

# AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT TO REDUCE POVERTY

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## **Introduction**

Most farmers in the developing world are smallholders. While in production there may be few economies of scale indeed, being small can give advantages in supervision of labour and understanding of micro-variations in soils and climate there are drawbacks when dealing with buyers, suppliers of inputs and bankers. Hence, finding ways to link small farmers to link effectively to large-scale enterprises in supply chains is a challenge. maintain viable rural communities, for whom farming is an important economic activity creating local employment; this delivers multiple economic, social, environmental and territorial benefits Agriculture is an integral part of the European economy and society. In terms of indirect effects, any significant cut back in European farming activity would in turn generate losses in GDP and jobs in linked economic sectors – notably within the agriculture food supply chain, which relies on the EU primary agricultural sector for high quality, competitive and reliable raw material inputs, as well as in non-food sectors. Rural activities, from tourism, transport, to local and public services would also be affected. Depopulation in rural areas would probably accelerate. There would therefore be important environmental and social consequences. Developing countries are moving from being largely rural and agrarian to becoming urban and industrial. We study the processes by which this takes place, including the way mutually beneficial links can be forged between town and country, and how the rural non-farm economy can be stimulated to provide local jobs for some of those who leave farming for better paid jobs.

## **The concept of development**

All rural extension work takes place within a process of development, and cannot be considered as an isolated activity. Extension programmes and projects and extension agents are part of the development of rural societies. It is, therefore, important to understand the term *development*, and to see how its interpretation can affect the course of rural extension work.

The term development does not refer to one single phenomenon or activity nor does it mean a general process of social change. All societies, rural and urban, are changing all the time. This change affects, for example, the society's norms and values, its institutions, its methods of production, the attitudes of its people and the way in which it distributes its resources. A rural society's people, customs and practices are never static but are continually evolving into new and different forms. There are different theories which seek to explain this process of social change (as evolution, as cultural adaptation or even as the resolution of conflicting interests) and examples of each explanation can be found in different parts of the world.

## **Rural development**

Rural development has traditionally centered on the exploitation of land-intensive natural resources such as agriculture and forestry. However, changes in global production networks and increased urbanization have changed the character of rural areas. Increasingly tourism, niche manufacturers, and recreation have replaced resource extraction and agriculture as dominant economic drivers. The need for rural communities to approach development from a wider perspective has created more focus on a broad range of development goals rather than merely creating incentive for agricultural or resource based businesses. Education, entrepreneurship, physical infrastructure, and social infrastructure all play an important role in developing rural regions. Rural development is also characterized by its emphasis on locally produced economic development strategies. In contrast to urban regions, which have many similarities, rural areas are highly distinctive from one another. For this reason there are a large variety of rural development approaches used globally generating strong linkages to other economic sectors. Rural livelihoods are enhanced through effective participation of rural people and rural communities in the management of their own social, economic and environmental objectives by empowering people in rural areas, particularly women and youth, including through organizations such as local cooperatives and by applying the bottom-up approach.

## **Agricultural and rural development**

This guide is primarily concerned with rural extension and with the livelihoods of farmers and their families. The concept of rural development must therefore be considered with particular reference to agriculture, since agriculture is the basis of the livelihood of most rural families. In the past two decades there has been increasing emphasis on rural development programmes and projects, and recognition that the development of rural areas is just as important as the building up of urban, industrial complexes. Development must have two legs: urban industrialization and rural improvement.

There are very strong reasons why resources should now be put into rural development. More than half the people of the world and the vast majority of the people in developing countries (Asia, Africa and Latin America) live in rural areas and gain part or all of their livelihoods from some form of agriculture. Most of these people are also still very poor and dependent on agricultural practices that have benefited little from modern technology. They live in isolated and often inhospitable places, with little access to the resources they need to improve their agriculture. Many lead their lives barely at subsistence level. Solely in terms of numbers of people, there is a very strong case for giving high priority to rural development. Agriculture and rural development.

At least temporarily, the emphasis on education and health has obscured the role of alternative forms of aid, especially measures aimed at agriculture and rural development. Although the debate rarely figures explicitly in the recent literature, donors must confront a long-standing dilemma, namely whether to address the sectors or regions where the poor are mostly found, or to promote sectors or regions where the poor are not found, but which could improve their prospects. In general equilibrium, living standards in rural areas might be improved by rural development, but also by the entry of new activities and productivity growth in urban areas. Growth economists have tended to emphasize the benefits of industrial growth, but in the past, donors have tried to promote agricultural productivity and rural living standards more directly.

