

RURAL DEVELOPMENT through DECENT WORK

FOR GROWTH, PRODUCTIVE JOBS, INCOME, GOOD WORKING CONDITIONS, EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES, RIGHTS, VOICE, SUSTAINED DEVELOPMENT, CRISIS RESILIENCE, FOOD SECURITY

Unleashing rural development through employment and decent work: A pressing need and timely investment

- Rural areas are home and workplace to half of the world's population, and 75 percent of the world's poor.
- Experience in developing countries and emerging economies demonstrate that when given proper support, farm and non-farm rural activities can thrive and be engines of growth, innovation, and attractive jobs.
- Focusing resources to minimize rural Decent Work deficits¹ is central to effective support strategies.

A window of opportunity to empower rural areas

Rural development is key to poverty eradication – a high priority today. No Millennium Development Goal (MDG) can be achieved – especially MDG 1 and its targets to halve extreme poverty, halve the proportion of hungry people, and achieve full and productive employment for all, including youth and women – if rural stakeholders and communities are not expressly empowered.

Rural empowerment is also central to other current pressing concerns, such as economic growth and crisis resilience, food security and climate change, women's empowerment, the management of migration flows, and socio-political stability.

The ILO's Rural Employment and Decent Work Programme

A vision

- Reveal the potential of rural areas as engines of growth, job creation, equitable development, and crisis resilience
- Replace stereotypical images of rural “backwardness” and “unattractiveness” with ones emphasizing potential and opportunities
- Take action to counter the decent work and other structural deficits impeding progress of rural areas
- Invest in rural men and women – especially youth – to help them realize their potential
- Demonstrate that investing in rural development is ethical as well as economically sound

A strategy

Based on the ILO's comparative advantages (Box 1)

- Establish human resource-based rural development at the core of national and international development strategies. Ensure that the economic growth and development architecture being re-designed following the on-going economic crisis adopts rural as a core pillar.
- Promote human resource-based rural development through strengthening:
 - The “voice” of rural stakeholders and their associations, so they may dialogue with each other and local authorities, as well as impact national counterparts and decision makers; and
 - The capacity of rural stakeholders to engage productively in high value added, high-return activities, with emphasis on appropriate skills acquisition, entrepreneurship and enterprise support, improvements to occupational safety and health and social security coverage, as well as implementation of relevant international labour standards.
- Achieve a balance between farm and non-farm activities. Combine support to agricultural productivity with assistance for diversification into productive, higher value added manufacturing and service work. This includes agri-business chain activities, as well as opportunities in emerging sectors such as tourism, energy-saving equipment, reforestation, water management, and green jobs.

Box 1. Comparative advantages

- Clear mandate to engage in rural issues (established in 1921 and confirmed in 2008, 2011)
- Expertise in key technical areas, such as: Local Economic Development, employment-intensive infrastructure, entrepreneurship, cooperatives, value chains, micro-finance, green jobs, skills and career guidance, informal activities, employment policy, occupational safety and health, social coverage, labour inspection, migration, gender, youth employment, child labour, international labour standards, links to employers' and workers' organizations, social dialogue, sectoral work (in agriculture, agro-processing, forestry, fishing, tourism, mining, etc.)
- Over 50 tools (guides, manuals, training kits) that are suited to rural contexts
- At least 30 Conventions and 20 Recommendations directly targeting rural activities
- Over 80 on-going technical cooperation projects with components addressing rural issues
- A Rural Employment and Decent Work Programme
- Broad partnerships with FAO, ICA, IFAD, World Tourism Organization, and collaboration with UNCTAD, UNDESA, UNDP, WB, WFP, among others
- Employment and Decent Work adopted as part of the “common language” within the UN and the development community at large (for e.g. it is the theme of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty 2008-17), as well as at country level, thus facilitating joint ventures

¹ Notable rural Decent Work deficits include higher rates of un- and under-employment (especially among youth and women); an alarming prevalence of child labour; a higher incidence of precarious work as wage work is mostly seasonal or casual; widespread informal activities; limited social protection; exposure to adverse working conditions due to poor labour standards coverage and monitoring; and little or no unionization or social dialogue.

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- Support and develop multidisciplinary, integrated interventions to match the multi-faceted nature of rural decent work deficits and rural development needs.
- Combine:
 - Practical interventions to achieve results that “make a difference” for rural stakeholders;
 - Capacity building of local and national stakeholders, staff of agencies, NGOs, the media, donors and other rural development practitioners in human resource-based rural development, through modular training and guidance materials adaptable to specific needs and circumstances and a rural platform; and
 - Advocacy of human resource-based rural development and its core role in national employment and development policies.
- Move from short-term, isolated interventions to longer-term, integrated programmes with strong policy connections to ensure sustainability and integration of programmes into mainstream national policies.
- Focus on women and youth as the real engines of rural development whose potential remains under-appreciated, under-developed and under-used. This includes combating child labour.
- Expand and promote partnerships with other agencies, NGOs, donors (viewed as “partners in development”), think tanks and the media. Coordination and synergies are indispensable to make a difference given the size and multi-faceted nature of rural development gaps.

A Team

Pro-active work organization consisting of shared responsibility, coordination and synergies:

- Units Office-wide (ILO’s HQ Units, Field Offices, International Training Centre in Turin) and constituents inscribing rural development into their agenda
- Eight thematic clusters on which different ILO Units will work in synergy: Rural-friendly agribusiness value chains; Career guidance and relevant skills acquisition in rural contexts; Tourism in least developed rural areas; Food security; A social protection floor; A culture of rural occupational safety and health; International labour standards rural coverage; Reaching and giving a voice to rural employers and workers
- Over 70 focal points on rural employment and decent work Office-wide
- Regular meetings between ILO focal points and constituents to monitor progress in strategy implementation
- A Core ILO Rural Employment and Decent Work Programme team to help maintain an ILO rural vision and direction; prompt action, coordination and delivery; engage in and support strategic initiatives; develop external partnerships; help disseminate and advocate specific products and approaches.

Box 2. Recent Milestones

- June 2008, International Labour Conference Resolution on *Promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction*:
 - Plan of Action Office-wide spanning multiple technical areas
 - Call for increased rural work and support by ILO constituents
- Programme and Budget 2010-11:
 - Rural employment identified as one of the ILO’s “emerging areas”
- March 2011, Governing Body discussion on *Unleashing rural development through productive employment and decent work: Building on 40 years of ILO work on rural areas*:
 - Request to make rural work an ILO priority
 - Support to an ILO rural development strategy
- Programme and Budget 2012-13:
 - Rural development set among ILO priorities and Units requested to:
 - “Strengthen technical capacity on rural employment”
 - Provide “additional emphasis” on rural work in all ILO technical programmes and regions

Key tools and resources

- ILO: *Promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction*, Report IV, International Labour Conference, Geneva, 2008
- ILO: *Conclusions on promoting rural employment for poverty reduction*, International Labour Conference, Geneva, 2008
- ILO: *Unleashing rural development through productive employment and decent work: Building on 40 years of ILO work in rural areas*, Paper to the Governing Body’s Committee on Employment and Social Policy, March 2011
- ILO: *Report of the Committee on Employment and Social Policy*, March 2011
- de Luca, Loretta, et al., *Unleashing the potential for rural development through decent work* (forthcoming)
- FAO-IFAD-ILO: Set of 7 policy briefs on Gender and Rural Development
- ILO: Set of 12 policy briefs on rural-related issues
- ILO: Toolkit of 54 ILO rural-relevant technical tools
- Rural website www.ilo.org/rural