

## Development, Environment and Rural Poverty

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### ABSTRACT

The causes of rural poverty are complex and multidimensional. They involve, among other things, culture, climate, gender, markets, and public policy. Likewise, the rural poor are quite diverse both in the problems they face and the possible solutions to these problems. This pamphlet examines how rural poverty develops, what accounts for its persistence, and what specific measures can be taken to eliminate or reduce it.

Broad economic stability, competitive markets, and public investment in physical and social infrastructure are widely recognized as important requirements for achieving sustained economic growth and a reduction in rural poverty. In addition, because the rural poor's links to the economy vary considerably, public policy should focus on issues such as their access to land and credit, education and health care, support services, and entitlements to food through well-designed public works programs and other transfer mechanisms.

Poverty and environment are closely interrelated. Whilst people living in poverty are seldom the principal creators of environmental damage, they often bear the brunt of environmental damage and are often caught in a downward spiral, whereby the poor are forced to deplete resources to survive, and this degradation of the environment further impoverishes people. When this self-reinforcing downward spiral becomes extreme, people are forced to move in increasing numbers to marginal and ecologically fragile lands or to cities.

### INTRODUCTION

About one-fifth of the world's population is afflicted by poverty—these people live on less than \$1 a day. Poverty is not only a state of existence but also a process with many dimensions and complexities. Poverty can be persistent (chronic) or transient, but transient poverty, if acute, can trap succeeding generations. The poor adopt all kinds of strategies to mitigate and cope with their poverty.[1,2]

To understand poverty, it is essential to examine the economic and social context, including institutions of the state, markets, communities, and households. Poverty differences cut across gender, ethnicity, age, location (rural versus urban), and income source. In households, children and women often suffer more than men. In the community, minority ethnic or religious groups suffer more than majority groups, and the rural poor more than the urban poor; among the rural poor, landless wage workers suffer more than small landowners or tenants. These differences

among the poor reflect highly complex interactions of cultures, markets, and public policies.

Rural poverty accounts for nearly 63 percent of poverty worldwide, reaching 90 percent in some countries like Bangladesh and between 65 and 90 percent in sub-Saharan Africa. (Exceptions to this pattern are several Latin American countries in which poverty is concentrated in urban areas.) In almost all countries, the conditions—in terms of personal consumption and access to education, health care, potable water and sanitation, housing, transport, and communications—faced by the rural poor are far worse than those faced by the urban poor. Persistently high levels of rural poverty, with or without overall economic growth, have contributed to rapid population growth and migration to urban areas. In fact, much urban poverty is created by the rural poor's efforts to get out of poverty by moving to cities. Distorted government policies, such as penalizing the

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agriculture sector and neglecting rural (social and physical) infrastructure, have been major contributors to both rural and urban poverty. The links between poverty, economic growth, and income distribution have been studied quite extensively in recent literature on economic development. Absolute poverty can be alleviated if at least two conditions are met:

- economic growth must occur—or mean income must rise—on a sustained basis; and
- economic growth must be neutral with respect to income distribution or reduce income inequality.[3,4]

Generally, poverty cannot be reduced if economic growth does not occur. In fact, the persistent poverty of a substantial portion of the population can dampen the prospects for economic growth. Also, the initial distribution of income (and wealth) can greatly affect the prospects for growth and alleviation of mass poverty. Substantial evidence suggests that a highly unequal distribution of income is not conducive to either economic growth or poverty reduction. Experience has shown that if countries put in place incentive structures and complementary investments to ensure that better health and education lead to higher incomes, the poor will benefit doubly through increased current consumption and higher future incomes.

The pattern and stability of economic growth also matter. On the one hand, traditional capital-intensive, import-substituting, and urban-biased growth—induced by government policies on pricing, trade, and public expenditure—has generally not helped alleviate poverty. On the other hand, agricultural growth—where there is a low concentration of land ownership and labor-intensive technologies are used—has almost always helped reduce poverty. Finally, sharp drops in economic growth—resulting from shocks and economic adjustments—may increase the incidence of poverty. Even when growth resumes, the incidence of poverty may not improve if inequality has been worsened by the crisis.

