OF IFAD**

- 1. Honourable Chief Audu Ogbeh, Honourable Minister
for Agriculture and Rural Development**
- 2. Dr Mahmoud Isa-Dutse, Permanent Secretary,
Federal Ministry of Finance**
- 3. Mr Musibau Olumuyiwa Azeez Director, Dept. of
Agribusiness, Processing and Market Development
(ABM)**
- 4. Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am truly honoured and pleased to participate in this Round-Table Workshop, at the conclusion of the independent evaluation of the IFAD-supported country programme in Nigeria.

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the Government of Nigeria, in particular the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, for their invaluable support and collaboration throughout this country programme evaluation process and for co-organizing today's workshop.

A word of appreciation is also due to Mr Ides de Willebois, Director of IFAD's West and Central Africa Division; and Ms Atsuko Toda, Nigeria Country Programme Manager.

I would like to thank Ms Johanna Pennarz, Lead Evaluation Officer of the Independent Office of Evaluation, who led the evaluation and Mr Nick Chapman, senior consultant who ably conducted this comprehensive endeavour and, Prof. Ifeyinwa Achike who worked hard to bring the evaluative evidence presented before you today.

Allow me to share with you a brief background on my office.

The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD is an integral division in the organizational architecture of the Fund. Structurally, our independence is primarily derived from the fact that we report directly to the Executive Board of IFAD. Behaviourally, independent evaluations avoid conflict of interest and undue pressure, by not having been directly responsible for the policy-setting, design, or overall management of the subject of evaluation.

The mandate of our office is to undertake impartial and evidence-based evaluations of projects, country programmes and corporate policies, with the aim of assessing results achieved, and generating lessons to further strengthen the performance of IFAD-financed operations on the ground.

The purpose of the Nigeria Country Programme Evaluation has been to provide an impartial and rigorous assessment of performance that can help the Government, IFAD and other

partners to develop the next country strategy - COSOP - and new projects financed by IFAD.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we will be discussing the findings, conclusions and recommendations of this Country Programme Evaluation, which will provide valuable inputs for the preparation of a new strategy for IFAD's engagement in Nigeria and of the evaluation's Agreement at Completion Point. For those of you who are not familiar with this, the Agreement at Completion Point is a short document summarizing the main evaluation recommendations, which the Government of Nigeria and IFAD Management will agree to adopt and implement within a certain timeframe.

The evaluation has been conducted in a context of strong economic growth in the country, and supported by solid Government commitment.

Nigeria's gross domestic product is now the largest in Africa, and its growth has been impressive with an average growth rate of 6 per cent between 2008 and 2013.

Nevertheless, the economic growth has contributed only to a slight reduction of poverty, as the positive trends have partly been offset by population growth and increasing inequality, both nationally and regionally. Economic growth has led to the

emergence of a sizable middle class, but has also been accompanied by increasing disparities between the haves and have-not, with large parts of the population still being affected by persistent and deep-rooted poverty, particularly in the rural areas.

Although Nigeria has drastically reduced the number of undernourished people under the Millennium Development Goal hunger target, food insecurity remains an issue. In 2010, the highest food poverty incidences occurred in the North West and North East, with three states registering food poverty rates above 90 per cent.

To face such poverty challenges, the Government has adopted several public policies for rural poverty reduction focusing on empowerment, private sector-led growth, and reforms to government service delivery. In the period covered by this country programme evaluation, from 2009 to 2015, Nigeria launched **Vision 20:2020** and the **Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA)**. The latter in particular brought agriculture to the forefront of Nigeria's approach to poverty reduction. In fact, agriculture still contributes 20 per cent of the GDP, with the Federal Government spending less than 1 per cent of its budget on agriculture, well below the commitment made by African leaders in the Maputo Declaration to invest 10% of GDP in Agricultural development.

I will now highlight only a few findings from the evaluation, since my colleague Johanna Pennarz will give you a more comprehensive presentation shortly.

The evaluation finds that the partnership between the Government of Nigeria and IFAD has grown stronger in the period covered by the current IFAD country strategy, or COSOP. Over the last 30 years, IFAD has supported ten projects in Nigeria for a total cost of US\$795.3 million, of which IFAD has provided US\$317.6 million.

In general, projects supported by IFAD over the past five years have been effective in improving the incomes and quality of life of the rural poor. Results were clearly visible in the communities where programme investments were focused. The single greatest achievement has been the strengthening of farmers' social capital through the creation of community-level organisations. Programme investments led to a significant increase in physical and financial assets in hard-to-reach villages, and to increases in food production and productivity.

The evaluation found that community development associations are registered and they continue to function. Most of the assets created are being managed in a sustainable way. However, within the overall picture of rural poverty, these achievements remain insular.

There are, still some areas that deserve further attention.

Firstly, unreliable flow of funding and delays in implementation have been major factors affecting the delivery of such results .

Secondly, efforts to document and disseminate those results have been insufficient. In general such efforts were hampered by poor quality of data available from monitoring and evaluation. Even though substantial efforts were made to produce baselines and impact studies, the quality was disappointing and the studies were of limited use for knowledge management.

Thirdly, effective targeting has been hampered by the lack of credible data at the sub-state level. The participatory methods used to select the poorest locations and households, did not demonstrate the clear criteria and consistent documentation required for a transparent and consistent process.

And last, but not least, the evaluation also finds that the partnerships were built on an ad-hoc base and around the specific needs of individual programmes rather than at a more strategic level. Stronger coordination capacities at federal level would have supported a more strategic approach to partnership building.

The progress made by the strengthening of the country office is recognized, but its level of capacity seems inadequate to cover multiple roles of programme implementation support, fostering

knowledge management from IFAD-financed operations, policy dialogue and partnership-building.

In closing I would like to share with you the words of Chinua Achebe when he reminded us that “Every generation must recognize and embrace the task it is peculiarly designed by history and by providence to perform”.

The challenges of rural poverty reduction are huge and require the concerted effort of local government, national government, civil society organisation, the private sector and the international cooperation community.

The partnership between IFAD and the government of Nigeria is strong but as the results of this evaluation show, there is room for improvement and a stern call for action for better development results is needed.

I invite you to absorb the inputs provided by this independent evaluation and engage frankly and constructively in a dialogue to explore ways to enhance the partnership between IFAD and the Government of Nigeria for a more inclusive and sustainable transformation of the rural sector.

I thank you for your attention.