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Enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty in **Burundi**

Rural poverty in Burundi

Located at the heart of the African Great Lakes region, Burundi has weathered nearly two decades of conflict and troubles, which have contributed to widespread poverty. Burundi is ranked 185th out of 187 countries on the 2011 United Nations Development Programme's human development index, and eight out of ten Burundians live below the poverty line. Per capita gross national income (GNI) in 2010 was US\$170, about half its pre-war level some 20 years ago.

The country is now rebuilding itself after emerging from recurrent conflict and ethnic and political rivalry. Between 1993 and 2000, an estimated 300,000 civilians were killed and 1.2 million people fled from their homes to live in refugee camps or in exile. During that period, life expectancy declined from 51 to 44 years, the poverty rate doubled from 33 to 67 per cent and economic recession pushed the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita down by more than 27 per cent.

The long period of fighting was extremely disruptive to agriculture, which is the main source of livelihood for nine out of ten Burundians. The destruction and looting of crops and livestock, as well as general insecurity, has put rural





Burundians under serious strains. Burundi was traditionally self-sufficient in food production, but because of conflict and recurrent droughts, the country has had to rely on food imports and international food aid in some regions.

The vast majority of Burundi's poor people are small-scale subsistence farmers trying to recover from the conflict and its aftermath. They face many constraints. This relatively small country has a high population growth rate, and as the population grows, the amount of fertile land available for agriculture is decreasing. According to the World Food Programme, the level of food vulnerability is extremely high: more than 60 per cent of the population is at risk of food insecurity as a result of climatic events, declining soil fertility and rising food prices.

The adverse effects of prolonged drought, the increase in crop pests and the decline in land productivity are most apparent in the eastern and northern regions. In those regions an estimated 100,000 households are at permanent risk of food insecurity and fragile nutritional conditions. The extremely high population density (about 270 inhabitants per km², and up to nearly 500 per km² in the most densely populated areas) has contributed to greater food and resource scarcity in rural areas.

As in neighbouring countries, the large number of men killed during the conflicts and the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS have created many poorer and fragile households headed by women or minors who have little access to non-agricultural resources.

Poverty in rural areas is the result of:

- High population pressure on overcultivated, eroded land supporting farms of an average size of 0.5 ha or less
- Insecurity and displacement
- Recurrent drought
- Scarcity or poor quality of agricultural implements and technology, and limited market incentives
- Low productivity of labour
- Low cash incomes from subsistence agriculture or limited non-agricultural activities
- Inadequate basic health and education services and safe drinking water
- High rates of illiteracy

Poor people in rural areas face an acute lack of basic social and economic infrastructure. Many lack access to safe water and health services. Much of the health-care system was destroyed during the fighting. Disability and death from malaria, HIV/AIDS and other diseases increased. As a consequence, the labour force for agriculture was significantly depleted. Men's life expectancy was down to 39 years in 2004, compared with 51 years before the conflict started. By 2009, it had risen to 49, still below the pre-war level.

Eradicating rural poverty in Burundi

Since the signing of the Arusha Peace Accord in 2000, the Government of Burundi has focused on consolidating peace and national reconciliation. In presidential and local elections held in 2005, the former rebels won an outstanding majority of votes. Tensions escalated when national elections were boycotted by the major opposition parties in 2010, but the crisis did not lead to a full-scale conflict. Since then, localized incidents of violence have continued amidst overall stability. The end of recurrent conflict is crucial to long-term development and to reducing poverty in the country.

In 2006 the government finalized its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) – a reference document for the country's economic and social development. In consultation with its development partners, the government also designed a Priority Action Plan for 2007-2010 to guide the implementation of its poverty reduction strategy. The Action Plan included 17 programmes for a total investment of US\$1.3 billion.

In February 2012, the government launched a new PRSP II to provide a framework for addressing the root causes of Burundi's poverty, governance deficits and impediments to sustainable growth – and for lessening the potential for social and political instability. The four underlying objectives of the government's poverty reduction strategy are:

- Improving governance and security
- Promoting sustainable and equitable economic growth
- Developing human capital
- Combating HIV/AIDS.

