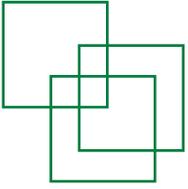




International
Labour
Organization



Reporting on Rural Issues

A Media Guide



Rosalind Yarde, Loretta de Luca,
Vittorio Longhi, Léa Breton, Paola Victoria

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Foreword

About half of the world's population live in rural areas. They are home to 70 per cent of the world's poor, and also to some of the most pressing issues of the day, both globally and nationally. From food security, poverty reduction, climate change and migration, to youth employment, child labour and indigenous rights, "rural" is headline news.

Rural areas are also fertile ground for a wealth of untold stories and unheard voices that, if captured, have the potential to engage readers, listeners and audiences in issues that concern them and which relate to their daily lives: technology, innovation, economic growth and entrepreneurship. For the journalist looking for fresh content, new ideas and exclusive stories to investigate, rural communities are the places to be.

Yet there is a widespread mistaken belief that rural equals "backwardness".

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is devoted to promoting social justice through its mission to stimulate job creation and improve working conditions for people around the world, including job-related security and better living standards.

Recognizing the potential of rural economies and communities to make real and long-lasting positive change in our world, the ILO has been working on rural issues since 1921, to make that change happen through numerous programmes, initiatives and partnerships.

As part of that mission, we believe it is essential to communicate the complex and fascinating reality of the rural economy. However, to do that, it is important to break the predominant negative stereotype about rural communities being passive backwaters where few things of interest happen.

Media have always played a determinant role in society. Good journalists are often the first to raise awareness about change, innovation and opportunities. They are constantly seeking new ideas to enrich their reporting content and new and important issues to investigate.

This guide is an opportunity to learn more about rural communities and issues. It shows how reporting on rural can increase the quantity, quality and originality of a journalist's work, while engaging with new audiences. It aims to shatter some dominant stereotypes and negative clichés when covering rural issues so that the result will be more accurate, engaging stories. In sum, this guide is a tool for people working in the media to think differently and report differently about rural areas.



Marcia Poole
Director

ILO Department of Communication
and Public Information



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Rural Employment and Decent
Work Programme (2009-2013)



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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Why a media guide?.....	1
What's inside?.....	1
How to use the guide?	1
Breaking stereotypes!	2
Activity No. 1: Introductory exercise	3
So what's the message on rural?	4
Activity No. 2: Breaking stereotypes	5
Activity No. 3: Changing language	5
Activity No. 4: Changing the focus	6
Facts and figures about the rural economy	7
Activity No. 5: Producing good articles.....	7
The human interest angle	9
Activity No. 6: The human interest angle	11
Where can you find good rural stories?	12
Activity No. 7: Sources (part 1).....	12
Activity No. 8: Sources (part 2).....	13
Activity No. 9: Press conference	13
Finding a strong story angle	14
Activity No. 10: What's the story?.....	14
Different ways to cover stories	17
Mainstreaming rural	18
Activity No. 11: Mainstreaming rural.....	18
Using different media platforms	19
Activity No. 12: A finished product.....	19
Annex 1	20
Annex 2	21
Annex 3	22
My contacts.....	24
My notes.....	30



Introduction

Why a media guide?

This guide is for editors, reporters, media trainers and professionals who want to widen the scope of the issues they cover and the quality of the stories they write and broadcast about the rural economy. Its purpose is to help them uncover a range of strong story ideas and new perspectives on rural issues and present them in an accurate and balanced way.

What's inside?

Inside you will find key facts and figures about rural; tips on new and different ways to cover rural areas; examples of stories and people; tips on how to access new sources and on good journalistic practice; and practical exercises and discussion topics.



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How to use the guide?

This guide can be used:

- a) As a framework for teaching by in-house and external media trainers running courses or workshops focussing on reporting rural issues. The exercises should be tailored to reflect specific geographical and news' contexts, as well as participants' needs. Aspects of the guide may also be used by trainers in more general media training workshops.
- b) As a self-learning tool aimed at editors and journalists who want to improve the quality of their journalism. It is designed so they can work through the manual on their own. It includes a list of further resources to deepen their knowledge about rural issues.
- c) As a handy newsroom reference tool for editors, sub-editors and reporters.
- d) As a reference guide for press officers in governmental and non-governmental organizations and international agencies working on rural issues and in rural communities, or in development topics in general.



Breaking stereotypes!

“We are going to give renewed attention to decent work in the rural economy... We must rediscover it as an axis of balanced and sustainable development and we will do so.”¹

Guy Ryder (Director-General, International Labour Organization, ILO)



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“There is a tendency to look directly and only at urban. But if you take advantage of what rural has to offer ... then you’ll maximize the potential for both your urban and rural areas ... Policy makers and also people have to change their mind-set about rural...”²

Betty-Ann Bryce (Administrator, Rural Development Unit, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD)

“[...] RECOGNIZING that empowerment and active participation of rural population, particularly of the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, plays a critical role in rural development [we] are committed towards eradicating poverty, with particular emphasis on promoting the development of progressive, prosperous, and self-reliant rural communities.”³

Ministers on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN)

“Why the big focus on rural transformation in Africa? ... The rural world is where 75 per cent of Africa’s peoples live. Its economy is fundamental to the well-being of rural and urban populations alike, to the prospects for national development, and to global sustainability...”⁴

Ibrahim Assane Mayaki (Chief Executive, New Partnership for Africa’s Development, NEPAD)

“There is a tendency to think about agriculture and rural areas as something in decline, pre-modern, where there is no development opportunity.... [but] rural areas are recipients of great new opportunities for agribusiness, recreation, cultural tourism, etc. ... there is a great window of opportunity for innovation, and the new concept of “rural” is increasingly becoming an important source of development for Latin America.”⁵

Claudia Serrano (Director, Latin American Centre for Rural Development, Centro Latinoamericano para el Desarrollo Rural, RIMISP)

¹ Guy Ryder, keynote address to the 8th Meeting of Caribbean Ministries of Labour, 2 July 2013 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/p3sn6e9>).