The rural poor depend largely on agriculture, fishing, forestry, and related small-scale industries and services. To understand how poverty affects these individuals and households, and to delineate the policy options for poverty reduction, we first need to know who the rural poor are.[5,6]

The rural poor are not a homogeneous group. One important way to classify the rural poor is according to their access to agricultural land: cultivators have access to land as small landowners and tenants, and noncultivators are landless, unskilled workers. There is, however, much functional overlap between these

groups, reflecting the poverty-mitigating strategies of the poor in response to changes in the economy and society.

**Cultivators**, who form the bulk of the rural poor in developing countries, are directly engaged in producing and managing crops and livestock. Since these households cannot sustain themselves on the small parcels of land they own or cultivate, they provide labor to others for both farm and nonfarm activities inside and outside their villages. Some members of these households migrate to towns or cities on either a rotational or a long-term basis. In many countries, both small landowners and tenants are under increasing pressure to get out of the agriculture sector altogether. Underlying this process of "depeasantization" are market forces and policies affecting landholdings, rents, prices, credit, inputs, and public investment in social and physical infrastructure.

**Noncultivators** are perhaps the poorest among the rural poor. Their numbers have been rising rapidly because of the natural increase in population and depeasantization. These workers depend on seasonal demand for labor in agriculture and in rural informal, small-scale industries and services. The landless rural workers are vulnerable to fluctuations in the demand for labor, wage rates, and food prices. They find it even more difficult than small landowners and tenants to gain access to public infrastructure and services. In addition, unlike their counterparts in urban areas, they are often excluded from public sector safety nets (food rations, for example).

**Rural women** tend to suffer far more than rural men. Their poverty and low social status in most societies is a major contributor to chronic poverty. Substantial evidence from many countries shows that focusing on the needs and empowerment of women is one of the keys to human development.[7,8]

Environmental degradation due to pervasive poverty is a matter of great concern in both rural and urban areas in the Asian and Pacific Region. The interaction of poverty and environmental degradation sets off a downward spiral of ecological deterioration that threatens the physical security, economical well being and health of many of the region's poorest people [9,10] For example, in the Loess Plateau of People's Republic of China in the 1960s and 1970s the drive to produce more food for the burgeoning population exacerbated land degradation and led to a decline in agricultural productivity and income. By the mid-1980s, more than 5 million people on the plateau's rainfed upland were surviving on incomes of less than \$US50 a year. However, consistent government efforts at environmental improvement combining

erosion control with improved crop and animal raising practices reduced soil erosion and increased rural incomes. Despite a decrease in the area under cultivation, the improved management of terraces and flatlands has helped to increase total per capita grain production by 30 per cent. Local solutions on environmental adjustments have also been devised in the Rajasthan Desert of India. It is often the case that people and countries make an explicit trade off, accepting long-term environmental degradation to meet their immediate needs. In many marginal, rural areas growing populations inevitably lead to daily degradation of the environment for subsistence, depleting not only the current environment but also future availability. [11,12] Long-term sustainability of resource use in degraded areas with high populations is an urgent issue that governments of developing countries and international donors have to address through the promotion of appropriate policy instruments

### Discussion

To understand poverty creation in rural areas and its effects on different groups, we need to look at the assets that the poor own or to which they have access, and their links to the economy. The economic conditions faced by the rural poor are affected by a variety of assets (and the returns on them) held at the household, community, and supra-community levels. The poor's physical assets include natural capital (private and common property rights in land, pastures, forest, and water), machines and tools and structures, stocks of domestic animals and food, and financial capital (jewelry, insurance, savings, and access to credit).