In July 2011, the government launched "Vision 2025" after four years of preparatory work and consultations with national partners. Vision 2025 comprises eight pillars, including governance, human capital, economic growth, regional integration, population growth, social cohesion, land-use planning and urbanization, and partnership. It represents a road map for Burundi's sustainable development through accelerated economic growth, and for the reduction of poverty to about 33 per cent by 2025. The United Nations Development Programme and the African Future Institute supported development of the plan.



In November 2011, the government launched the National Agricultural Investment Programme to streamline its National Agricultural Strategy into programmes that address the roots causes of rural poverty through investments financed by the country's own resources, as well as external sources.

With an estimated population of 8.4 million in 2010 (World Bank), Burundi, in the Great Lakes region, is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa. It is also one of the world's poorest countries. In 2006, about 67 per cent of the population was living below the poverty line.

The climate is of a temperate tropical type, with two rainy seasons. Eighty per cent of the country's total area of 28,000 km² consists of an undulating plateau situated between 1,600 m and 2,000 m above sea level.

Burundi is a landlocked country, and the nearest ports are located more than 1,500 km away in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, or Mombasa, Kenya. Nine in ten Burundians live in rural areas and depend almost exclusively on subsistence farming and livestock for their livelihood.

Burundi is overwhelmingly rural. Its economy is based on agriculture. But the sector is struggling. In the 1970s and 1980s, agriculture was already in decline, and the situation worsened with the conflict that started in 1993. Food production is the dominant activity, and coffee and tea are the nation's biggest earners. They accounted for 8 per cent of agriculture production but for no less than 90 per cent of export earnings before the conflict started.

The collapse of the international coffee and tea markets in the 1990s added a heavy burden to the economy. These external factors were compounded by the destruction by armed rebels of about half of the country's coffee-washing stations, the destruction of one tea factory and serious damage to other factories. Violence also affected other agroindustrial facilities in the cotton, palm oil and sugar subsectors.

Since 2002, more than 300,000 displaced people have returned to their birthplaces and original villages in Burundi. The issues of land ownership, and lack of land and other economic alternatives in agricultural activities complicate their reinsertion into the economy.

From an agricultural point of view, soils on the plateau are generally good. In some areas, farmers struggle to produce crops because of the low fertility of the soils and the steep nature of the hills on which they plant. Common cropping practices are primarily based on crop associations – most frequently, beans, sorghum, cassava, millet and maize. Almost without exception, farms also include livestock, mainly small animals.

The rapidly growing population, which doubles in size every 30 years or so, faces the problem of land that is becoming less available and increasingly unproductive. Generalized overexploitation and erosion do not allow for a fallow period, which is the traditional way of maintaining soil fertility. Farmers have little or no capital to invest in chemical fertilizers.

The growth rate of the GDP was negative for several years until it picked up again in 2004. In 2002 per capita GDP had fallen to US\$110 from US\$210 in 1990. After 2005, reforms to stabilize the economy, recover public finance and improve governance led to an economic recovery. The GDP growth rate rose to 5.9 per cent in 2006 but had dropped back to 3.9 per cent by 2010.

The impact of conflict on the distribution of income and wealth has been significant in both urban and rural areas. The extent and the depth of poverty have become greater. Inflation has wiped out much of the Burundians' purchasing power.

Fishermen are active on Lake Tanganyika, bordering the United Republic of Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but their market outreach is fairly limited.



IFAD's strategy in Burundi

IFAD has funded nine programmes and projects in Burundi for a total investment of US\$141 million. IFAD's experience in the country confirms that even under adverse circumstances programmes and projects conceived and designed on the basis of adequate consultations with and incentives to rural communities can help improve household food security.

During more than a decade of open conflict in Burundi, IFAD continued to implement programme and project activities. In keeping with its mandate for rural and agricultural development, the organization supported participation in social development and the cohesion of rural communities that were directly or indirectly affected by massacres and combat. By continuing activities in the face of insecurity and within the constraints of an international embargo on Burundi, IFAD helped communities maintain a sense of normalcy.

The experience acquired during that period strengthened the organization's understanding of conflict situations. IFAD emerged in a stronger position to facilitate participation by communities and supplement the government's reduced ability to provide services to rural poor people.

IFAD has worked with post-conflict governments, which have regularly repaid their loans, and with local communities, which have been involved in preparing and implementing programmes and projects. In Burundi the organization also works with other United Nations agencies and NGOs.

