



Global Donor
Platform for
Rural Development



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Strengthening food systems through development finance

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Interviewed by GDPRD's Carlotta Cramer

Carlotta Cramer/GDPRD: Thank you, Tuleen, for sitting down with us this afternoon. First of all, what inspired you to take on the leadership role of Co-chair for the new Thematic working group with the global donor platform?

Tuleen Alkhoffash/IFAD: I really think we need this group between the donor community and the UN organizations, as well as impact investors and philanthropy. I think sometimes we get to be very disconnected from each other's when we work, and we really wanted to get them to work together on one thing. That's why we wanted to make something different this time. And we wanted to have something that will focus on one goal towards our journey in the thematic group.

Carlotta: Why is sustainable blended finance important for addressing global security challenges and what specific opportunities does it present?

Tuleen: When it comes to food security in general, you know generally when you work in the ag business or the value chain with agriculture, it's very difficult to find investors who are interested to do so because of the high risk that this sector represents. So, for example, what's the margin of a farmer's profit? Very, very little. And also with climate change, you know, you can have a sudden flood or sudden drought. And when it comes to addressing global security challenges, especially on food security, blended finance and the role of the private sector to step in and help those farmers to work with investors and with bigger companies is a central part of the whole process.

Carlotta: Could you elaborate a little bit on the formation of this working group? What were some of the factors that led to its creation?

Tuleen: The idea was to have something precise and to have all those different parties contribute to one thing. There's a lot of coordination groups around, between donors and the UN, and we don't want to be part of that because I tend to be very critical of coordination groups - they keep changing. But when you have something concrete and focused, that would allow people to stick to it and we really wanted to be part of that literature, we wanted to be part of what we could do better.

Carlotta: And then on the flip side, what are some of the main challenges that you see in scaling up sustainable blended finance and how does the working group plan to work around and address some of these challenges?

Tuleen: One of the major challenges that we notice is that donors tend to receive a lot of data from different parties, and you know each party comes with a different set of parameters for guarantees and first loss. When the donor becomes part of that exercise, when they become part of that framework, they will look at it from a different lens. So that's why we think about data and how data is designed and interpreted, to be part of it. Don't forget internally within the donors - and this comes from my USAID experience before - you have the sector team and you have the finance team. So there's always a debate between financial objectives and development objectives. So, having something like this for the donors allow them to kind of bring those two different visions together.

Carlotta: And lastly, what is one message that you would like our listeners to walk away with, and why?

Tuleen: I really would like to send this message to our donors, who have been really an essential part in the thematic group. The partnership has been very important for us, having donors who agreed to work voluntarily on testing is very important, and so we're very happy and very delighted to have you with us and we look forward to continue working with you. I also wanted to precisely thank my colleague Songbae from USAID. He's the Co-chair for this thematic group and, you know, having USAID support and their intervention in the thematic group is very critical because they bring the donor angle and for us as UN agencies, they bring a different perspective, in addition to philanthropies as well impact investors. So, a very big thank you Songbae for being my partner in this and looking forward for another two years of working together.