² Betty-Ann Bryce, interview, Bologna, Italy, 25 October 2013 (available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZjEdokcMRk>).

³ ASEAN: Ministerial Understanding on Cooperation in Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/pzsglhf>).

⁴ NEPAD: *The rural future programme. Rural transformation across the African continent*. Johannesburg, October 2010 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/oxl5989>).

⁵ Claudia Serrano, interview, Bologna, Italy, 25 October 2013 (available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8dc5c-eeCg>).



Breaking stereotypes!

“A worrying trend is that media coverage is restricted to urban areas with little or no coverage of rural areas and their issues. This has the effect of leaving people in the rural areas out of the development matrix as their issues get no or limited attention by relevant stakeholders.”⁶

Edward Musumbu (Member of Parliament, Zimbabwe)



Activity No. 1: Introductory exercise

When thinking about rural areas and rural people, what are the key words/expressions/topics that come to your mind? Write them down, and then share them orally with the group. Can you explain why you have these images and beliefs?

Topics

Expressions and key words

Rural telecentres in Rwanda



© AALDI Editor

Paul Barera is the founder of a network of rural telecentres in Rwanda, which provide not only basic IT services but are also delivery hubs where individuals, companies and government can advertise, sell, buy and exchange products and services from e-training to banking, insurance, taxation, healthcare, electricity and information. His vision is to set up 1,000 telecentres in Rwanda by 2015, in partnership with governments, creating hundreds of jobs for young people. (Check out his blog on www.barerapaul.blogspot.com, and ILO's feature on this initiative: [here](http://tinyurl.com/qe84fy8))⁷

There are many dynamic entrepreneurs like Paul Barera living and working in rural communities around the world. Yet, due to the scant attention given to rural areas, their voices are often not heard.

Simplifications and negative stereotypes prevail, with the focus largely on issues such as poverty, survival-type activities rural youth migrating to cities and low productivity. Although it is important to report on issues like these, there are also other stories that challenge the traditional negative rural stereotypes.

⁶ Nyamukondiwa, W. Zimbabwe, speech at the 2012 World Press Freedom Day. May, 7, 2012 (available at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201205070850.html>).

⁷ ILO: “The Nyamata Telecentre and the Rwanda Telecentre Network (RTN), Rwanda”, in *Learning from Catalysts of Rural Transformation*, Chapter 5, Geneva, 2013, pp. 77-104 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/qe84fy8>).



So what's the message on rural?

- *Rural areas are not only about agriculture* – Although agriculture represents a great share of activities in rural areas, there is growing diversity in terms of economic sectors, assets, people and the work they do.
- *Rural areas are not simply suppliers of raw materials and labour for the urban “engine”* – They can be sources of innovation and economic growth. Many diverse economic and social activities are taking place in rural areas, from high-quality agribusiness and tourism to distribution, light manufacturing, local energy production, environmental care, and arts and crafts.
- *Rural areas are not “backward”, “poor” and “unproductive”* – More and more alternative development initiatives for bio- and advanced agriculture and agribusiness techniques, eco- and cultural tourism, recreation, eco-health services, ICTs (Information and communication technologies) are opening windows of opportunity for innovation, high returns, well-being and sustainable growth.
- *Rural areas are not an island* – What happens in rural areas can have a wider impact nationally and internationally on issues such as food security, environmental protection, economic growth, youth employment and women's empowerment. Additionally, improved communications are helping rural areas connect with the rest of the world, establish partnerships and contribute to some major economic, social and political trends.
- *Rural people are drivers of change and innovation and can be good sources of information* – People are not merely passive recipients of external aid: they can be successful, valuable entrepreneurs.
- *Today, rural is “news”: rural areas host innovative projects that can generate good media stories* – It is time for media to focus on rural contexts and to weave rural angles into mainstream topics such as the economy, employment, environment, technology, communication, politics, human rights, business, health, gender issues and ethnic groups.

Key definitions

What are ... rural areas?

There is no standard definition of “rural areas”, but they are often defined as localities with a population of less than 2,000 inhabitants, often sparsely populated. Other criteria may be used, such as the percentage of the economically active population employed in agriculture, the general availability of electricity and/or piped water in living quarters, and the ease of access to medical care, schools and recreation facilities.

Source: Adapted from: ILO: *Report IV, 97th Session of the International Labour Conference*, 2008, p. 20. The ILO is currently refining this definition.

What is ... Decent work?

Decent work is about people's aspirations in their working lives, having opportunities for work that is productive and provides a fair income, safe working conditions, social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration. Decent work is also about people being free to express their concerns, organize and take part in the decisions that affect their lives. It also means equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

Source: ILO: *Decent work FAQ: Making Decent work a global goal* (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ntdda2z>).



Activity No. 2: Breaking stereotypes

Get into groups and discuss these six points, according to your own region or country. Can you come up with examples that break stereotypes? Report back in plenary.

Rural centres of excellence in Benin



Godfrey Nzamujo, founder of Songhai's centres of rural excellence in Benin

Songhai centres are productive enterprises which run a variety of activities in farming, processing, handicrafts, marketing, energy production, irrigation, repair, recycling and other services, with strong emphasis on holistic approaches, self-reliance, research and training. "We dance our own dance.....do it right, create success and then people will join you and your ideas."

These centres are multiplying in Benin, and Africa-wide. (Check out this video on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bquoSTUSzU>, and ILO's feature on this initiative: [here](#))⁸



Activity No. 3: Changing language

What words do you use when covering rural issues? Take the list below and think of more positive language:

What words can give a negative connotation?	Positive language to refer to rural people
Peasants	
Recipients	
Beneficiaries	
Subsidies	

Stereotypes are created and perpetuated not only through the written word. In fact images are often more powerful than words. They send strong and lasting messages to audiences in a way that the written or spoken word does not, often reinforcing stereotypes.