IFAD is now in a strong position to contribute to an effective strategy of assistance and policy dialogue for Burundi's reconstruction. The organization's strategy in Burundi promotes rural communities' "ownership" of social capital reconstruction and productive processes and employment.

The implementation of IFAD's post-conflict strategy contributes to:

- Building up the resilience of Burundi's rural areas to violent conflict and regenerating sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable households.
- Establishing effective mechanisms to support community-driven planning and implementation of sustainable community projects.
- Improving the capacity and accountability of local government for planning and monitoring how services are provided for rural people.
- Enforcing an effective policy of encouraging NGOs and private organizations to deliver such services.

Total number of programmes and projects: 9 Total cost: US\$298.5 million Total financing from IFAD:

Directly benefiting: 496,820 households

US\$141.0 million

- Acquiring sufficient practical experience to design both an overall policy and specific programmes and projects with the aim of developing rural microfinance institutions in the context of post-conflict reconstruction.
- Promoting effective participation of women in the peace building and post-conflict reconstruction processes so they can have a significant share of the benefits of projects and programmes.
- Improving financial control, reporting, monitoring and evaluation of ongoing and future IFAD projects.

IFAD approved its Country Strategic Opportunities Programme (COSOP) for Burundi in 2008. The strategic approach is to adapt interventions to the evolution of stability in the areas where operations are under way or about to be initiated.

The current country programme includes four operations, two of which – the Transitional Programme of Post-Conflict Reconstruction, designed in the context of the crisis, and the Livestock Sector Rehabilitation Support Project – focus on community development with the aim of rebuilding the conflict-torn society. Two new operations – the Agricultural Intensification and Value Enhancing Support Project, and the Value Chain Development Programme – were approved in 2009 and 2010, after the crisis period.

In the more peaceful context now prevalent in Burundi, the four operations are having a positive impact on beneficiaries. IFAD is expected to add other operations totalling more than US\$100 million in the near future.

IFAD-funded programmes and projects emphasize community development committees, an innovative feature and a key contribution to the decentralization process. The multisector nature of programmes and projects enables them to offer a diversified response that is adapted to the need for reconstruction and recapitalization in rural areas.

The country programme is evolving towards an approach centred on implementing profitable economic activities, developing subsectors and including vulnerable groups in economic initiatives.

As IFAD provided technical assistance to Burundi throughout the duration of the conflict, the organization acquired an in-depth knowledge of poverty in the country, of vulnerable groups and of their adaptation strategies. It has developed a range of interventions to restore the social fabric and rebuild the working capital of households affected by the post-conflict crisis. They are based on community accountability and their aim is to enable the most vulnerable people, particularly women, to access project benefits.

IFAD invests in creating jobs and generating income through production and services initiated and managed by small-scale producers. These include seed production, nurseries and rice-growing. The involvement of participants in formulating and monitoring rural development policies is an important feature of interventions.

In Burundi, IFAD orients its activities towards generating economic opportunities and improving food and income security for rural households, particularly for the poorest households. At the same time, it will contribute to the government's objectives to restore social cohesion and re-establish democratic governance.

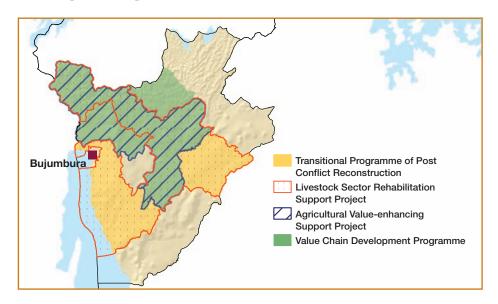
The country programme's strategic objectives are to:

- Facilitate poor rural people's access to new economic opportunities
- Strengthen poor people's organizations, enabling them to access services and resources, and participate in rural development policies
- Facilitate participation by women and vulnerable groups in the economic initiatives supported by the programme.

The targeting strategy for IFAD-funded projects is inclusive of all small-scale producers in the priority subsectors in the project areas. It facilitates inclusion of women and other poor people in production and other parts of the value chain, as well as in producers' organizations and in national decision-making bodies.

