

A long history.....

In many countries in the Asia Pacific region, the provision of reliable and effective infrastructure remains a major challenge. Infrastructure assets such as rural roads, tracks, bridges, irrigation schemes, water supplies, schools, health centers and markets are needed in rural areas for the local population to fulfill their basic needs and live a social and economic productive life. The ILO has been leading in the field of rural infrastructure development and has been active for more than 30 years in developing and demonstrating strategies and tools and has extensive experience in formulating and implementing rural infrastructure programmes. A wide range of manuals and technical guidelines have been developed over these years.

The strategies and methods for the effective and sustainable provision of infrastructure in rural areas (in particular rural roads) using local resource-based approaches have now been adopted by a large number of governments and international development agencies. This is a clear recognition of the effectiveness of such approaches to livelihood improvements in rural areas.

Decentralization.....

There is a growing trend in the region to decentralize responsibility for the provision and maintenance of infrastructure. Whilst the degree and form of decentralization vary, the rationale is usually to enhance participation, improve the sense of ownership and generally improve efficiency in planning and implementation. Rural infrastructure provision usually consists of a large number of comparatively small investments over a geographically large area. With the appropriate management tools and sufficient resources, local authorities are in a good position to effectively plan and supervise the development of rural infrastructure. The nature of these works offers significant potential for the use of local resources including labour, materials, communities and small contractors. The ILO has done groundbreaking work in the fields of rural participatory infrastructure planning, labour-based technology, community and small-scale contracting and rural road maintenance.

Ongoing work.....

The ILO continues to provide support to its partners in the field. The current emphasis is on:

- Assisting countries in strengthening the capacity at local level to build and maintain rural infrastructure using local resource-based methods;
- Designing and supervision of technical assistance projects and project components at the country level;
- Supporting other agencies in the formulation, design and implementation of rural infrastructure programmes;
- Working with central governments to secure the necessary policy framework and implementation arrangements for local resource-based rural infrastructure works.