## **Agricultural production**

This concern to improve a country's agricultural base, and thus the livelihood of the majority of its inhabitants, is usually expressed in terms of programmes and projects of rural development. However, while agriculture is rightly the most important objective in the development of rural areas, rural development should also embrace the non-agricultural aspects of rural life. There are many definitions and statements on rural development that attempt to describe succinctly what it is trying to achieve. Perhaps the one used in conjunction with the UN-sponsored Second Development Decade in the 1970s best illustrates the broad nature of rural development.

## **Farmers and their families face a whole range of problems**

In thinking of rural development, therefore, a whole range of problems which the farmer confronts daily must be considered. Some of these problems will be physical or tangible, and relatively easy to identify. They can quickly be spotted by observation or by means of a survey and once the extent of the problem is understood a relevant course of action can be proposed. For example, fertilizer can be recommended to improve the production level of a certain crop.

However, not all of the problems that farmers face are physical nor can they always easily be seen. Many of these problems derive from the farmer's place in the social and political structure in the rural area. Farmers and their families are involved in a complex web of relationships with other farmers in the area and often these relationships bring about problems. Dependence upon a money-lender, for example, is a problem facing many farmers in developing countries. Farmers may also have little access to the resources necessary for development, nor any way of getting such resources. Finally, they may have had very little contact with rural development programmes or other government services, and may not know how to take advantage of such activities.

## **Principles of rural development programmes**

Rural development strategies usually take the form of programmes which implement projects in a specific rural area. Such programmes form the basis of most government and non-government efforts to assist rural areas, and they include both agricultural and non-agricultural projects, e.g., maternal and child health programmes. Specialized staff supply the expertise required, and ministerial or other institutional budgets provide the necessary financial resources. External aid is also usually channelled into such programmes in the rural areas.

While this guide does not intend to examine the areas of programme planning or implementation, it does suggest a number of very broad principles which should be followed by rural development programmes. The content of these programmes is a matter for the specialists in the particular field, i.e., agriculture, health or water supply. It is important, however, for all such programmes to establish beforehand a set of principles to guide their activities. The following principles are suggested to implement rural development programmes.

Extension is not concerned directly with generating knowledge; that is done in specialized institutions such as agricultural research centres, agricultural colleges or engineering departments. Extension takes this knowledge and makes it available to the farm- family. Rural extension, therefore, is the process whereby knowledge is communicated, in a variety of ways, to the farm family. This process is usually guided and supported by an extension agent who works at the programme and project level, and who is in direct contact with farmers and their families.

#### **Important Measures Adopted to Remove Rural Poverty in India are as follows:**

Several poverty alleviation programmes have been launched by the central government for the rural poor, comprising small and marginal farmers, landless labourers and rural artisans. They are as follows:

- Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP):
- Training Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM):
- Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA):
- National Rural Employment Programme (NREP):
- Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP)
- Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY):
- Assurance Scheme (EAS):
- Million Well Scheme (MWS):
- Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY):
- Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY):
- Jai Prakash Rozgar Guarantee Yojana (JPRGY):
- Rural Housing Schemes:

Indira Awas Yojana was launched by the government in 1985. Under this scheme house is given free of cost to SC/ST families and free bonded labourers. Its scope has been extended to include non-scheduled rural poor. Under the Ninth Five Year Plan, Samagra Awas Yojana has been launched to ensure integrated provision of shelter, sanitation and drinking water to poor rural households. After independence our planners and economists had felt that the economic development by itself would reduce poverty in the country. But the reality is that the benefits of development have not reached the doorsteps of the poor. Further, the poverty reduction policy of the government through increase in the budgetary allocations for expenditure on social sectors also contributes to the removal of poverty. But its role is very much limited as it does not directly create any employment opportunities. It simply provides some relief to the weaker sections of the society under certain situations. The above measures, if honestly implemented, are likely to help a sizeable section of the rural population to rise above the poverty line in India. A study of nine states of India conducted by the World Bank and completed in 1995 reveals that despite leakages in the operation of various poverty alleviation programmes many poor have been able to move above the poverty line.

#### **Conclusion**

This paper rural development has traditionally centered on the exploitation of land-intensive natural resources such as agriculture and forestry. However, changes in global production networks and increased urbanization have changed the character of rural areas. Increasingly tourism, niche manufacturers, and recreation have replaced resource extraction and agriculture as dominant economic drivers. The need for rural communities to approach development from a wider perspective has created more focus on a broad range of development goals rather than merely creating incentive for agricultural or resource based businesses.

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