IFAD will continue to work in partnership with the government and to forge partnerships with donors, civil society organizations and the private sector in Burundi.

Ongoing operations



Value Chain Development Programme

The Value Chain Development Programme is designed to facilitate greater professionalization and organization among smallholder agricultural producers within viable agricultural value chains, and to help reduce the country's grain and dairy deficit. The project's goals are to:

- Reduce poverty and improve food security in rural areas through the development of agricultural value chains.
- Empower smallholder farmers to play a central role so that they can achieve maximum value added in their production and increase their income.

The project will:

- Assist public and private institutions, civil society and organizations of rural poor people in forming quality partnerships to promote two main value chains (rice and milk) and six other secondary value chains.
- Build the human, physical and technical capacity of poor smallholder farmers to enable them to protect their productive assets, increase their production of rice and milk and raise their incomes in a sustainable manner.
- Allow producers' organizations to make the most of the value added to their produce through better market access.

The programme will directly reach 77,500 rural family farm households, or approximately 387,000 people. Around 262,000 people, as well as hundreds of grassroots associations, economic interest groups and services providers, will also benefit indirectly from the programme.

As of March 2012, results include:

- Value chain development. 5,761 people, including 3,457 women, have received training and sensitization on value chain development.
- Vulnerable groups. 5,383 vulnerable individuals, of whom 70 per cent are women, have been sensitized on issues such as HIV/AIDS, health and nutrition; and 216 women have successfully asserted their rights through legal aid support.
- Intensified cultivation. 26 seed multiplication associations have received seeds and other inputs with a value of US\$141,573, and their members have been trained in quality seed multiplication (including potatoes, cassava, rice and maize).
- Livestock solidarity scheme. 1,500 future beneficiaries of improved breed cattle have been identified and trained in animal husbandry techniques; and 1,825 local cattle have been artificially inseminated from the Friesian breed.
- Rural infrastructure. Anti-erosion ditches have been dug over an area of 2,597 ha and are in the process of being replanted.

Total cost: US\$73.8 million

Approved DSF grant: US\$39.6 million

Cofinancing: OPEC Fund for International
Development (US\$11.9 million),

World Food Programme (US\$9.1 million)

Duration: 2010-2019

Directly benefiting: 77,500 households

Total cost: US\$31.6 million
Approved DSF grant: US\$13.6 million
Cofinancing: European Union
(US\$6.0 million), to be determined
(US\$2.5 million), World Food Programme
(US\$4.7 million)

Duration: 2009-2017

Directly benefiting: 30,000 households

Agricultural Intensification and Value-enhancing Support Project

The project area covers six provinces north and east of the capital, Bujumbura. The project was designed in a post-crisis context, and it will contribute to the fight against poverty among the country's most vulnerable groups.

In Burundi population growth and the return of refugees have resulted in heavy pressure on the land. The average farm size is shrinking, the soil is rapidly becoming degraded, and virtually all public land has been distributed or occupied. Food insecurity and malnutrition are becoming chronic for a large percentage of households.

IFAD channels financing for the project through a grant, which will have no impact on the country's debt. The project's objectives are to develop organized and sustainable family farming to allow small-scale rural producers to increase their incomes. The target group consists mainly of small-scale hillside farmers, and a secondary group includes farmers in the marshlands that the project will rehabilitate or develop.

The project's specific objectives are to:

- Support public and private institutions, civil society and organizations of poor rural people, and make them stakeholders in partnerships for agricultural development, piloting interventions that can be replicated at national level.
- Work with poor small-scale farmers to help them build their human, physical and technical capacity to protect productive assets, increase productivity, improve nutrition and raise incomes.
- Improve market access to permit producers' organizations to make the most of value added to their produce.

Activities will focus on reinforcing and protecting productive capital, supporting the enhancement of the value of agricultural production and the development of infrastructure, and facilitating project implementation and coordination.

Communities, associations and cooperatives will be fully involved in the decision-making process and there will be a focus on mobilizing local technical assistance capacity.

As IFAD's partners and cofinanciers in the project, Belgian Technical Cooperation will be responsible for activities related to seed production, and Gutwera Neza, financed by the European Union, will support community development centres. The project will maintain close contact with marshlands development projects, particularly those financed by the World Bank and the United Nations system. It will work to link them to the initiative for dissemination of the system of rice intensification. The World Food Programme will help identify participants and support infrastructure projects. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations will support the establishment of teaching farms.