Their human assets are the labor pools—comprising workers of varying ages, genders, skills, and health—in the households and communities. Their infrastructural assets are publicly and privately provided transport and communications, access to schools and health centers, storage, potable water, and sanitation. Their institutional assets include their legally protected rights and freedoms and the extent of their participation in decision making in households and communities, as well as at the supra-community level. The first two categories of assets are largely regulated through formal and informal networks among individuals and communities. Most rural people, particularly women and those in landless households, are greatly handicapped by inadequate assets and the low and volatile returns on them. [13,14]

The differences among the rural poor are more clearly reflected in their links to the economy, which determine how they use their assets and participate in

production. All of the rural poor are engaged in the production of both tradable and nontradable goods and services. Artisans and unskilled workers provide many nontradable services and some nontradable products (such as staple foods) that small cultivators also produce. Only cultivators, however, have access to small parcels of land through ownership or (sharecropping) tenancy. They are also the only groups of poor people who own or rent physical capital such as tools, implements, and machinery. Artisans and small-scale farmers have only limited amounts of physical capital. They have only limited access to financial capital and acquire it largely through informal agents or institutions, except for tenants, who can use their landlords as conduits to formal credit. Borrowed capital is often costly and is used to maintain consumption during hard times or to buy supplies and equipment needed for farming. Households' labor is used both within the family—for work done by unpaid family members—and to earn the wages paid to landless, unskilled workers in farm and nonfarm activities.

All groups of the rural poor are vulnerable to serious risk owing to changes in weather, health, markets, investment, and public policy. The resulting fluctuations in the prices and quantities of their assets and of what they produce can either deepen their poverty or give them opportunities to escape from it. The main reason is that the rural poor have a very low capacity to absorb abrupt financial shocks. In addition, economic crises and natural disasters can bring about sharp increases in poverty and make it more difficult for the poor to escape it. [15,16]

Numerous characteristics of a country's economy and society, as well as some external influences, create and perpetuate rural poverty:

- political instability and civil strife;
- systemic discrimination on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or caste;
- ill-defined property rights or unfair enforcement of rights to agricultural land and other natural resources;
- high concentration of land ownership and asymmetrical tenancy arrangements;
- corrupt politicians and rent-seeking public bureaucracies;
- economic policies that discriminate against or exclude the rural poor from the development process and accentuate the effects of other poverty-creating processes;
- large and rapidly growing families with high dependency ratios;

- market imperfections owing to high concentration of land and other assets and distortionary public policies; and
- external shocks owing to changes in the state of nature (for example, climatic changes) and conditions in the international economy.[17,18]

Biases in national economic and social policies can contribute to rural poverty by excluding the rural poor from the benefits of development and accentuating the effects of other poverty-creating processes. Policy biases that generally work against the rural poor include:

- urban bias in public investment for infrastructure and provision of safety nets;
- implicit taxation of agricultural products through so-called support prices and an overvalued exchange rate;
- direct taxation of agricultural exports and import subsidies;
- subsidies for capital-intensive technologies;
- favoring export crops over food crops; and
- bias in favor of large landowners and commercial producers with respect to rights of land ownership and tenancy, publicly provided extension services, and access to (subsidized) credit.

These policies can have both short- and long-term effects on the rural poor. The effects are particularly significant in the context of the structural adjustment programs that many developing countries have undertaken to restore macroeconomic stability and expand the capacity of the economy to increase production, employment, and incomes.[19,20]

The WHO has called poverty the world's biggest killer (WHO 1995). Although efforts to reduce poverty and increase disposable income levels continue, the key to identifying new strategies for achieving these objectives lies in an understanding of how poverty affects both the environment and human health. Environmental health problems emanate from a lack of access to essential environmental resources, primarily sufficient and clean water, enough food, appropriate shelter and fuel and healthy air. At least one in four of the region's population has no access to safe drinking water, and one in two has no access to sanitation (see Chapter 14). Public expenditure on water and sanitation is relatively low at only one per cent of the GDP for most countries. Unsafe water and poor sanitation in developing countries is responsible for a large percentage of diseases and a significant proportion of mortality. In Jakarta, Indonesia alone, the economic cost of impaired health from unsafe

