



Global Donor Platform
for Rural Development

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Global Donor Platform for Rural Development segment - Interview transcript

[Starts at 47-minute mark on podcast]

Carin Smaller (Director of Agriculture, Trade, and Investment at the International Institute for Sustainable Development)

Ammad Bahalim (Senior Program Officer in Agricultural Development at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation)

Welcome to the second of our four part miniseries from the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development which is currently hosted by IFAD. We are going to hear from leaders in the donor world about the issues that matter to them.

The Platform is a network and partnership of 40 influential donors including international development agencies, financial institutions, intergovernmental organizations and foundations.

The membership aims to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, through collective influencing and knowledge sharing, so that donors can successfully lobby for policies and increased funding in agriculture and rural development.

In this second interview, we are speaking with Carin Smaller, Director of Agriculture, Trade, and Investment at the International Institute for Sustainable Development, and Ammad Bahalim, Senior Program Officer in Agricultural Development at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Our reporter Monique Amar asked Carin and Ammad about what keeps them up at night.

Carin Smaller: Right now, it's the conflict in Ukraine and the atrocity is being committed in Ukraine.

But it's also the massive repercussions on poor and hungry people all over the world, so we're seeing skyrocketing food, energy and fertiliser prices. And it's making people in Africa and the Middle East even more vulnerable and more desperate. That's what keeps me up at night because it doesn't need to be that way.

I was born and I grew up in South Africa during the apartheid regime, and I saw growing up all the injustices that came from that regime.

And I know because I've been working on this all my life, that hunger and poverty are not inevitable.

That we can end this dreadful scourge.

Ammad Bahalim: A lot of things keep me up at night I think a lot of us in the agricultural development community overall are being kept up by the urgency of the current food price spikes.

We've got hunger hotspots and in some parts of the world, such as in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan, South Sudan and Yemen, people there are at risk of starvation or even death, and this will probably be made worse by the crisis in Ukraine. I guess you know for somebody like me, I grew up in Pakistan and have done development work for a while now. We have the privilege of being able to flit in and out of some of these hotspots in these situations, but knowing or experiencing the deprivation that people across the world face and that we could do something about it, it's certainly something that bothers me and keeps me up at night.

GDPRD/Monique Amar: Thanks so much to both of you for those very powerful responses, and for sharing your personal experiences with us. So, my next question is related to both of your answers. As a global community, how can we work to help these people facing poverty and hunger?

Carin Smaller: We can help people by investing in three big areas.

The first is investments or interventions on the farm. That will help directly improve productivity and the incomes of the poorest.

The second is improving storage and services that farmers need to help them move the food they grow to markets. We need more investment to improve handling and packaging. Storage services for more nutritious foods like fruits and vegetables, this would really help.

And the third thing was that if we want all these other things to work, the farm interventions, the storage interventions we have to empower the excluded by ensuring that every person has the right or gets the right to an education.

A decent livelihood and a political voice, so without those basic things, none of these other investments will work. If we can do that, we will help people who experience hunger.

Ammad Bahalim: Sure, I mean so the urgency of the humanitarian crisis is real. I'm not probably what we need to take care of first, but in the long term, we have to develop a system, an agricultural development system that delivers on these crises. They are preventable and they just require a bit of forethought and investment. So the last few years the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation told us that conflict, economic downturns and climate change are moving the trend line on hunger in the wrong direction. And the only real way to respond to that is to invest in agricultural development.

GDPRD/Monique Amar: Thank you both for those interesting answers. So clearly, we need to continue with agricultural development and build resilience to protect against crises like the ones we're experiencing now. But practically speaking, is ending hunger a realistic goal? Do we even have the resources as a global community to do this, to end hunger?

Ammad Bahalim: This is a realistic goal. As of 2015, with sustainable development goals, we have very, very specific targets and of them you know we have very ambitious goal in the case of sustainable development goal two to end hunger by 2030, and then within that we have targets such as on small scale producer productivity, income and sustainability and the form of SDG 2.3 and 2.4. By being this specific and thinking through how these kinds of specific smaller targets lead to bigger goals. For example, SDG 2 the goal to end hunger, I think we make these things more feasible and more realistic. So rather than talking in broad generalities, we can talk about things that are specific that are measurable that are realistic, that are time bound, and that are fundamentally achievable.

Carin Smaller: So I was part of a team of 86 researchers from 23 countries who produced this very clear and convincing road map for the most effective ways to end hunger, including how much it would cost to end hunger and to do it in an environmentally sustainable way.

The project was called Ceres 2030 Sustainable Solutions to end hunger. Our study found that we need an extra \$33 billion per year until 2030 to end hunger, double people incomes and protect the climate. It's peanuts. For an extra \$11.00 per person living in the industrialised world, we could bring an end to hunger within our reach and to do it sustainably. It's criminal if we don't do this.

GDPRD/Monique Amar: Wow, its inspiring to hear that ending hunger is so achievable. If we have all the information necessary to end food insecurity, what are the actions and priorities that we need to focus on in order to actually eliminate hunger for good?

Ammad Bahalim: Sure, I'll walk you back a little bit though. Although we have the resources, we haven't allocated them to achieve this goal yet, so that's probably an important challenge.

I want to get to that and in truth, although we have good goals, targets and indicators, we actually don't have the data, so this is a little bit where our work at the Global Donor Platform under the Sustainable Development Goal 2 Roadmap Working group comes in. Since about 2015 when we agreed to these targets in to get you some goals that I mentioned the donor community quite quickly realised that we weren't able to measure where we're at and we didn't have a plan to get where we needed to be.

And so, we've been working together in this group to build this road map, and we've agreed to roughly 3 areas of work to achieve this ambitious target.

First, we need to identify what works. So through the road map working group and support from our colleagues at the Platform, we on the donor side have made quite a bit of progress in terms of actually having a plan. Being able to track how we're collectively making progress towards it and to go back to your earlier points.

If you know, are these kinds of ambitious goals or targets realistic, or are they feasible? Yes, they are, as long as we have some sort of plan to deal with it and some sort of way to track what kind of progress we're collectively making. So, for that, we're definitely grateful to the Platform and to IFAD for hosting Platform.

Carin Smaller: So, add more resources, spend the money better.

This means the money has to go through existing financing mechanisms, so organisations like IFAD have to get more money and to channel that money to the people who need it. Programmes like the GAFSP, the Global Agriculture and Food Security programme need more resources to channel.

We also need Platforms like the Global Donor Platform that helps bring donors together and make sure that they know what each other are doing and that they coordinate their actions better.

We also need coalitions like the Zero hunger coalition that was launched at the UN Food System Summit last year, to help align activities or actions better and to advocate for more and better spending.

And we need the private sector because we cannot raise this money without the involvement of the private sector.

All these things together and we can get the action we need to achieve Zero hunger.