⁸ ILO: "Songhai, Benin", in *Learning from Catalysts of Rural Transformation*, Chapter 8, Geneva, 2013, pp. 169-200 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/og9fgry>).

(The following activity is targeted at photographers, camera crews, producers and sub-editors, but is equally valuable for reporters who work with them).



Activity No. 4: Changing the focus

In the western media, moving and still images about rural contexts and persons often portray them as victims, dependent on donor countries and agencies for survival.

Look at the pictures in Annex 1: *What messages are these pictures conveying to you?*

Top-down camera angles which force subjects to look up, create an impression of helplessness. The archetypal close-up of the crying child or the sad, breast-feeding mother reinforce a sense of hopelessness (as well as not being very original).

Analyse how the camera is creating the stereotypes you see in this selection of images.

When covering rural issues, think about how to use images to break the stereotypes.

Now look at the pictures in Annex 2: *What is the difference here?*



Facts and figures about the rural economy

Taking time to find out more about the rural economy will uncover new and fresh stories.



Activity No. 5: Producing good articles

Using the facts outlined below, make notes on the kind of stories that could be generated from the information and discuss.

- More than 1 billion people worldwide belong to **cooperatives**, most of them in rural areas, where they play a major self-help role.⁹ They pool members' resources, giving them a voice, bargaining power and access to land, machinery, innovation, financial services and markets, as well as health care, education, potable water, sanitation, energy, housing and roads (more information available [here](#)).¹⁰
- **Employment-intensive rural infrastructure works** can generate up to five times more jobs than equipment-intensive methods. They are also cost effective, save on foreign currencies and help maintain the infrastructure (more information available [here](#)).¹¹
- Many **everyday goods**, from foodstuffs to cosmetics, medicines, clothing and furniture, can be tracked back to rural areas, where their raw materials are produced (more information available [here](#)).¹²
- **Global market trends and niche products** in, for instance, organic agriculture and fair trade, offer important opportunities to rural producers.¹³
- Over 70 per cent of adults in developing world rural areas lack access to **financial services**; but they are increasingly recognized as “bankable”, and ICTs are greatly facilitating rural financial services¹⁴ (more information available [here](#)).¹⁵



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⁹ International Co-operative Alliance (ICA): Statistical Information on the Co-Operative Movement, 2013 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/q3tvare>).

¹⁰ ILO: *Cooperatives for people-centred rural development*, Policy Briefs, Geneva, 2011 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/otvk9vs>).

¹¹ ILO: *Employment-Intensive Investments, providing infrastructure, jobs and income*, Policy Briefs, Geneva, 2011 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/qcp5bbz>).

¹² ILO: *Value chains for rural development*, Policy Briefs, Geneva, 2011 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/okaoonf>).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ CGAP (Consultative Group to Assist the Poor): Financial Access Data, 2013.

¹⁵ ILO: *Empowering rural communities through financial inclusion*, Policy Briefs, Geneva, 2011 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/pufcba5>).



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■ Rural areas host the three most **dangerous employment sectors**: agriculture, mining, and construction. Workers in agriculture run twice the risk of dying on-the-job, compared with other sectors and represent half of the 321,000 fatal workplace accidents worldwide¹⁶ (more information available [here](#)).¹⁷

■ Some 60 **International Labour Conventions and Recommendations** explicitly

cover rural workers. But national laws or their

implementation leave many of them unprotected (more information available [here](#)).¹⁸

■ **Unionization** barely reaches 10% of employees in rural areas; rural workers' organizations are often weak and fragmented (more information available [here](#)).¹⁹

■ Rural workers face large **gaps in labour protection**, from lack of freedom of association and forced labour, to child labour and discrimination, to rights relating to employment security, wages, working time, occupational safety and health, and social security (more information available [here](#)).²⁰

■ Less than 20% of agricultural workers have basic **social protection** (more information available [here](#)).²¹



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¹⁶ ILO: *Introductory Report: Global Trends and Challenges on Occupational Safety and Health*, IXI World Congress on Safety and Health at Work, Istanbul, Turkey, 11-15 September 2011.

¹⁷ ILO: *Promoting rural Development through Occupational Safety and Health*, Policy Briefs, Geneva, 2013 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/q35155b>).

¹⁸ ILO: *Empowering rural workers, employers and communities through International Labour Standards*, Policy Briefs, Geneva, 2012 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/pl78o9e>).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.1.

²¹ ILO: *Food security through decent work*, Policy Briefs, Geneva, 2011 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/o55bsmd>).



The human interest angle

Good journalism is about people, and those living in rural communities are as diverse as in any urban setting. Rather than simply focussing on the problems they face, many are finding solutions. Include their voices to add extra dimensions to your stories.

- Nearly half of the world's population work and live in rural areas; yet rural opportunities, challenges and “voices” are rarely heard. Attention and investments concentrate on cities.
- Rural areas host 70 per cent of the world's very poor, with 1.4 billion people living on less than US\$1.25 a day.²²
- **Women** contribute substantially to economic activities and development. They produce about half of the world's food²³ and increasingly run their own enterprises.²⁴ However, many rural women are exposed to precarious jobs and/or low pay, and lack access to land, education, training or financial services. Their potential remains largely unrecognised and untapped. Initiatives are multiplying to address these challenges. The “Self Employed Women's Association” (SEWA) in India has been successfully organizing disadvantaged rural self-employed women, helping them set up and run cooperatives, rural producer groups, micro-finance and social security organizations - giving them skills and bargaining power (See ILO's feature on this initiative: [here](#)).²⁵

Social business enterprise in Cambodia



Chantha Nguon, Founder of Mekong Blue, Stung Treng, Cambodia.

