

SUMMARY OF THE FSN FORUM DISCUSSION No. 42
RECENT THINKING ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT
FROM 4 SEPTEMBER TO 9 OCTOBER 2009

Proceedings available at
http://km.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fsn/docs/PROCEEDINGS_RD_Evolution.doc

I. ISSUES RAISED

Forum Members were invited to discuss on the evolution of Rural Development approaches and the shifting away from a mainly agricultural to a more holistic thinking which has taken place in the last 15 years. Essential components and impediments of successful Rural Development strategies were identified and analyzed.

II. ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF A MODERN RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- RD approaches need to be comprehensive, as sector-specific development policies do not have the capacity to address vast and variable needs of rural people. Similarly, if the RD program does not address social issues including rural institutions, it will only have a poor sustainability with weak overall achievements. (A. Widana)
- A three-dimensional approach is needed, including a "structural" dimension identifying and assessing the main components of the socio-economic system of the rural space, a "behavioural" dimension analyzing the interactions between the various components of the system and a "time" dimension capturing the evolution of key factors/ determinants influencing the behavioural and structural elements. (J. Michiels)
- Important generic principles and components that are expected to be in any program of RD components and processes of RD are: (A. Widana)
 - Multi-sectoral, simultaneous and integrated approach
 - Participatory principle
 - Evolving plan
 - Facilitation / strengthening of organizations
 - Coordination with other actors
 - Adequate funding
 - Income generation and savings
 - Program continuity
 - Dedicated staff
 - Awareness, education and training
 - Monitoring and documentation
 - Conflicts resolution
- The modern rural development strategy needs to shift from intensive agricultural production to eco-friendly development. (T. H. Dargie)
- The expressed aspirations and felt needs of the local community are to be assessed through participatory methods, including the gender dimension and members are to be elected to represent the locality. Further, community-based organizations (CBO) should be promoted. (PK Thampan, K. Hussain)
- A rural development governance system encompassing public private partnership with high level of participation of the rural communities needs to be set up. (T.H. Dargie)
- A strong positive correlation exists between the socio-economic status of the rural people and their level of education. The concentration of educational institutions in specific parts of the country provided benefit to specific communities. (M. S. Ahmedani)

- While rural areas need to be equipped with modern facilities it is important to protect their characteristics and avoid converting them to urban settling places without any food production. (T. H. Dargie)
- The quality of the facilitating agency is of paramount importance. Although different government agencies are presently engaged in rural development they have functional limitations because of the bureaucratic system of administration. Functionaries of NGOs could prove to be more efficient and purposeful in working with rural people and in creating a change in their outlook towards achieving better livelihoods through self help and community effort. (PK Thampan)
- An adequate staffing, with a sufficient number of people on the ground, to work with farmers and assist them in identifying areas where there might be mutual benefit is necessary in order to achieve the desired results. (P. Methven)
- A general willingness by community members to adopt innovations in their spheres of activities is necessary to help themselves as well as others in creating better livelihoods. (PK Thampan)

III. EVIDENCE OF IMPACT AND LESSONS LEARNED

- Evidence of impact of the paradigm change in Rural Development is hard to find. This is because the large majority of past RD programs was focused on the technical with insufficient consideration on social issues, especially group formation, coordination, and conflict resolution. (A. Widana)
- In some areas thinking has not evolved and continues to promote rural development from a strictly agricultural approach. (Z. Chunga Liu)
- Even when there is a whole new vision of development of rural areas and new ways to enact it, rural areas still have serious problems of self-sustainability as migration, especially by the younger population who does not see in the rural areas a place to develop their aspirations, cause other problems such as aging and lack of generational replacement. (Z. Chunga Liu)
- Each rural area has diverse socio-economic and territorial characteristics and problems making the creation of a universally valid Rural Development strategy impossible. In rural development a multi-sectoral approach may seem to be ideal, but it is likely to encounter contradictions and incompatible sectoral interests causing disharmony within the local community. (Z. Chunga Liu, PK Thampan)
- It is of chief importance to integrate and coordinate the efforts of various agencies and actors in a framework of effective coordination to allow focusing efforts in one direction and to avoid duplication of efforts with the consequent waste of resources. Where possible local development groups should be involved. (Z. Chunga Liu, A. Widana)
- In the EU, LEADER Groups have been given local rural development funds, which may also be used to assist agriculture even though due to the current financial climate groups are desperate to find funding to keep essential services going and are applying to LEADER for this type of funding. (P. Methven)
- It is necessary to direct development funds as much as possible in favour of Rural Development. It is basically the poor in many rural areas who suffer a lot by not having the basic necessities of life hence becoming the first tier beneficiaries of RD activity. (A. Widana)

- In some areas, certain rural activities might be uneconomic to keep without subsidies. In many areas of Scotland, for instance, keeping animals is part of the cultural heritage of the area but is inefficient from an economic point of view. This should be kept in mind when designing projects. (P. Methven)
- The administration of funding needs streamlining as too many funds responding to too many administrations exist. Moreover these funds often lack communication mechanisms and duplication of effort takes place. (P. Methven)

IV. REFERENCES

International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD)

<http://www.icarrd.org/sito.html>

IFAD Publication "Decision tools for rural development programmes"

<http://www.ifad.org/english/cdd/pub/decisiontools.pdf>

The Socio-economic and Gender Analysis Programme (SEAGA)

<http://www.fao.org/sd/seaga/>

Rural Development portal of the European Commission

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/index_en.htm

EU Leader+ initiative

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/index_en.htm

Rural Development portal of the World Bank

www.worldbank.org/ard