drinking water is estimated at US\$300 million a year. Most infectious diseases are "environmental" in origin, as specific environmental conditions increase the biological organisms' ability to thrive or spread. Even diseases such as acute respiratory infections are linked with poor conditions within the household environment, including overcrowding, poor sanitation and indoor air pollution. Since 1998, the Andhra Pradesh government (with donor assistance) has been assessing the overall burden of ill-health associated with lack of water and sanitation infrastructure, and outlining a cost effective strategy for reversing this situation. The burden of disease has been reduced by 17 per cent through the provision of clean water from taps inside the house, private latrines and reducing indoor air pollution through clean cooking fuel.[21,22]

### Results

To design policies that have a chance of effectively helping the rural poor, the focus of policy should be on four major groups:

- **small landowners** who cultivate their land;
- **landless tenants** who cultivate other people's land;
- **landless laborers** who depend on casual or long-term employment in the farm or nonfarm sectors; and
- **women**, who could also be part of any of the three preceding groups.

All of these groups will benefit from good macroeconomic management—which helps keep inflation in check and maintains unsubsidized prices—because it facilitates sustained economic growth through private investment and competitive markets. Needless to say, unfair laws or poor enforcement of existing laws, exclusion of the poor from decision making, and pervasive corruption in the public sector are no less detrimental to the well-being of the poor than they are to the country's overall economic growth.[23,24]

Achieving agricultural growth by applying new technologies is one of the most important ways to reduce rural poverty. The impact of such efforts on the rural poor, however, depends on initial conditions, the structure of relevant institutions, and incentives. Research shows that agricultural stagnation has harmed the rural poor in sub-Saharan Africa by creating food shortages and higher prices that have reduced their ability to buy food and find work. Conversely, experience with the Green Revolution showed that rapid agricultural progress made a big difference in reducing rural poverty in parts of South Asia. Researchers have found that higher crop yields

reduce both the number of rural poor and the severity of rural poverty. But these effects are strong only if certain conditions are met:

- land and capital markets are not distorted by a high concentration of ownership of natural resources (agricultural land), including unfair tenancy contracts, and repression in the capital markets (with restricted access to finance);
- public policy on pricing, taxes, and the exchange rate does not penalize agriculture and encourage or subsidize labor displacement;
- public investment in basic education and health care is high and used effectively; farmer literacy and good health have great influence on farm productivity;
- public sector support for agricultural research is strong and resulting improvements are made available to small farmers is effective;
- physical capital, like irrigation systems, access roads, is adequately maintained;
- safety nets and social assistance are available for the very poor, particularly the landless (casual) workers and rural women, in the form of public works programs, microfinance, and food subsidies; and
- the rural poor are directly involved in the identification, design, and implementation of programs to ensure effective use of resources and equitable distribution of benefits.

Since the rural poor are a varied group, we need to understand how macroeconomic changes and policies can affect them. The three major ways in which policies affect the rural poor are through markets, infrastructure (including public services), and transfers.[25,26]

The **markets** in which the rural poor participate are those for products, inputs (labor and nonlabor), and finance (from formal and informal sources). Several important features of these markets can affect conditions in rural areas.

The **infrastructure** that directly affects the rural sector's productivity and the rural poor's quality of life includes the economic (transport, communications, extension services, and irrigation) and the social (education, health care, water, and sanitation). Given that most elements of a country's infrastructure are provided through public funding, the level of spending, cost effectiveness, quality of service, and access of the rural poor to infrastructure and public services have important effects on human capital and productivity in rural areas.

**Transfers**, which are both private and public, provide some insurance against anticipated and unanticipated economic shocks. Most of the rural poor depend on private transfers among households, extended families, and other kinship groups. Public transfers can take the form of redistribution of such assets as land, employment on public works projects, and targeted subsidies for inputs and some consumer products. These transfers supplement or displace private transfers, depending on the policy instrument and how it is used. But these channels—markets, infrastructure, and transfers—do not work in the same way for all of the rural poor because each group has quite different links to the economy.