Mekong Blue, a social business enterprise in the Cambodian rural province of Stung Treng, is crafting and exporting fine traditional silk products, while providing its 70 women and nine men workers with a high income, childcare centres, literacy and healthcare training. Chantha Nguon and her husband, Kim Dara Chan, founded this enterprise as an alternative for young women who were becoming victims of prostitution and illegal sex trafficking. Currently, Mekong Blue is one of the largest private employers in the province. It has moved into online sales and marketing, expanding its commercialization abroad. It also provides the highest salary for weavers in the country, as well as a number of social security benefits for its employees. (Check out their website on <http://bluesilk.org/>, and ILO's feature on this initiative: [here](#)).²⁶

²² IFAD (International Fund for Rural Development): *Rural Poverty Report 2011. New realities, new challenges: new opportunities for tomorrow's generation*, Rome, 2010.

²³ FAO: “Climate change, Biofuels, and Land” (accessible at: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/nr/HLCinfo/Land-Infosheet-En.pdf>).

²⁴ Cheryl Doss: *If Women Hold Up Half the Sky, How Much of the World's Food Do They Produce?*, FAO, Rome, 2009.

²⁵ ILO: “Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), India”, in *Learning from Catalysts of Rural Transformation*, Chapter 7, Geneva, 2013, p. 135-168 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/q6n8xuf>).

²⁶ ILO: “The Stung Treng Women's Development Centre (SWDC), Cambodia”, in *Learning from Catalysts of Rural Transformation*, Chapter 9, Geneva, 2013, pp. 201-221 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/nubj23k>).

- Almost 85 per cent of the 1.25 billion **youth** aged 15-24 live in developing countries, with approximately 60 per cent in Asia alone, and 23 per cent in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Over half live in rural areas.²⁷ They are the future of agriculture, rural industries and communities but often lack proper education, training, guidance and other support, or a “voice”. For example, only 10 per cent of World Bank projects on youth target rural areas.²⁸ Addressing their aspirations and needs is vital for growth and social peace (more information [here](#)).²⁹
- Rural **children** account for 82 per cent of out-of-school children.³⁰ Child labour is mainly a rural issue. Out of 168 million child labourers aged five-17 years, 58.6 per cent are in agriculture alone, in contrast to 7.2 per cent in industry, 25.4 per cent in services, 6.9 per cent in domestic work and 1.9 per cent in other sectors (more information [here](#)).³¹



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- Four out of every five **disabled people** live in rural areas in developing countries.³² They are often excluded from education, training and work, which cost countries between land 7 per cent of GDP.³³
- Over 370 million **indigenous people** live in more than 90 countries across the world. They constitute approximately 5 per cent of the world population but 15 per cent of those living in extreme poverty.³⁴ Nevertheless, indigenous communities are custodians of unique knowledge, skills and production systems. If these are recognized, protected and valued, indigenous people can become real assets to national economies.³⁵ In Peru, in 2007 a woman belonging to the

²⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs: “Youth - Frequently asked questions” (available at: <http://undesadspd.org/Youth/FAQs.aspx>).

²⁸ Puerto, O.S.: Labour market impact on youth: A meta-analysis of the Youth Employment Inventory, World Bank, Washington D.C., 2007, p. 8.

²⁹ ILO: *Investing in Youth for Rural Transformation*, Policy Brief, Geneva, 2012 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/puk7ypx>).

³⁰ ILO-IPEC: Children in hazardous work. *What we know, What we need to do*, Geneva, 2011.

³¹ ILO-IPEC (International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour): *Marking progress against child labour: Global estimates and trends 2000-2012*, Geneva, 2013.

³² UN Enable: *World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons*, Geneva, 2006.

³³ Murray, Barbara: *Disability Employment for Social Justice and a Fair Globalization, Overview of ILO Programmes*, ILO, Geneva, 2010 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/qg59l7o>).

³⁴ United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII): *State of the World's indigenous peoples*, New York, 2009 (available at: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/SOWIP_web.pdf).

³⁵ ILO: *Unlocking indigenous peoples' potential for sustainable rural development*, Policy Brief, Geneva, 2011 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/qgseolb>).

indigenous Quechua community established, La Chetina, a micro-enterprise producing and selling cheese as well as a variety of other agriculture-based products. Today it has three stores in the Chachapoyas province of Peru, generates employment for over 50 local farmers and successfully promotes the consumption of those products locally, also exporting them to other provinces.³⁶



Activity No. 6: The human interest angle

Using the facts outlined above, (or on your cards), and the available resources, think about what kind of stories could be generated from the information. In groups, role-play an editorial meeting where you have to “sell” your human interest story to the news editor. Think about components of the story including illustrations. Report back in plenary.

³⁶ ILO: “La Chetina, Peru”, in *Learning from Catalysts of Rural Transformation*, Chapter 4, Geneva, 2013, pp. 63-75 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/pag7567>).



Where can you find good rural stories?



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Every day reporters and writers are looking for story ideas. Whether you are a national newspaper reporter, an investigative journalist, a television producer or a community radio broadcaster, the starting point for covering rural issues is a good story idea.

The rural world can offer you excellent content for news, features, TV reports, blog posts or comment articles.



