

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

Summary available at:
http://km.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fsn/docs/SUMMARY_RD_Evolution.doc

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Duration:	from 04.09.2009 to 09.10.2009
Number of participants:	10
Number of Contributions:	12

II. INTRODUCTION OF THE TOPIC

Hi,

My name is Jan Michiels and I am a Consultant working in the Policy Assistance and Resource Mobilization Division Service of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). I am currently writing a paper analyzing Rural Development's past, present and likely future trends including projects and policies covering the full spectrum from the local to the regional, national and international field.

Rural Development (RD) is playing an increasingly significant role in both developing and developed nations' policy frameworks. Initial attempts to impact rural areas, since 1950s, used mainly sectoral approaches as entry points, through top-down often blue-print driven frameworks. Recent interventions have become more grassroots-based, community driven through participatory actions and with a cross-sectional and highly integrated and spatial oriented development approach which centres on people's livelihoods and wellbeing.

I have drafted three questions which I would appreciate to hear your views on:

- A key component of rural development is agriculture. The thinking has, however, evolved towards a more holistic approach that aims at achieving broader objectives of area development and livelihoods' improvement applied to the rural space. **Given this, what are the essential components of a modern comprehensive rural development strategy/ approach and if possible could you share case studies which encompass your views?**
- **Can you provide evidence to-date on the impact and effectiveness that the shift of paradigms/approaches have had in a developing or transition country context?**
- The number of actors involved in rural development assistance programs has increased dramatically in the last decades. **What are the effects of this evolution based on existing evidence, and what implications are there for a conducive environment for RD?**

Thank you for having taken time to read this note and for providing any comments and suggestions you may find relevant.

Warm regards,

Jan Michiels,

Rome, Italy

III. LIST OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Contribution by Muhammad Shoaib Ahmedani from the PMAS Arid Agriculture University, Pakistan

Like other developing countries of the globe, there exists a strong positive correlation between socio-economic status of the rural people and their level of education in Pakistan.

Unfortunately rural areas had always been deprived from education since creation of Pakistan. Before partition we may find some notable educational institutions in remote areas, which contributed a lot in promotion of education level of the rural community. But with the passage of time colonial thinking prevailed and the English medium western based institutions were promoted and confined to the urban areas only. All commanding sections supported this agenda just to favor the Land lords who needed bonded/cheap labor to work at their farms.

That is a why we had witnessed that all regimes and all sort of bureaucracies followed and supported this agenda and shifted their families and kids from villages to large cities for getting their english medium education from good institutes. That is a why today we don't see any single top class educational institution in rural area of the country. This state of affairs deprived the rural communities from getting education. Karachi, Lahore and twin city Rawalpindi/Islamabad were graciously blessed with double digit universities and other professional institutions in the public sector. The private sector also selected these large cities keeping inview higher paying capacity of the parents residing in the urban areas. The concentration of educational institutions in specific parts of the country provided benefit to specific communities. The poor students and communities of the remote area were unable to get costly education in the large cities. That is why we see poverty in rural areas of Pakistan. When we deny right of the people for getting higher education, the young brain with no dimension is often misled by the anti-human anti-state elements.

Today disharmony of the country is basically more in rural areas than that in settled or urban areas. By adopting following measures we may encourage our youth force to participate in development of Pakistan.

1. Every division of the country should have at least three universities including technical, agricultural and general education university.
2. Cadet Colleges/schools both for boys and girls be opened at union council level throughout the country.
3. All educational institutions should either be converted to English medium or English must be declared as a compulsory subject right from class-1. If it is not convenient then English and Urdu medium students should not be judged by the same examiners in the competitive examinations. Because we have seen that so called elites are trying to dominate English language over all other languages of the rural areas. That is why intellectual students of the rural areas are deprived from good jobs as well as admission in universities merely because of their poor spoken English. There is no need to mention importance of native languages. Today supremacy of USA, China, Russia, France, Germany and UK is just because their researchers and students were taught in their local languages. That is why their concepts became clear and they advanced rapidly as compared to those like Pakistan where the researcher feel confusion in communication of knowledge.
4. 75 % local and foreign scholarships may be reserved for the students of rural areas to fill the gap that had been created since 62 years between the rural and urban communities.
5. Job and health facilities which at present are not comparable to those in urban areas should be improved.

6. Justice system be improved in rural areas. The fear of peoples relating to costing of their votes freely and independently be removed by improving justice.

I am strong in my opinion that once the above steps are taken in letter and spirit and with sincerity and devotion, the development of rural areas will take place automatically through their representation in shape of officers in every disciplines of life. Otherwise there exists a strong negative correlation between the sustainable rural development and promotion of education in the urban areas. In Pakistan both rural and urban areas need a lot of improvement yet rural areas are many times more deprived as compared to the urban areas. So our policy should address development of both the areas in away that both become at same level with in few years.

Contribution by Tesfaye Haile Dargie from SNV, Sudan

Thank you, Jan Michiels,

The discussion issue you have raised is really fundamental.
I am Tesfaye Haile an Economic development advisor working for SNV Sudan.
I am sharing with you my views.