So, what are the key elements when crafting a policy to reduce rural poverty?

Competitive markets, macroeconomic stability, and public investment in the physical and social infrastructure are widely recognized as important requirements for sustained economic growth and reduced poverty. In addition, the first requirement of a strategy to reduce rural poverty is to provide the enabling environment and resources for those in the rural sector who are engaged in the agricultural production and distribution system.

Other policy components for national strategies— involving the government, the private (for-profit) sector, and civil society—to reduce rural poverty can include:

- **Information gathering.** The rural poor face many different problems and are not a homogeneous group. Therefore, a sustained effort must be made to gather information about the particular problems they face so that they can be adequately addressed.
- **Focus on building assets.** The government should assess what assets the poor need most to help them earn more. This could be agricultural land or other resources, access to credit, or improvements in health and education. Dependence on raw labor, without a focus on building other assets, is the single most important source of persistent poverty.
- **The right to adequate land and water.** A broad-based land reform program—including land titling, land redistribution, and fair and enforceable tenancy contracts—is critical for reducing rural poverty. It can make small (marginal) landowners and tenants more efficient producers and raise their standards of living.
- **Basic health care and literacy.** The rural poor need to build and strengthen their human capital

so they can get out of poverty and contribute more to the economy and society. Basic health care (immunization, provision of clean water, and family planning) and education (literacy, schooling, and technical training)—particularly for women and children—are essential building blocks and should be accessible at reasonable cost.

- **Local involvement.** The infrastructure and services associated with health and education can be funded and maintained best if the target groups are involved in making decisions about the design, implementation, monitoring, and accountability.
- **Providing infrastructure.** The rural poor cannot make the best use of their resources, including human capital, if either the quantity or the quality of some of the key parts of the country's physical infrastructure (irrigation, transport, and communications) and support services (research and extension) is inadequate. The social and physical infrastructure and services can be funded and maintained best—that is, they will be cost-effective and of reasonable quality—if the target groups are involved in designing, implementing, and monitoring them, as well as in ensuring accountability of the government officials responsible for them.
- **Targeted credit.** Informal and formal sources of credit often are too costly for, or unavailable to, the rural poor. Targeted public sector rural credit programs, especially if they are subsidized, benefit the nonpoor far more than the poor. The poor want credit that is available on acceptable terms and when they need it. Recent experiments with community-based credit programs, in which the poor actively participate in the making of lending decisions that are subject to peer accountability, have been successful in reaching target groups at reasonable cost.
- **Public works.** A large and increasing proportion of the rural poor depends on wage labor, because they have either no asset other than raw labor or very few assets: limited quantities of land and domestic animals. A flexible public works program can greatly help the near landless and the landless smooth out household consumption and avoid transient poverty. If it is used on a sustained basis, it can also strengthen the bargaining power of the poor in rural areas.
- **Decentralized food programs.** Some of the rural poor, both individuals and households, suffer from inadequate nutrition most of the time. They

need different kinds of support, depending on their circumstances. These may include food supplement programs; food assistance provided through schools, health care clinics, and community centers; and cash transfers. Decentralized and targeted programs seem to work best.[27]

The health effects of environmental degradation in selected Asian countries and their related costs are shown in Table 9.5. These costs indicate the scale of the problem and the need for action, particularly in the cities of the region where lead levels are a serious health hazard. According to the World Bank, three types of activities are important in improving the status of environmental health: enhancement in knowledge of environmental health problems; development of appropriate response procedures and integrating critical environmental health issues in the operations of the relevant sectors