Activity No. 7: Sources (part 1)

Where and how can you find the right sources, the best inputs and tips for a good story idea about the rural economy? Discuss

- You can get your initial ideas from your own media consumption and from discussions with your editors and colleagues.
- Try to have regular briefings, calls and contacts. If someone feeds you a story idea, ask about the rural dimension. It will enrich your content.
- Add new names to your contacts' book to include people who have roles and responsibilities within rural communities, such as the police, hospitals, tribunals, council officials, politicians, trade unions, employers' associations, employment centres, local associations of youth, women and indigenous people.
- Make regular calls to MPs representing rural areas, environmental organizations and NGOs, academics and researchers working on those areas.
- Find sources from other media such as radios, television, internet and newspapers, as well as letters to the editor and advertising. At first glance, sources may not seem to offer much in terms of news value or rural content but if you dig deep you may find some good story ideas.
- Subscribe to newsletters, press releases and news alerts, accounts on social media and other internet sources. Always follow up by sending direct messages or calling your potential source.
- You can also look for local rural dimensions in national or international events and debates.
- The many reports about rural development that are produced by international organizations, NGOs, United Nations' agencies and other institutions can contain some relevant information about your country and can suggest excellent

story ideas about the rural areas you are interested in. They also add to your understanding of global trends and changes that may be relevant to rural communities in your country. Follow their events, initiatives, campaigns and annual reports about rural development. Get in touch with their experts and researchers so you can find good story ideas and also fairer and more accurate information which will allow you to compare and contextualize the situation of rural areas in your country within regional and international contexts.



Activity No. 8: Sources (part 2)

Using the internet, newspapers, and other available resources, you have half an hour to find five new potential rural contacts that might be the source of a good rural story. Be prepared to explain who you have chosen and why.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Mastering the trout supply chain in Colombia



© Universidad.com

Iliana Mera, Coordinator of production and technology transfer and member of APROPESCA, Colombia

“APROPESCA was born out of the necessity to have a decent income, ... [and as an alternative to illegal crops] ... After some years of work, we are more in control of the trout business. Little by little we have expanded our markets. We are now a source of employment and our production and processing infrastructure has improved a lot, making the whole process more efficient. Although it has not been easy and there are ups and downs, positive changes can be seen in our members ... from improvement in our houses to management, production or even social skills. The work in these years has shown that affordable innovation can also happen in Silvia, Cauca. That is the message that we are now sharing with other producers in Colombia”.³⁷
(Check out a video about this initiative <http://vimeo.com/65931506>).



Activity No. 9: Press conference

You are attending a mock press conference, in which representatives from a rural organization make an announcement about a rural issue. Ask them questions for publication or broadcast. Present your questions and be prepared to explain in plenary what angle you would choose for a “newsy” story.

³⁷ Iliana Mera, interview. Popayán, Colombia, September 2013.



Finding a strong story angle

Once you turn the spotlight on rural, you will find there is a lot of information out there to sift through. Finding a strong angle that is newsworthy and fresh, which makes a good read, is essential if you want to grab the attention of your readers, viewers and listeners.



Activity No. 10: What's the story?

Using one (or more) of the issues outlined below, think about the angle of a story you could write for your media organization. Find original ways to use the data and information. Write a headline and the first three paragraphs of the story. Say who you would interview and why. What type of pictures would you use and why?

■ **Environment** – Many rural activities both cause and are affected by **environmental degradation and climate change**. Nevertheless, rural communities can create alternative and sustainable ways of development: “greening the economy” offers opportunities to improve social inclusion by addressing the challenges of poverty and of lack of access to energy.³⁸ For instance, “The Solar Women of Totogalpa”, a cooperative of women in rural northern Nicaragua, are empowering their community with renewable energy products and services, which range from solar cookers and dryers, to the electrification of households.³⁹

■ **Agriculture** – Agriculture is the mainstay of many countries, ensuring food security, livelihoods, export earnings and economic development. It is predominantly associated with rural areas but it has been practised in urban and peri-urban sites for centuries.⁴⁰ Although agriculture is, in part, responsible for environmental damage, new trends are emerging: agro-ecological practices, for instance, are less harmful to the environment, ecology and communities.

For many small farmers, the situation is complicated by small-scale, political, social and environmental issues but they can find proactive ways to organize, protect their livelihoods and promote sustainable and high-return products: the “Palestine Fair Trade Association” (PFTA), for instance, is empowering farmers and handicraft producers through fair trade and organic agricultural training and certifications, to access lucrative external markets (see box on p.17).



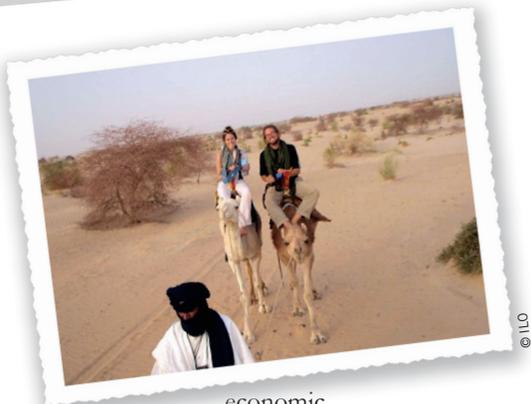
³⁸ ILO-UNEP: *Working towards sustainable development. Opportunities for decent work and social inclusion in a green economy (Summary)*, ILO, Geneva, 2012 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/pltlp7c>).

³⁹ More information can be found online here: http://www.homepower.com/article/?file=HP143_pg30_Returns

⁴⁰ ILO: *Agriculture: An Engine of Pro-Poor Rural Growth*, Policy Brief, Geneva, 2011 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/q6dxvwx>).

■ **Rural activities are diversifying –**

Agriculture is still the main activity industry and services growing. Already, one in four rural workers are working new industries and services, accounting for 32 per cent of rural households' income in Asia, 40 per cent in Latin America, and 42 per cent in Africa.⁴¹



■ **Tourism –** Tourism is of growing

importance in rural areas, with interest growing in different types of holidays away from the big cities and “sea and sand” resorts. From 2015, emerging economies will, for the first time, receive more international tourists than advanced economies.⁴² Eco-tourism, (which involves responsible travel to natural areas in an environmentally and socially respectful manner), is a growing trend, currently representing about 3 to 5 per cent of global tourism. It is one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry.⁴³ Rural areas are therefore becoming more attractive as people discover what they have to offer. Tourism can also be a cultural tool, a way for a community to share its culture. An example of this is the “Eco-Health Farm Network” in Latvia, which supports small farmers in integrating healthy and ecological food production, cultural heritage preservation and tourism (See box p.19).

