

Harvesting solutions: How poor rural people overcome poverty

IFAD's flagship publication looks at rural poverty today to seek solutions for the future

Seventy-five per cent of the world's poor people live in rural areas of developing countries, and this will continue to be the case at least until 2040. Each day, new issues and processes are reshaping the face of poverty in rural societies, including climate change, rising energy and food prices, agro-fuel production and increasing migration and urbanization. This means that development programmers and policymakers need to re-examine the way they respond.

Harvesting solutions: How poor rural people overcome poverty is a major publication that IFAD is developing in broad partnership with other institutions, regional networks and organizations of poor rural people. Underpinning the publication is the central premise that in today's rapidly changing conditions there are no predefined pathways out of rural poverty. Therefore, all stakeholders must make a concerted effort to empower poor rural people to address their challenges.

KEY MESSAGES

- In most developing countries, inclusive agricultural and rural development is a necessity for poverty reduction, sustainable development, food security, preserving the environment, limiting forced migration and ensuring peace.
- Although agriculture is a private enterprise, its role in providing public goods for society as a whole cannot be regulated exclusively by the market and needs to be supported by strong and proactive public policies.
- Rural poverty reduction is possible when and where poor rural people are empowered, and the right combinations of enabling policy and rural investments are in place. Pathways out of poverty are diverse. They are affected by global processes but depend on local conditions, institutions, initiatives and investment. More attention from policymakers, more policy space for countries and rural societies to decide their own path to development, and more innovation are needed to address this diversity.
- Rural people, especially smallholders, are key actors in bringing sustainable solutions to the challenges of tomorrow, such as how to achieve food for all, sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity, climate change mitigation, and supply of renewable energy. This all constitutes a common agenda in which 2.1 billion poor rural women and men have a key role to play.

IFAD believes that what is needed is an on-the-ground assessment of how poor rural people perceive the challenges they face and how they are responding to them today. By learning from the adaptive responses of poor rural people, development programmers and policymakers will be better equipped to adapt their own responses so that poor rural people can overcome poverty.

This is what IFAD's flagship publication sets out to do.



Content

Harvesting solutions: How poor rural people overcome poverty focuses on poor rural women and men as diverse agents of their own welfare and development; on the challenges they face in a dramatically changing environment; and on their positive experiences in overcoming them.

The publication will begin with an overview of rural poverty today. Its five main chapters will address five sets of challenges faced by poor rural people concerning:

- access to, sustainable management of, and capacity to benefit from, natural resources
- access to, and capacity to benefit from, agricultural services
- access to, and capacity to benefit from, remunerative and equitable markets
- access to, and capacity to benefit from, opportunities for non-farm employment and enterprise development
- access to, and capacity to, participate effectively in governance processes and in policymaking

The publication will reflect the fact that empowerment is not only about access to assets, but also about opportunities and the capacity of poor rural people to make effective use of this access to meet their needs and aspirations. Genuine empowerment occurs when the capacity of poor rural people to find new, effective solutions to their challenges is expanded in a sustainable manner. Moreover, empowerment involves effective participation in decisions that affect a person's life, welfare and environment.

A broad consultative process

Harvesting solutions: How poor rural people overcome poverty will be the result of a broad consultative process within and beyond IFAD. The steps include:

- **Background papers** for chapters, and development of a conceptual framework, structure and key messages in collaboration with experts from development and research institutions
- **Regional consultations** to help ensure that the publication is accountable to its various stakeholders, especially poor rural people; participants will include stakeholders from IFAD-supported country programmes, regional networks and organizations of poor rural people
- **On-the-ground scouting and stocktaking** efforts to identify 'success stories' – documenting effective and sustainable responses, particularly those developed by poor rural people, to emerging challenges. Scouting and stocktaking involve IFAD country programme managers and national partners, regional networks and regional programmes, non-governmental organizations, farmers' and rural producers' organizations, indigenous peoples' organizations and rural women's associations.

The publication will be a valuable reference for a wide range of stakeholders in rural development and poverty reduction, including policymakers, donors, development organizations, private-sector foundations and enterprises, and rural organizations in all regions where IFAD works. It will provide policy-relevant inputs for developing pro-poor agendas at the global, regional and country levels that empower poor rural people to address old and emerging challenges in a sustainable way.

Harvesting solutions: How poor rural people overcome poverty will be published in early 2010. For more information, contact Jean-Philippe Audinet, Acting Director of IFAD's Policy Division, j.audinet@ifad.org.