### Conclusions

The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is at the centre of sustainable development. Sustainable rural development is vital to the economic, social and environmental viability of nations. It is essential for poverty eradication since global poverty is overwhelmingly rural. The manifestation of poverty goes beyond the urban-rural divide, it has subregional and regional contexts. It is therefore critical, and there is great value to be gained, by coordinating rural development initiatives that contribute to sustainable livelihoods through efforts at the global, regional, national and local levels, as appropriate. Strategies to deal with rural development should take into consideration the remoteness and potentials in rural areas and provide targeted differentiated approaches. A healthy and dynamic agricultural sector is an important foundation of rural development, 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. Close economic integration of rural areas with neighbouring urban areas and the creation of rural off-farm employment can narrow rural-urban disparities, expand opportunities and encourage the retention of skilled people, including youth, in rural areas. There is considerable potential for rural job creation not only in farming, agro processing and rural industry but also in building rural infrastructure, in the sustainable

management of natural resources, waste and residues. Rural communities in developing countries are still faced with challenges related to access to basic services, economic opportunities and some degree of incoherence with regard to planning related to rural-urban divide. Investments in environmental protection, rural infrastructure and in rural health and education are critical to sustainable rural development and can enhance national well-being. Beyond meeting basic needs, investments must be linked to the potential to raise productivity and income. The vulnerabilities of the rural poor to the economic and financial crisis and to climate change and water shortage must be addressed. The success of sustainable rural development depends on, inter alia, developing and implementing comprehensive strategies for dealing with climate change, drought, desertification and natural disaster.[26,27]

Related actions include:

- A. Promoting poverty eradication in rural areas;
- B. Promoting pro-poor planning and budgeting at the national and local levels;
- C. Addressing basic needs and enhancing provision of and access to services as a precursor to improve livelihoods and as an enabling factor of people's engagement in productive activities;
- D. Providing social protection programmes to benefit, inter alia, the vulnerable households, in particular the aged, persons with disabilities and unemployed many of whom are in rural areas.

Actions are needed to:

- A. Build social capital and resilience in rural communities. In that context:
  1. Empower women and small-scale farmers, and indigenous peoples, including through securing equitable land tenure supported by appropriate legal frameworks;
  2. Promote equitable access to land, water, financial resources and technologies by women, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups;
  3. Support and promote efforts to harmonize modern technologies with traditional and indigenous knowledge for sustainable rural development;
  4. Provide access to credit and other mechanisms as well as resources for farm-based activities, especially for small-scale farmers, including women in particular, in developing countries to better manage the various risks they face, including price, weather, climate, water shortages, land degradation and natural disasters, including by providing aid and promoting the development of agricultural insurance markets;

5. Protect and ensure sustainable use of traditional knowledge, including indigenous knowledge in accordance with article 8 (j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity, for the management of natural resources to address the challenges of sustainable development;
  6. Facilitate the active participation of vulnerable groups, including women, youth and indigenous peoples and rural communities, in the elaboration of local and national planning of rural development, taking into account national legislation;
  7. Build the resilience of rural communities to cope with and recover from natural disasters;
  8. Promote and scale up labour-intensive recovery activities in addition to capital-intensive programmes;
  9. Support training and capacity-building of rural communities to effectively implement adaptation programmes to climate change at the local level;
  10. Invest resources to enhance research aimed at adapting to the challenges of climate change;
  11. Foster and strengthen capacities of rural communities for self-organization for building social capital, taking into account national legislation;
- B. Strengthen the human capacities of rural people. In that context:
1. Strengthen rural health-care facilities and capacities, train and increase the number of health and nutrition professionals and sustain and expand access to primary health-care systems, including through promoting equitable and improved access to affordable and efficient health-care services, including provision of basic health-care services for the poor in rural areas, in particular in Africa, for effective disease prevention and treatment;
  2. Create and develop educational programmes for rural communities aimed at disease prevention;
  3. Eliminate old and new forms of illiteracy in rural communities and ensure provision of primary education and access to secondary and tertiary educational opportunities as well as vocational and entrepreneurship training including proactive and market-related elements to build capacities within rural communities, in particular for youth, young girls, women and indigenous people;
  4. Encourage rural communities' participation in decision-making, promote rural communities' empowerment and rural leadership;