■ **Innovation –** ICTs, for instance, are expanding rapidly: telecentres, internet access and mobile phones are increasingly found in rural settings. People are finding creative ways to use them to get access to and exchange information (about the weather in the case of agriculture-related activities, market prices, the political and social situation and new technologies). They also use ICTs to buy and sell products, access banking and administrative services. Communication technologies also help them find and create jobs and acquire new skills in computer work and through e-learning. Government and public-private partnerships often support rural ICTs, as in the case of the “1,000 telecentres” project, launched by Paul Barera, an entrepreneur, who has established a network of telecentres in the rural areas of Rwanda (see box p.3).

■ **Employment –** Youth aged 15-24 number 1.2 billion, comprise approximately 18 per cent of the global population⁴⁴ and over half of them live in rural areas of developing countries,⁴⁵ where un- or under-employment is high. This lack of rural job prospects forces many to migrate to urban centres or abroad. Few initiatives target young people in rural areas but those that do can be very

⁴¹ FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization): *Promoting farm/non-farm linkages in developing countries. Case studies from Africa and Latin America*, Rome, 2002.

⁴² UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization): *Tourism and Poverty Reduction*, December 2011 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/qj4tudj>).

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ UN: *Youth and climate change*, World Youth Report 2010, New York, 2010.

⁴⁵ Bennell, P.: *Promoting livelihood opportunities for rural youth, knowledge and skills for development*, IFAD, Rome, 2007.

successful. For instance, Songhai centres in Benin are developing sustainable organic agriculture techniques and, through a holistic approach, are integrating a variety of agricultural, industrial and service activities that are attractive to youth, coupled with training and research to build their skills (see box p.5).

- **Migration** – Over the last 50 years, 800 million people have moved from rural to urban areas.⁴⁶ They move either to cities in the same country or to another country. Remittances from family members abroad supplement the income of rural households. In some origin countries, such as Senegal, migrants’ remittances account for up to 70 per cent of households’ earnings.⁴⁷ Some of that money is used to start new businesses which boost local economies. However, the drain of human resources from rural areas, particularly youth, is a matter of concern.
- **Informal economy** – The “informal economy” refers to all economic activities that are not or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements, (either because they are not included in the law, or not covered because the law is not enforced in practice).⁴⁸ Most informal economy workers and entrepreneurs live in rural areas⁴⁹ but informality is also an urban issue and rural out-migrants often swell the ranks of the informal economy in urban areas and abroad.⁵⁰



⁴⁶ Sakuyama, T.: *The Roles of Agriculture*, Project Brief No. 2, FAO, Rome, 2007.

⁴⁷ FAO: *Till to Litter: Linkages between International Remittances and Access to Land*, LSP working paper, Rome, 2004.

⁴⁸ ILO: *Resolution and conclusions concerning decent work and the informal economy*, International Labour Conference, 90th Session, Geneva, 2002.

⁴⁹ ILO: *Addressing Informality for Rural Development*, Policy Brief, Geneva, 2012 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/nltf6c2>).

⁵⁰ ILO: *Labour Migration Governance for Rural Development*, Policy Brief, Geneva, 2011 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/pcwltxl>).



Different ways to cover stories

Once you have a good story idea, the right sources and a strong rural angle, you should decide how to cover the issue and how the content should be organized, pursued, checked and written up in a way that makes it readable and attractive to your audience.

Is it a hard news story, an investigative piece, a feature, profile or campaigning journalism?

Ask yourself:

- What's the hook? Why does this story matter?
- Are you revealing new facts about an issue? If so, a “hard news” format may be appropriate. Always refer to the five “W’s” and “H” — Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? In a few lines you can summarize the core content and grab the reader’s attention.
- Include a variety of voices and perspectives so the story is as objective, accurate, complete and fair as possible.
- Sometimes individual stories are strong enough as a stand-alone piece in the form of a profile or a feature, which allows you to provide deeper insight into people, places, lives and events.
- A blog or a personal comment piece from an influential voice from a rural community can bring readers closer to the issues and can make compelling content.

Fair trade in rural Palestine



© Chelsea Willis of the Change

Nasser Abufarha, founder of the Palestine Free Trade Association (PFTA)

Nasser Abufarha is providing training and is opening lucrative foreign markets for over 1700 small producers, organized in over 43 cooperatives. The goal is to achieve and sell high-quality and high-return products, based on organic techniques, good working conditions and other fair trade standards. They include olive oil, handicrafts and a growing variety of agricultural products. The aim is to allow Palestinian men and women to become self-reliant and gain and self-confidence.

His association is, in his words, a “partnership based on dialogue, transparency and respect”, ensuring good jobs and living conditions to producers.

(Check out their website on <http://www.palestinefairtrade.org/>, as well as ILO’s feature on this initiative: [here](#))⁵¹

⁵¹ ILO: “The Palestine Fair Trade Association (PFTA), occupied Palestinian territory”, in *Learning from Catalysts of Rural Transformation*, Chapter 6, Geneva, 2013, pp. 105-134 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/nsgsbnn>).



Mainstreaming rural

Launching clothing production in rural United States

Sarah Calhoun, founder and owner of “Red Ants Pants”, Montana, United States

“After being an employee of an US company for rural workers’ clothes, I decided to found ‘Red Ants Pants’ for rural women workers, simply because people forget that women also work in gardens, farms, industry... We believe in putting our company dollars towards local jobs. That is why I founded ‘Red Ants’ in White Sulphur Springs. Because we know our neighbors. There are lessons learned from living in rural areas that we apply to our business practices. Build a community around your product, people and brand then the working relationships gain depth and value.”



