



## 2023 ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

# 20 Years of rural development and aid effectiveness: Where are we now and where are we going?

## CONCEPT NOTE

Rome, Italy, 26-27 October 2023

### 1. Background

The Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (GDPRD, or “the Platform”) is a network of 40 bilateral and multilateral donors, international financial institutions and foundations that share a common vision on the role of agriculture and rural development in reducing global poverty and combating hunger and malnutrition. The Platform is committed to achieving increased and more effective aid for agriculture and rural development through evidence-based advocacy and knowledge sharing.

Every year, the Platform holds its Annual General Assembly (AGA), an event that provides Platform members, partners and invited guests with an open space to debate emerging topics in agriculture and rural development (ARD). AGA participants benefit from the core services of the Donor Platform: knowledge sharing, strategic influencing, and networking on key development issues and strategic directions that affect lives in rural spaces. AGAs are based on topical, thematic areas. Past examples include the 2022 AGA on “Implementing National Pathways for Food Systems Transformation to Accelerate Progress Towards the SDGs in Times of Crisis and Conflict”, and the 2020 AGA on “Strengthening Coordination Towards SDG2: Pathways for Food Systems Transformation”.

In order to maximize participation and reach diverse audiences, the GDPRD Board Members and Secretariat have decided to hold the 2023 AGA in a hybrid in-person/online format. It will take place over two days, on 26-27 October 2023, under the theme **“20 Years of rural development and aid effectiveness: Where are we now and where are we going?”**.

### 2. Rationale for the 2023 AGA Theme

At the 2002 European Forum on Rural Development Cooperation, governments agreed that aid could be more effective through enhanced donor coordination, both at global and country levels. In light of this aspiration, the establishment of a “Global Forum for Rural Development”

was proposed. The following year, at the World Bank's Rural Week, a Global Donor Platform for Rural Development was established. Over the next two decades, its members have worked continuously to enhance donor coordination and improve rural development strategies, and the impact of their projects and programmes, with a continued focus on harmonization, ownership, accountability, and an emphasis on results and impact. Policy coherence has also been an increasing concern for the donor community.

This year, upon the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Platform, donors will be invited to reflect on how the Aid Effectiveness Agenda has changed the way they work on food systems. Over the last 20 years, there have been major advances and renewed focus on rural development, with momentum provided by the 2015 Millennium Development Goals, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, and the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit. Nevertheless, in the face of such important advances, development assistance has also substantially changed; new emerging economies have challenged traditional approaches, and financial resources for food systems have shrunk.

Major progress in development has been achieved in the past two decades; for instance, pre-pandemic global poverty rates have been cut by more than half, since 2000. However, the world has transformed in many more ways than expected, and there are nevertheless still major concerns. World population has increased by 30 per cent, mainly in developing countries. Climate change has accelerated, making it increasingly challenging to reach the goals of the Paris Agreement. And, as reported by FAO in the [2022 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World \(SOFI\)](#), "the world is moving backwards in its efforts to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms". Hunger has largely remained persistent for more than eight hundred million people due to slowing progress and has escalated due to the number and severity of recent global crises. In 2020, among children under five years of age, an estimated 149 million (22 percent) were stunted, 45 million (6.7 percent) were wasted, and 39 million (5.7 percent) were overweight, which highlights the importance of investing more and better in nutrition, a very effective driver for broader development. Biodiversity loss is also increasingly threatening the benefits nature provides to people around the world, with far-reaching consequences on agriculture and food systems. Damaged ecosystems exacerbate climate change, undermine food security and nutrition and put people and communities at risk.

The latest edition of the [Global Report on Food Crises](#) clearly identifies the three main drivers of food crises: conflicts/insecurity; economic shocks; and extreme climate events, notably caused by climate change. According to this report, in 2022 close to 258 million people have been acutely food insecure and in need of urgent assistance, across 58 countries/territories. This represents an increase of nearly 60 million people since 2021.

The world has transformed politically too – from the relative stability and optimism of the post-cold war decade with its embrace of multilateralism, to an increasingly multi-polarized planet, where the international 'rules-based order' - and the fabric of global multilateralism itself are under increasing pressure. Indeed, concerns about international development have given way to a greater focus on national security issues, as conflict, climate change, biodiversity loss and geopolitical competition present new challenges and dangers. Globally, inequality is rising, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic which pushed millions into poverty.