As of March 2012, results include:

- **Nutrition and incomes**. The project has succeeded in reducing the number of households living in extreme poverty by 7 per cent; the incidence of malnutrition in infants has declined by 4.6 per cent; and direct beneficiaries have seen their incomes increase by an average of 64 per cent.
- Rehabilitation of eroded and deforested areas. Anti-erosion ditches have been dug over an area of 4,681 ha; and 6,248,269 trees have been planted, including many fruit trees
- Intensified cultivation. The project has rehabilitated 829 ha and reclaimed 257 ha of marshland; 672 people have been trained in intensive rice cultivation, and have since doubled their production; agricultural production overall has increased by 35 per cent, with higher yields of rice, beans, maize and bananas; and about 3,000 ha have been planted with forage for livestock.
- Livestock solidarity scheme. 1,200 improved breed heifers and 10 bulls have been distributed; and 1,292 poor households have received goats.
- Infrastructure. The project has constructed and equipped 6 warehouses and 1,210 modern sheds for livestock; and 51 km of paved roads have been created for access to the rehabilitated marshlands.

Total cost: US\$17.8 million
Approved DSF grant: US\$14.0 million

Duration: 2008-2014

Directly benefiting: 100,000 households

Livestock Sector Rehabilitation Support Project

Farm animals are essential to many poor rural households in Burundi. They provide food and cash income, as well as manure to preserve soil fertility and improve yields of staple crops. The livestock sector in the country declined dramatically during the 12 years of civil war, and its recovery is slow, despite strong demand for animal products. Much of the population is too poor to buy livestock. Farmers who do own animals lack access to forage, animal health services and livestock support services. As a result, productivity is low.

The grant approved under the debt sustainability framework helps finance a project to raise livestock productivity and improve the food security and incomes of poor farmers. The project will also help add value to animal products such as meat, dairy products and honey by developing markets and processing technologies and facilities. It will target vulnerable groups, including women, returnees and landless people and other people with few assets.

Specifically the project will help:

- Raise the productivity of small-scale livestock farmers by improving fodder quality and smallstock breeds, as well as providing training and participative learning in improved production and marketing practices.
- Improve community-based animal health and disease control by ensuring that vulnerable households have access to para-veterinary services and by reporting contagious animal diseases to higher-level animal health services.
- Improve private sector delivery of inputs and processing facilities.
- Empower community committees to manage local development and contribute to policy decisions on animal health and management.

As of March 2012, results include:

- Health and nutrition. The project has helped improve the nutritional intake of children under 5 years of age; chronic malnutrition in the target area has fallen from 46 to 27 per cent; and severe malnutrition has declined from 5.6 to 4.4 per cent.
- Capacity-building. The project has provided training and capacity-building for 292 hillside community development committees and 43 community development committees; and has created 76 farmer field schools with a total membership of 4,166 producers, 60 per cent of whom are women.
- Livestock. 16,762 households have received livestock in the form of goats, pigs and rabbits, and beehives; 1,393 community agents for animal health have been appointed and trained; and 5,135 artificial inseminations carried out have resulted in the birth of 1,643 calves.
- Forage cultivation. 16 farmers have been trained in seed production for improved varieties of forage.
- Rural infrastructure. 4 collection centres have been constructed for milk and 7 for honey.
- Improved incomes. Average incomes have risen from BIF 102,105 to BIF 3,063,150 per season for forage production associations; from BIF 21,000 to BIF 78,000 per month for pig farmers; and from BIF 11,833 to BIF 65,000 per month for the recipients of bulls for breeding.

Transitional Programme of Post-Conflict Reconstruction

The programme primarily benefits 100,000 vulnerable rural households in the provinces of Bujumbura Rural and Bururi in the west and Ruyigi in the east. Most of those who are expected to benefit work on small farms and face chronic food insecurity.