© RedPants.com

(Check out the website: <http://redantspants.com/>).⁵²

It often happens that while you are working on a story, the germ of another appears. Good rural story ideas can be found in mainstream news stories about the economy, employment, development, elections, migration, politics, transport or telecommunications, for example.

Give your mainstream stories depth by weaving in rural angles, quotes, examples and photos. Stories about climate change and global warming, for instance, can relate to rural areas and communities. They are often the most affected by natural disasters. Ask yourself questions about the impact of climate change on these areas. What effect has it had on the rural economy and on rural populations compared to industrialized and urban areas? Does the government have a rural environmental policy?

There are also less evident links between mainstream stories and the rural world. Therefore, it is worth always thinking about the many connections and implications that a fact, an event, or a phenomenon, may have outside urban areas.

If you are covering gender issues, you could focus on working women in rural areas, where access to employment or credit for small businesses is difficult. If you are interested in ICTs, you could write about the importance of online communications for the development of rural areas. Or if you were to write a story about politics and the next general election, do consider the rural angle. Find out if and how rural communities’ demands influence candidates’ agendas and how rural people are going to vote.



Activity No. 11: Mainstreaming rural

From a selection of newspapers or online news sites, find three mainstream stories which potentially could have strong rural angles. Present your ideas to the group.

⁵² Sara Calhoun, “Do Great Work”, TED talk, April 2012. Retrieved from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TosdrRJ34w>.



Using different media platforms

Ecological lifestyle in rural Latvia

Mara Bergman, founder of the “Eco-Health Farm Network” (EHFN)

Mara Bergman has mobilized over 70 small farmers in high-quality and high-profit healthy food production, processing and marketing activities that create good jobs and income while preserving producers’ and consumers’ health. They range from organic techniques that avoid the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, to medical therapies using herbal teas, steam saunas and massages, and nutrition counselling. Latvia’s traditional knowledge and practices about farming, health and nature combine with modern lifestyles, training and advice from scientists and doctors.

(Check out ILO’s feature on this initiative: [here](#))⁵³



© 2013 Embassy of Latvia

Today’s media platforms can offer you a wide range of tools and possibilities to produce and share content in different formats and to combine text, pictures, sound and videos. Those platforms can help you also to pitch the story using both traditional media, like newspapers, radio and TV, and social media or even mobile phones, often stimulating the debate through comments, cross-posting and sharing functionalities.

However, in order to choose the best tools, decide on the audience you aim to reach and the potential impact of your story. If you have a good rural angle for a mainstream story about politics, for example, and your target audience is mainly politicians, decision-makers, spin-doctors, government officials, political journalists, you might want to use traditional media formats, like written texts for newspapers and websites, also embedding a short video comment from an expert on politics.

Rural stories provide good picture and video content. Make sure you have easy access to a good photo archive and footage about rural areas, rural communities and issues such as agriculture, food and natural resources. Go beyond the stereotypes and get images and clips about what is less known about rural areas, such as technology, innovative businesses activities, jobs that are not related to agriculture or farming.

Online social media allows media organizations to share, circulate and enrich the content.



Activity No. 12: A finished product

Building on the stories you began researching and writing in previous activities, complete a rural story for publication. Make sure you have a strong angle and multiple voices to balance. Add quotes from a variety of resources. Is it hard news, a feature, a profile? Present your story in groups or individually in plenary.

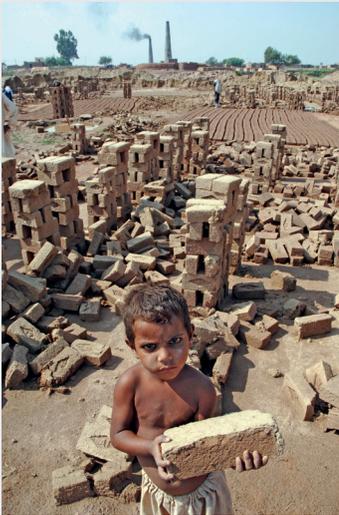
⁵³ ILO: “Eco-Health Farm Network (EHFN), Latvia”, in *Learning from Catalysts of Rural Transformation*, Chapter 2, Geneva, 2013, pp. 9-34 (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/n7aqbjc>).

Annex 1

Selection of pictures 1



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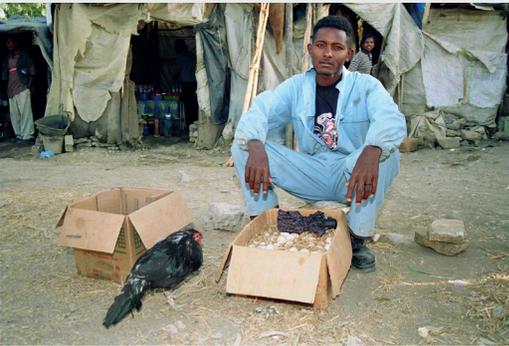
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Annex 2