Despite these significant headwinds, there is hope. The digital transformation is linking rural farmers to global markets more directly and efficiently, accelerating the spread of ideas, agricultural innovation, and access to financial services. Climate finance is opening new economic and environmental opportunities for rural communities. While progress is being made, significant improvements could be made through better donor coordination.

Donor coordination is particularly crucial to food systems transformation and rural

development in the current context, when crises are increasing in both number and severity, and commitments to achieving long-term resilience are faltering.

**There is therefore an urgent need for the donor community to come together to reaffirm its commitments for improved harmonization, and country ownership, as well as policy coherence (both at donor and partner level).** Moreover, with the increased pressure on financing, the need for accountability is a priority, and our commitment to harmonization and aid effectiveness is essential.

In addressing these issues, the Donor Platform remains committed to working with its members to effectively catalyse change through interventions (investments, technical support, capacity, and governance strengthening) in rural communities, the development of agriculture and the transformation of food systems for the achievement of the SDGs.

### 3. AGA Topics and Objectives

This AGA will be an informative and participatory event, where donors and others (including representatives from partner/developing countries, private sector and foundations, civil society, among others) will engage in a series of thought-provoking questions and discussions. These conversations will be built around the themes of the Aid Effectiveness Agenda, balancing emergency responses and long-term sustainability and resilience measures, donor approaches, and stakeholder engagement.

Specifically, the AGA **will seek to address the following fundamental questions:**

1. **How has aid effectiveness changed development cooperation** in agriculture, rural development and food systems? What were the main impacts and challenges, including what has or has not worked? How has the Food Systems Summit, and the Donor Platform's participation, improved the shared understanding of what food systems are?
2. In terms of donor approaches:
  - a. How have donors **adapted their activities** to respond to persistent and enduring rural development issues (e.g. climate change, biodiversity loss, conflict, pandemics and other crises)?
  - b. **What further transformations** will be needed in the future (e.g., innovative financing mechanisms, new technologies, approaches and partnerships)?
  - c. How can donors ensure that forward-looking strategies and proposals from global forums, such as the Food Systems Summit (and its July 2023 'stocktaking moment'), drive **country-level programme planning**?
3. In the face of future global crises, **how can the GDPRD help donors coordinate** their long-term development strategies?
4. **How can the GDPRD help donors to better engage with partner countries**, i.e. those that donors actually target – and in particular with youth and women?
5. How can the GDPRD assist donors in prioritizing greater climate adaptation and resilience as well as biodiversity in their strategies and actions on agriculture, rural development, and food systems?

This event will build the GDPRD's capacity to strategically influence the international

development agenda, through innovative approaches rural development in a food system approach.

At the end of the session, participants are expected to:

1. Understand how the principles of the Aid Effectiveness Agenda have changed and influenced international and country-level policies and strategies on food systems, agriculture and rural development;
2. Assess how to adapt financing models to the changing landscape, including through the adoption of innovative approaches (e.g. the use of blended finance);
3. Be equipped to engage in conversations on how sustainable financing and technological innovations can advance food systems transformation;
4. Understand the current landscape of data for agricultural development and food systems; and
5. Be better informed on potential avenues for increased donor collaboration at country-level.

## **4. Organizational Arrangements**

The AGA will be held over two days, on 26-27 October 2023, in Rome, Italy. Upon GDPRD Board Member's requests, this date and location was chosen due to its proximity with the 51st session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS 51) Plenary. Participants will be invited to a hybrid event, allowing for in-presence participation, as well as virtual attendance on Zoom.

Members of the Platform, its Board and representatives from GDPRD's Thematic Working Groups (TWGs), as well as other key partners, will be invited to attend in-person. Participants will include representatives from all geographic regions, including governments, international organizations, agribusiness companies, academic and research organizations, think tanks, NGOs, civil society, farmers' organizations and others. Special attention will be given to the representatives of women and youth organizations.

The GDPRD Secretariat will organize the AGA under the leadership of the Platform Board, which will contribute to the event's design and organization. This includes mobilizing participants and speakers, reviewing background documents to facilitate dialogue at the event, identifying authoritative individuals as possible speakers and panellists, and various other contributions.

The event will also provide an opportunity for TWGs to design specific sessions around their theme/topic. There will be a blend of high-level plenary sessions and technical panel discussions, along with special breakout working sessions, a format that will maximize opportunities for dialogue and participation.

A communication plan will be developed for the AGA by the GDPRD Secretariat, in cooperation with the Communications divisions/departments of the Board members and other partners, as appropriate. An event page and selected video recordings of the AGA will also be available on the GDPRD website.