

29 OCTOBER: HOW TO MAKE FAILURE A STEPPING STONE TO SUCCESS



Have you ever considered that success and failure are two sides of the same coin? Do you think learning from failures is an extravagant and outlandish proposition? Would you agree that mistakes and failures are inherent in the human condition, and that there is no one on the face of the earth who has not failed?

No matter how you answered the above questions, **mark your calendars for 29 October 2013** and join an IFAD event that aims to challenge the common thinking around failure – and to raise awareness about how learning from failure is a key to success. The event will benefit from the insights and experience of renowned personalities such as [Tim Harford](#), [Aleem Walji](#), [Dave Snowden](#) and [Ashley Good](#).

The complex world in which we live and work requires that both organizations and donors accept the fact that *failure is a natural part of doing business*. This, in turn, entails creating the right environment and space so that everyone can identify and honestly admit what has not worked and why an activity has failed.

The objective of this event is to:

- recognize the causes of failure, understand the value of learning from failures and learn how to communicate about failures
- find out why it is so important to be flexible and learn the art of adaptation so that we can deliver better investment projects
- share, discuss and exchange failures without falling into the blame-game trap
- change the perception that UN agencies and IFIs are reluctant to expose their failures

This event marks the beginning of a journey to help us learn how to capture lessons from projects and activities that do not scale up, are not sustainable, get tangled in bureaucracy or simply fail because of unanticipated circumstances.

It will also help us identify the structural and organizational changes required to anticipate, learn from and adapt to failures and explore whether 100 per cent success rate means checking all the boxes or if success means learning from failures and adapting.

Fail fair: Creating a safe place to share failures

Want to show your leadership? Want to push the boundaries, and show you have adapted to a changing environment and thanks to the “failure” you managed to deliver an even better project? **Why not share your story of a project and/or activity which did not quite work out as planned.**

Please send your submission to [Roxanna Samii](#) by cob **16 October 2013**.

About the speakers

- **Tim Harford**, economist, writer, broadcaster, TEDTalk speaker, author of the million-selling *The Undercover Economist* and *Adapt*, will talk about what it takes to fail in a complex world, and about the fact that it is “normal” for development-related activities to fail. He will speak about how to overcome the fear of failing, how to fail on a survivable scale and how to spot a failure and fix it early – underscoring the importance of not being ashamed to admit failure, facing up to it and adapting. He will offer tools and tips to build the audience’s ability to frame and respond to failures in a way that will lead to success.
- **Aleem Walji**, director of the World Bank Innovation Labs overseeing open government, transparency and accountability initiatives at the Bank, will discuss what the impetus was for an institution such as the World Bank to start embracing the concept of learning from failures. In his talk, he will share what is happening behind the scenes at the Bank giving specific examples of how acceptance of failure has allowed them to deliver better programmes, exceed donor and stakeholder expectations and what it takes to make learning from failure an acceptable norm and practice in the development business.
- **Dave Snowden**, a leader in knowledge management, is well known for his work on the role of narrative and sense-making as chief scientific officer at cognitive edge, father of the Cynefin framework and director at the IBM institute of KM, where led programmes on complexity. He will talk about how, in the complex world of development, logframes, and other linear mechanisms may be tools of the past and hinder rather than help progress and development.
- **Ashley Good**, founder and CEO of FailForward, will speak about how fear of failure can inhibit innovation, adapting and growth. She will share her experience in helping organizations to learn, innovate and become failure-friendly.

Dress code

All participants are kindly requested to take note of the “dress code” requirements. Please make sure you wear your:

- Constructive attire
- Commit to learn gown
- Participation garment
- Humility and humour outfit

Kindly note that bouncers will “undress” those with snarky and blaming outfits.



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