

Access and Poverty Reduction

Contributing to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).....

To achieve sustained poverty reduction, developing countries must attain higher, durable growth that involves and benefits poor people. Pro-poor growth is also crucial to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Poverty reduction strategies (PRSPs) often recognize that continued improvements of the infrastructure assets of a country are fundamental to support economic growth and reduce poverty. The internationally defined MDGs also set clear targets for a number of challenges in different sectors (agriculture and income, education, health, water and sanitation etc.). Infrastructure as such is not identified as a direct MDG target or indicator, but obviously sustainable local infrastructure is a facilitating measure to reach many of the MDGs in both urban and rural areas. The World Bank has developed a Rural Access Indicator which measures the number of rural people who live within 2 km (typically equivalent to a walk of 20 minutes) of an all-season road as a proportion of the total rural population. This indicator is not an MDG indicator, but it is a key contribution to achieving many of the MDGs. Surveys have shown that poor people view isolation as a major contributor to their poverty and marginalization. Without the infrastructure services many of the MDG targets can not be met. Improving infrastructure (and generating income in the process) contributes to the following MDGs in the Asia Pacific region:

- Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
- Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
- Goal 5: Improve maternal health
- Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Improving Access and Reducing Poverty.....

Lack of access to basic needs and socio-economic services has its effect at the most basic level of living. If there is poor access to health services, people will remain unhealthy; children will die; and any epidemic can have catastrophic results. If there is poor access to clean water, again health will suffer. And if there is poor access to education, children will in the future share the limitations confronting their parents today. In addition lack of access to markets will ensure that whatever potential that exists for marketing products will be limited. Concentrating on improving access is therefore a key element in any poverty reduction strategy. Over the years, the ILO has developed and demonstrated a tool, Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning (IRAP) which helps communities and local governments to identify what should be done (a school, a bridge, a road or a water supply etc?), where (in which villages) and how (using local resources or imported technology) to improve rural access and reduce poverty. The tool has been successfully introduced to 10 countries in the Asia Pacific region.

Ongoing work.....

The ILO continues to provide support to countries in the field of improving access in rural areas and poverty reduction. The current emphasis is on:

- Assisting countries in further developing and demonstrating IRAP planning tools to identify rural infrastructure investment needs at the local level;

- Integrating local resource-based strategies in country poverty reduction strategies and poverty alleviation programmes;
- Capacity building to strengthen local government units in the identification, planning and implementation of rural infrastructure investments to address poverty issues.

Key resources.....

- [Improving Access in Rural Areas – Guidelines for Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning \(IRAP\)](#) – ILO 2003
- Access, Rural Transport and Poverty Reduction – ILO ASIST AP
- [Rural Transport, Poverty Reduction and Livelihood Improvement in the Lao PDR](#) – ILO 2008