Selection of pictures 2



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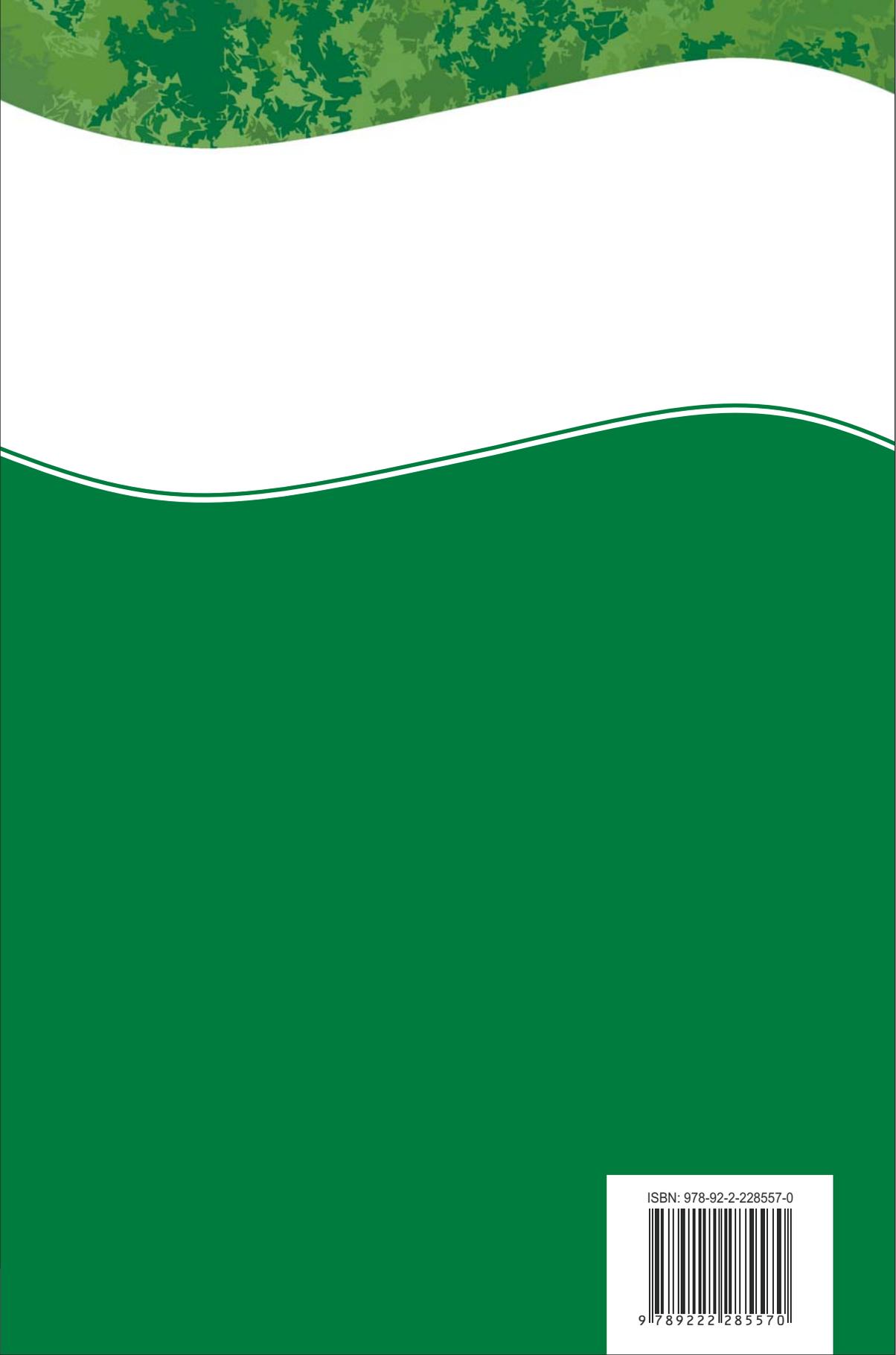
Annex 3

Select recent ILO rural-related materials

-  ILO: *Promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction, Report IV, International Labour Conference, 97th Session, 8 April 2008, Geneva, 2008*
(available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ner9jfy>).
-  FAO-IFAD-ILO: *Gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: Differentiated pathways out of poverty, Rome, 2010*
(available at: <http://tinyurl.com/phq66ry>).
-  FAO-IFAD-ILO: *7 Gender and Rural Employment Policy Briefs, 2010*
(available at: <http://tinyurl.com/oce8bqd>).
Topics: *Gender-equitable rural work; Skills for socio-economic empowerment; Agricultural value chain development; Infrastructure work; Migration and rural labour markets; Getting rural children out of work and into school; Women's entrepreneurship.*
-  ILO: *Rural Policy Briefs, Geneva, 2011* (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/onu5dfu>).
Topics: *Children and child labour; Disabled persons; Indigenous people; Youth; Cooperatives; Crisis-affected areas; Employment-intensive infrastructure; Food security; HIV and AIDS affected communities; Informal economy; International labour standards; Labour inspection; Local Economic Development; Micro-finance; Migration; Occupational Safety and Health and working conditions; Skills development; Social Protection Floor; Value chains; Agriculture; Fisheries; Food, drinks and tobacco; Forestry; Tourism.*
-  ILO: *Rural-Related Tools, Geneva, 2011* (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/oj9gal9>).
Topics: *Crisis (4 tools); Employment-intensive investment (2 tools); Enterprises (12 tools); Skills and career guidance (4 tools); Social finance (3 tools); Social protection (8 tools); Children (5 tools); Disabled persons (4 tools); HIV/AIDS affected persons (5 tools); Indigenous and tribal people (2 tools); Women (2 tools); Youth (6 tools).*
-  ILO: *Safety and health in agriculture. Code of practice, Geneva, 2011*
(available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ojfv7ln>).
-  ILO: *Toolkit on Poverty Reduction through Tourism in Rural Areas, Geneva, 2012*
(available at: <http://tinyurl.com/nqpa3nu>).
-  ILO-IEA (International Ergonomics Association): *Ergonomic Checkpoints in Agriculture, ILO, Geneva, 2012* (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/nprbsus>).
-  ILO: *Freedom of Association for Women Rural Workers. A Manual, Geneva, 2012*
(available at: <http://tinyurl.com/p9z7l2q>).
-  ILO: *Unleashing the Potential for Rural Development through Decent Work – Building on the ILO Rural Work Legacy 1970s-2011, Geneva, 2012*
(available at: <http://tinyurl.com/nmuxr6x>).
-  ILO: *Learning from Catalysts of Rural Transformation, Geneva, 2013* (available at: <http://tinyurl.com/px2pqff>).

 ILO: *Timeline of ILO rural work (1920-2013)*, Geneva, 2013
(available at: <http://tinyurl.com/qaxp3dv>).

 ILO rural webpage: www.ilo.org/rural



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