

Philippines Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation National Workshop, Manila, 16 November 2016

Statement by Mr Fabrizio Felloni Deputy Director of the Independent Evaluation of IFAD

Ms Violeta Corpus, Director, Monitoring and Evaluation Staff, NEDA,

Ms Sylvia Mallari, Undersecretary, Department of Agrarian Reform,

Mr Périn Saint Ange, Associate Vice-President for the Programme
Management Department, IFAD,

Ms Hoonae Kim, Director of the IFAD Asia and the Pacific Division,

Distinguished representatives of government agencies and partner
institutions,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured and pleased to be part of this workshop, which is the final step of the country strategy and programme evaluation. Since 2002, it has always been a very pleasant experience to visit the Philippines and I am very glad to be back again.

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the Government of the Philippines, in particular the National Economic and Development Authority, NEDA, for their invaluable support and collaboration throughout this evaluation process and for co-organizing today's workshop.

I would also like to thank Mr Perin Saint-Ange, Associate Vice-President of the Programme Management Department of IFAD, and

Ms Hoonae Kim, Director of IFAD's Asia and the Pacific Division for their participation in this event today and support for this evaluation throughout the process. Much appreciation also goes to the IFAD country team for the Philippines for their collaboration and assistance: Mr Omer Zafar, Country Programme Manager; Mr Jing Pacturan, Country Programme Officer; Ms Vivian Azore, Country Programme Assistant; and I also need to mention Mr Yolando Arban, former Country Programme Officer.

Lastly, I would like to thank Ms Fumiko Nakai, Senior Evaluation Officer of the Independent Office of Evaluation, who led the evaluation, Ms Laure Vidaud, Evaluation Assistant who has been handling administrative and logistical arrangements, and Ms Melba Alvarez who heads the IOE Communication Unit, for her support with communication and media contacts.

Before touching on selected issues from this evaluation, allow me to share with you a brief background on our office. The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD is a unit in the organizational architecture of the Fund reporting directly to the Executive Board of IFAD (comprising of representative of member countries of IFAD) and independent of Management.

The mandate of our office is to conduct impartial and evidence-based evaluations of projects, country strategies and 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. While independent, these exercises are conducted in consultation with the main stakeholders.

Today, we will be discussing the key findings and recommendations of the country strategy and programme evaluation, the first undertaken at IFAD for the Philippines. The discussion will provide valuable inputs for the preparation of the evaluation's agreement at completion point. The latter is a short document summarizing the main findings and recommendations, together with follow-up actions jointly agreed by the Government and IFAD. This evaluation and the agreement will inform the IFAD's new country strategy.

Over the past decade, the Philippines experienced steady economic growth. However, poverty has persisted: in 2015 the Philippines Statistics Authority estimated that 21.6 per cent of the population lived below the national poverty line. Poverty in rural areas has been reported to be higher. In 2012, 39 per cent of the rural population lived below the national poverty line. According to several studies, among the key factors for poverty persistence was the poor performance of the agricultural sector, notably due to insufficient rural transportation infrastructure, low productivity and profitability of farming and natural resource degradation.

Since 1978, IFAD has approved financing for total amount of US\$244 million and the cumulative cost of the portfolio has been US\$ US\$771 million. While these figures may not seem high for the Philippines, the programme was relevant in that it targeted upland farmers, indigenous peoples, agrarian reform beneficiaries and fisher folks, among the poorer segments of the population.

The IFAD-financed portfolio has supported a mixture of: (i) area-based projects in Cordillera and Mindanao with multi-sectoral

components, based on participatory approaches; and (ii) projects with sectoral focus such as microenterprise development or natural resource management, with wider geographical coverage.

The evaluation found that IFAD-funded projects made notable achievements in crucial areas for rural poverty reduction, such as increasing crop yields (productivity) through irrigated agriculture and upgrading and rehabilitating rural infrastructure. The Philippines portfolio has also promoted gender equality and women's empowerment by helping diversify income sources and encouraging participation and leadership in grassroots organizations.

On the other hand, there are also areas for significant improvement such as the need to: (i) shorten the time required for project processing and implementation; (ii) fine-tune the definition of target groups; and (iii) improve the quality of evidence from monitoring and evaluation across the portfolio, including better monitoring which groups of beneficiaries have actually been reached.

Beyond the lending portfolio, there have been good practices in knowledge management and sharing, and effective partnerships with diverse government agencies, civil society organizations and research organizations.

While partnerships between IFAD and the Government have been strong, more progress needs to be made in terms of the partnerships with other international development agencies. In fact, it will be important to multiply efforts in partnerships and enhance evidence-based analysis and learning to inform key policy

issues and larger programmes so that good practices from the IFAD-funded programme can be scaled up with larger resources.

I am sure that the discussion today will be useful for reflecting on the future cooperation between IFAD and the Government of the Philippines and I look forward to your active participation.

I thank you for your attention.