

Editorial

The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is at the centre of sustainable development. Sustainable rural development is vital to the economic, social and environmental viability of nations. It is essential for poverty eradication since global poverty is overwhelmingly rural. The manifestation of poverty goes beyond the urban-rural divide; it has sub-regional and regional contexts. It is therefore critical, and there is great value to be gained, to coordinate rural development initiatives that contribute to sustainable livelihoods through efforts at the global, regional, national and local levels, as appropriate. Strategies to deal with rural development should take into consideration the remoteness and potential in rural areas and provide targeted differentiated approaches. A healthy and dynamic agricultural sector is an important foundation of rural development, generating strong linkages to other economic sectors. Rural livelihoods are enhanced through effective participation of rural people and rural communities in the management of their own social, economic and environmental objectives by empowering people in rural areas, particularly women and young people, including through organisations such as local young people cooperative, and by applying a bottom-up approach. Close economic integration of rural areas with neighbouring urban areas and the creation of rural off-farm employment can narrow rural-urban disparities, expand opportunities and encourage the retention of skilled people, including youth, in rural areas. There is considerable potential for rural job creation not only in farming, agro-processing and rural industry, but also in building rural infrastructure, in the sustainable management of natural resources, waste and residues. Rural communities in developing countries are still faced with challenges related to access to basic services, economic opportunities and some degree of incoherence with regard to planning related to the rural-urban divide. Investments in environmental protection, rural infrastructure and in rural health and education are critical to sustainable rural development and can enhance national well-being. Beyond meeting basic needs, investments must be linked to the potential to raise productivity and income. The vulnerabilities of the rural poor to the economic and financial crisis and to climate change and water shortage must be addressed.

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