



Global Donor Platform  
for Rural Development

## **IFAD Podcast | EP41 - February 2023**

*Global Donor Platform for Rural Development miniseries*

### **Interview with**

**Ron Hartman** (Director, Global Engagement, Partnership and Resource Mobilization Division, IFAD and Board Member of the GDPRD)

**Secretariat/Michelle Tang:** Ron, thank you so much for being with us today on this podcast. What are the issues that currently keep you up at night?

**Ron Hartman:** Thanks very much Michelle. Very pleased to be with you today to share some of my thoughts on the global issues that are impacting all of us. And of course, as a keen member of the platform itself, I'm always looking for ways to discuss how the platform can contribute to furthering the global agenda around food security.

Having spent the last 25 years working in some of the world's most remote and most marginal places with some of the world's poorest people, the thing that keeps me awake is, behind these large aggregate numbers of people facing food insecurity, there's a human story.

Every one of the 700 to 800 million people facing food insecurity is a member of a family, is a person with the same hopes and dreams that we have.

Another dimension beyond this is the combination of different crises that we're facing at the moment and how unprecedented they all are.

And in the current political environment where multilateralism is challenged, it's a real concern about how the global community can come together to jointly resolve issues that are affecting us all.

That's the main concern that I have as a father of relatively young children.

**Michelle:** Indeed, those are very complex issues, and definitely the numbers are staggering.

2023 is the year of IFAD's 13th replenishment, which is its funding cycle. Why is this a significant moment for the organization and the work it does for the most vulnerable?

**Ron:** The replenishment process is this really interesting process that happens over a 12 month period. As a member-based organization, what this actually entails is IFAD engaging really closely with its membership to do three things.

Firstly, to review the funds results. There's an accountability aspect.

The second dimension of the replenishment is a strategic dialogue around what should be the future medium term objectives for the fund.

The third element of the replenishment, and this is probably the element that people most think of the replenishment as an observer, and that's around resource mobilisation.

We're very proud of the fact that we have the largest number of contributors to our replenishment than any other fund or MDB (multilateral development bank). We have over 100 countries, both developed and developing, contribute resources to the fund. For me personally, that's a really significant show of support and ownership of IFAD, the work that it does and its mandate.

Why is it this is a significant replenishment for the fund?

Considering the global context where you've got increasing conflict, climate fragility, economic and fiscal pressures, and an energy crisis which is all combining into providing and increasing hardship for people globally, the replenishment comes at a really critical time.

And it mirrors the origins of IFAD. IFAD was born out of the food and energy crisis of the 1970s and it was purpose built to respond to these kinds of crises. This year is a very important global moment for our Member States to come together to provide increased resources to respond to increased demand, particularly from our developing Member States.

**Michelle:** For our listeners who may be facing increasing heating bills and higher food prices, why should they pay attention to the replenishment efforts of IFAD or whether the donor community is actually coordinating with each other?

**Ron:** This is, I think, a key political challenge for many of our Member States. Overseas Development Assistance, ODA, has tended to be quite a hot political issue in many of our key traditional donor member countries. Many taxpayers in countries, are asking why should we invest in ODA when we have challenges at home?

What we see with increasing fragility, increasing food insecurity, is that there's increasing instability and marginalisation of people, and this creates all kinds of issues that affect both developing and developed countries, such as migration, increasing conflict around resources, assets, and even food.

There are some really important lessons that have come from the COVID-19 issues of the past few years. It really taught us as that no one is safe until everybody is safe and that perspective needs to be applied also in the food security and nutrition space.

The message to all of our constituencies is that overseas development assistance is beneficial in so many different ways and in economic, financial, social, and particularly in terms of stability for the global community.

**Michelle:** You also mentioned IFAD's comparative advantage, how its mandate has not changed and is now more relevant than ever before. From what I hear, this ultimately enables IFAD to better respond to the changing landscape of food systems with its dynamics and challenges, which are also faced by other donors.

Together with the multiple global crises like you just mentioned, how does this affect the replenishment process, and also the donor community as a whole, to be better equipped and to coordinate against these challenges?

**Ron:** IFAD, as an international organization, is constantly challenged and seeking to evolve, to deliver more effective development results on the ground.

Most of the world's poor and hungry people live in rural areas. And the majority of them work in work in agriculture. IFAD is an organisation that specialises in targeting the last mile and over the

course of our plus 40 years, we've helped millions of people and families improve their productivity, incomes, livelihoods, increase their opportunities for employment and build their resilience, and it's particularly that final point on resilience that's critical now.

What we do know going forward is that shocks such as we're facing at the moment are going to become the new normal.

We need to find ways of building resilience because we just can't afford, as a global community, a continued sort of humanitarian and emergency support.

And we try and catalyse our investments to influence policy to have an even greater impact on promoting sustainable food system transformation.

We assemble finance to ensure that every dollar that we receive from our Member States translates into more than \$8.00 investment on the ground. We leverage our capital base to ensure that taxpayers' money goes much further. Every \$1.00 that's provided to IFAD, we're able to directly invest more than \$3 in the world's poorest and most marginal rural people.

The IFAD13 replenishment can provide a very needed global investment framework to respond to the current crisis. It's clear that our food systems are under pressure. It's clear that we need to rethink on how we're able to produce more food, more sustainably, and it's also clear that we increase investments in improving local food production and productivity.

**Michelle:** What is your vision for the year ahead and what are you most looking forward to?

**Ron:** Our priority is obviously the replenishment process. The opportunity for us to check in with our Member States to get their feedback around how we're performing, to be able to communicate the robust results that we've been able to achieve in the previous replenishments, is a great opportunity for reshaping, rekindling the organisation and relaunching it to respond to the current crisis.

We hear from our Member States that they want not handouts, but they want hand ups. They want to make sure that their food systems are transformed to be more sustainable so that they're not drifting just from crisis to crisis. And that's going to require a mindset shift in how we view agriculture and food systems.

Another vision and outcome of this year is, I'm really excited to continue to engage with the Global Donor Platform. It is important that there is coordination between development partners, and the Global Donor Platform provides a unique space for like-minded partners to come together. So I've got really big expectations for you, Michelle, the Global Donor Platform team and particularly for IFAD's continued involvement as a board member.

**Michelle:** Thank you for that Ron, and we at the secretariat are really looking forward to working together with you and with all of our board members, members and partners in this coming year.

**Ron:** Super, thanks very much Michelle and my best for the New Year to all of your listeners.