5. Improve access by rural people and communities to information, education, extension services and learning resources, knowledge and training to support sustainable development planning and decision-making;
- C. Invest in essential infrastructure and services for rural communities. In that context:
1. Increase public and private investments in infrastructure in rural areas, including roads, waterways and transport systems, storage and market facilities, livestock facilities, irrigation systems, affordable housing, water supply and sanitation services, electrification facilities, and information and communications networks;
  2. Improve access to reliable and affordable energy services, including renewable and alternative sources of energy for sustainable rural development;
  3. Enhance access of rural populations to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation;
  4. Develop and improve access of rural populations to information and communications technologies, inter alia, to support Internet access and build capacities for an effective use of these technologies;
  5. Develop rural public and private services that realize the potential of those technologies, including cellular banking and e extension services;
  6. Promote the development of rural organizations such as community-driven cooperatives to enhance investment in essential infrastructure and services, and recognize the role of urban areas in fostering rural development;
  7. Support improved access for all to strengthened rural health-care services and facilities;
- D. Stimulate the creation of new jobs and income opportunities in rural areas. In that context:
1. Support rural diversification, including on-farm diversification towards non-agricultural and other non-primary production activities;
  2. Provide appropriate land-use frameworks in order to support the establishment of agricultural activities and both agricultural and non-agricultural services related to sustainable rural development, while respecting the rights of rural communities and indigenous people;
  3. Provide entrepreneurial training, credit and other support to off-farm and other non-primary production activities;
4. Strengthen the links between agriculture and other sectors of the rural economy;
  5. Develop sustainable ways to add value to agricultural products locally, subregionally and regionally to generate additional income;
  6. Support the development, transfer and use of safe and environmentally sound construction technologies and practices, in particular for housing, to improve living standards and to create employment in rural areas;
  7. Support as appropriate, sustainable tourism as a valuable source of employment and income supplement to farming and other primary production activities, as well as sustainable natural resource management;
  8. Actively promote sustainable forest management;
  9. Increase access of rural populations, particularly women, youth, indigenous people and other vulnerable groups, especially in disadvantaged areas, to markets as well as affordable financial and business advisory services, such as market literacy, microcredit, loan guarantees and venture capital;
  10. Expand access to markets by assisting rural producers, associations and firms, especially those from developing countries, to respond to market demand;
  11. Increase employment opportunities through labour-intensive approaches including green jobs and development of rural infrastructure, taking into account the decent work agenda of the International Labour Organization as an important instrument to achieve the objective of full and productive employment and decent work for all;
  12. Develop the necessary infrastructure and encourage data collection, including disaggregated population data, synthesis and analysis, to enhance the understanding of the contribution of non-farming activities to poverty reduction and income generation in rural areas;
  13. Support the development of integration into market of smallholder family agriculture and sharing of experiences and best practices;
  14. Promote non-agricultural industries such as mining, service industries, construction and commerce, in a sustainable manner, as a source of employment and income for rural populations;



E. Ensure environmental sustainability in rural areas.

In that context:

1. Encourage the use of land resources in a sustainable manner to prevent land degradation that is caused by unsustainable exploitation of land resources;
  2. Encourage the use of environmentally friendly practices;
  3. Promote sustainable natural resources use and management, including ecosystem conservation through community-based programmes;
  4. Promote safe and environmentally sound waste management practices;
- F. Promote women's empowerment and gender equality. In that context:
1. Involve women in decision-making in all activities related to rural development;
  2. Take measures that promote access to and ownership of means of production, including land, capital, entrepreneurship, by women;
  3. Promote gender equality as well as take measures to achieve equal opportunities for women and men in all aspects of rural development;
  4. Carry out extensive education, and awareness-raising on the rights of women and the concept of empowerment and gender equality in rural areas.[28]

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