

17 May 2022

Malawi Country  
Strategy and  
Programme Evaluation

## Statement of the Director IOE

Indran A. Naidoo, PhD

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you, Chair.

Distinguished representatives of the Government of Malawi,  
Representatives of IFAD, partner institutions and international  
organizations,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to be part of this virtual national workshop, organized by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD in collaboration with the Government of Malawi. This workshop follows the finalization of the independent country strategy and programme evaluation and provides an opportunity to share and discuss the main findings and recommendations with the Government, IFAD and other stakeholders and partners.

I would like to start by expressing my appreciation to the Government of Malawi and to the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture, and executing agencies for their collaboration on this evaluation. Our appreciation goes to the project teams and partner organizations for sharing insights, supporting field visits, and patience in responding to requests for data and information from the evaluation team.

I would also like to recognize the support of the IFAD Programme Management Department, in particular: Mr Donal Brown, Associate Vice-President; Ms Sara Mbago-Bhunu, Regional Director of East and Southern Africa Division; Mr Ambrosio Barros, Malawi Country Director.

Finally, I would like to thank the evaluation team, led by Ms Johanna Pennarz, Lead Evaluation Officer, who was ably supported by a team of national and international consultants.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In 2021 the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD conducted the first country-level evaluation in Malawi. The objectives of this evaluation were to:

- assess the results and performance of ongoing Country Strategic Opportunity Programme (COSOP 2016) and
- generate findings and recommendations for new COSOP in 2022.

Malawi is a low-income country. High poverty persists. More than half of the country's population was moderately or severely food insecure in 2020.

Against this background, the partnership between IFAD and the Government remains highly important to reduce poverty, food insecurity, and enable inclusive and sustainable rural transformation. Since 1981, IFAD has provided USD 350.5 million lending, contributing to a cumulative USD 652.4 million in financing for 14 programmes, four of which are ongoing. The portfolio supports rural poverty reduction and agricultural development, by investing in a range of activities and sectors.

**Moving forward**, it is my sincere hope that this evaluation will contribute to improving the effectiveness of the strategic partnership between the Government of Malawi and IFAD.

Let me now highlight **a few key findings**. The evaluation found that country programme has been comprehensive and consistent in addressing key issues faced by smallholder farmers in Malawi. Crucially, it addressed high

vulnerability, low productivity and food insecurity as a result of unsustainable land use and mono-cropping cultures (with focus on maize production).

The country programme has actively promoted gender equality and women empowerment, encouraging participation of women in all activities and promoting household methodologies to address root causes of inequalities and power imbalances. Furthermore, climate change adaptation and nutrition were mainstreamed in the programme.

However, the evaluation also pointed at some areas that deserve attention.

**Firstly**, the CSPE found that poverty and food insecurity are deep-rooted and widespread in the districts targeted by IFAD's country programme. Related to this, projects have achieved significant increases in productivity, through provision of technology, inputs and irrigation. Nonetheless, in most cases these gains were eroded soon after project completion.

**Secondly**, the project had limited achievements in diversifying production systems and securing reliable market access for smallholder farmers. Food remains the most important expenditure item for smallholder farmers.

**Third**, integration of livestock into production systems had a positive effect on food security and nutrition.

**The evaluation concludes** that food security and climate change resilience are the paramount challenges that the country programme has to address more effectively.

Moving forward, IFAD would have to further enhance its support to sustainable and diversified production systems and take decisive steps to resolve the ongoing implementation challenges. To this aim, realistic implementation planning and effective oversight are of paramount importance.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As part of its ongoing decentralisation, IFAD will establish a stronger country presence. For the new COSOP, this will open opportunities for enhanced

engagement with government, development partners and other stakeholders and for addressing performance issues through continuous follow up with implementing partners.

For the new COSOP, IFAD needs to engage with its partners in the development of concrete strategies to address the persistent performance bottlenecks and enhance the results, sustainability and impact of its operations in the country.

Now that we can gain a better understanding of future opportunities and challenges, it is my genuine hope that this evaluation will provide the foundation for strengthening country-level ability to monitor, collect, analyse and translate data into knowledge that can support inclusive and sustainable rural transformation.

I thank you for your attention.