The objectives of the programme are regeneration of rural livelihood and reconstruction of social capital. The programme consolidates previous IFAD operations in Bururi and Ruyigi. It works to restructure farm production through donating cattle

Total cost: US\$35.7 million IFAD loan: US\$16.4 million

Cofinancing: OPEC Fund for International Development (US\$10 million); Belgian Fund for Food Security (US\$6.27 million); Government of Burundi (US\$2.8 million); beneficiaries (US\$0.37 million)

Duration: 2006-2012 (to be extended to 2014)

Directly benefiting: 74,000 households



and building plant nurseries, and it supports various training projects focusing on community development, legal issues, HIV/AIDS and literacy. Legal support is offered to women and vulnerable groups who were subjected to violence during the conflict.

Essential rural infrastructure, including drinking water systems, wells and feeder roads, are being rehabilitated and large areas of swampland reclaimed. By intervening specifically in Bujumbura Rural, where armed rebels are still active, the programme supports the government and the international community's efforts in the implementation of peace.

The programme's ultimate objective is to help restore the dignity and livelihoods of rural poor people after many years of war.

IFAD and the Belgian Fund for Food Security (formerly the Belgian Survival Fund) are preparing additional activities to support socio-sanitary development in Bujumbura rural province.

As of March 2012, results include:

- Community development. 581 hillside development committees and 27 community development committees have been established and trained.
- Legal support. 990 paralegals have been trained from among community representatives; a total of 979 mediation sessions have been organized to resolve local conflicts; and 497 vulnerable individuals have benefited from legal support.
- Development of vulnerable groups. 168 income-generating groups have set up small enterprises thanks to access to microcredit; 11,382 people have received literacy training; and 168 young orphans have received professional training.
- Intensified cultivation. 23,800,000 high-yielding cassava cuttings and 84,142 oil palm plants have been distributed; and 1,293 ha of marshland have been reclaimed and converted into rice paddy.
- Livestock solidarity scheme. 682 cattle, 1,345 pigs and 12,516 goats have been distributed; and a further 308 cattle, 2,637 goats and 728 pigs have been passed on to other community members.
- Rural infrastructure. The programme has built two rural health centres and rehabilitated a further two, serving 86,600 rural inhabitants; 11,295 households now have access to drinking water thanks to the provision of new wells and a piped access system; and 75 km of rural roads have been rehabilitated.

Completed operations

Rural Recovery and Development Programme

Total cost: US\$34.2 million IFAD loan: US\$20.0 million

Cofinancing: OPEC Fund for International Development (US\$8.3 million), Government of Burundi (US\$3.5 million), World Food

Programme (US\$1.2 million)

Duration: 1999-2009

Geographical area: Cibitoke, Gitega, Karuzi

and Kayanza provinces

Directly benefiting: 40,000 households

Ruyigi Rural Resources Management Project

Total cost: US\$11.0 million IFAD loan: US\$7.0 million

Cofinancing: OPEC Fund for International Development (US\$2.5 million), Government

of Burundi (US\$1.5 million) Duration: 1995-2003

Geographical area: Ruygi province Directly benefiting: 10,000 households

Bututsi Agro-Pastoral Development Project

Total cost: US\$19.8 million IFAD loan: US\$9.0 million

Cofinancing: African Development Bank (US\$9.0 million), Government of Burundi (US\$1.8 million), National Bank for Economic Development (US\$0.1 million)

Duration: 1989-2005

Geographical area: Bututsi region in south-western Bururi province Directly benefiting: 10,000 households

Integrated Rural Development Project/ Ngozi III

Total cost: US\$28.9 million IFAD loan: US\$7.0 million

Cofinancing: International Development Association (US\$16.0 million), Kuwait Fund (US\$3.0 million), Government of Burundi (US\$ 2.9 million)

Duration: 1983-1989

Geographical area: Ngozi province in

central Burundi

Directly benefiting: 150,000 households

East Mpanda Rural Development Project

Total cost: US\$42.4 million IFAD Ioan: US\$14.5 million

Cofinancing: African Development Fund (US\$9.5 million), Government of Burundi (US\$9.7 million), European Development Fund (US\$5.9 million), OPEC Fund for International Development (US\$2.0 million), World Food Programme (US\$850,000)

Duration: 1980-1993

Geographical area: lower Ruzizi Valley,

in western Burundi

Directly benefiting: 5,320 households

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For further information on rural poverty in Burundi, visit the Rural Poverty Portal:



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