The modern rural development strategy is now shifting from intensive agricultural production to Eco friendly development. This approach is ensuring sustainable development in the rural areas. In the Northern Part of Ethiopia there is one project supported by WFP looking into environmental protection and development. In these project areas now the dry mountain are changing to green forest cover and also producing fruit and other food stuff.
The liberal free economy may not always work in rural poor settings. I support a rural development governance system encompassing public private partnership with high level of participation of the rural communities.

The focus for rural development and the number of actors working on it is very encouraging. That should be the future focus of the world economic system. We shall keep our rural areas as rural as they are but with modern facilities. We shall protect them before they are converted to bare urban settling places without any production to feed others. This can happen if the public and private sector work together with higher level of participation of the local communities.

Tesfaye Haile Dargie

Contribution by Khadim Hussain, Pakistan

I think the questions Jan Michiels has put forward (comprehensive rural development strategy/ approach, shift of paradigms/approaches and what implications are there for a conducive environment for RD?) are very heavy and only big papers and researches may properly deal with these.

Recently I wrote the context of the rural women in Pakistan. I am attaching this herewith, in fact to problematize the whole situation. Though it is a kind of a general sitrep, it may bring back the focus of the discussion.

CONTEXT OF THE RURAL WOMEN IN PAKISTAN **by Khadim Hussain**

Socio-economic scene of the developing world is dominated by agriculture; it is not only the main characteristic and distinction of such societies but all the structural problems of their political systems are caused by this factor. In other words, a large portion of their population lives in the rural areas and people earn their living by working in the agricultural-related professions. Thus

the issue of rural development is pivotal to the status and future strength of these countries while the well being of an extremely large part of humanity hinges on the governmental policy and efforts towards this end.

The images and perceptions associated with the word “rural”, particularly in South Asia, are poverty, illiteracy, lack of infrastructure & social amenities, overwhelming powers of the big land-holder families, lack of opportunities, backwardness, conservatism and decadence. These problems and the root causes of such a state of affairs are historical in nature; truly the history of travails of the rural sector can best be depicted by the history of rural women. Once the bedrock of the productive system and thus the kingpin of rural economy, rural woman has continuously been losing her importance and hence the status. At present a poor rural woman in Pakistan is one of the most vulnerable human beings on the face of earth.

The village for centuries has been playing the role of a foundation of South Asian society. Once, this was the most autonomous and independent unit—having every aspect of life and each institution of maintenance & development being integrated intrinsically—and hence had been functioning and performing automatically. This means village had its own political system, economy and produce-distribution mechanism, belief system, maintenance of tradition and customs, entertainment, health, education and justice systems. Cities, rather, were considered an artificial outgrowth of this society; in spite of being power centers, these were considered a fearsome, exploitative and usurping entity which very much depended on the village for food. This is typical of South Asia that it went through continuous invasions and migrations from the northwest and thus village was continuously plundered of its resources and produce. The food producers turned into slave-like populations but the village remained resilient as a social entity that it has existed to date. This has been entirely due to the tough rural woman who was and is determined to take every oppression and suppression on her soul and body but kept the survival of her children intact. It seems that, her men-folk mostly couldn't stand the ground; if they fought were defeated, sometimes they ran away, at time they rebelled against the power but left the villages; and interesting of all, they passed on the miseries towards their women by suppressing them more and more. Rural woman took every attack and disaster on her only to ensure the forward march of humanity, a future for her off-springs.

As is widely known today the village society was an ecological society, with inbuilt thought and process, for sustainable and environment-friendly productive systems and practices. The traditions, the customs and folktales all were geared towards protecting, conserving and developing the natural resources. On the other hand, extraneous forces have been threatening this system because of their greed for power and wealth. This continues to this day. Village is broken into pieces today and her queen, the farming woman, has lost her crown, i.e., the village's productive system. All its institutions are linked to and commanded by the state's departments which are run by the offices in the cities—this has been a gradual process, from the era of kingdoms, through colonialism and neocolonialism to the present globalization phase.

Land and its ownership remained the main casualty at the hand of external forces. From a position of collective ownership it gradually was diverted to private ownership and the ownership and control shifted towards the powerful. As a result majority of the poor farmers and the women have been rendered landless. Very recently, ownership and control is going to the foreign countries either via “corporate farming phenomenon” or by direct handing over of large tracts of land by the state to foreigners. Meanwhile, because of the male dominance, women have always been refused to own/control their share of inherited land. This alienation of land has had far-reaching consequences for the status and decision-making power of rural women.

Next has been a shift in cropping pattern. With the increasing attraction for cash crops, rural women have been rendered helpless in ensuring food security for their households. This not only made her and her girls children malnourished but further deteriorated her social status; along with reducing her role in decision making. This situation set in motion a perpetual neglect for the girl children and a process of keeping the rural women in the state of being malnourished and extremely vulnerable health-wise. In addition, with the mechanization of agriculture and

onslaught of unsustainable methods of cultivation the crucial role of women in managing food stocks, seeds, organic fertilizer, natural / herbal pesticides has drastically been curtailed.

On the whole, a large section of poor farming households faced what is called “pauperization of the rural communities”. This has happened simply because farming activities hardly earned these households a living and these gradually sold out their assets like livestock, trees, ornament and finally lands. Obviously they leave their villages and end up in the cities’ slums where their last (social) asset, i.e. the dignity also dissipates away. So, rural woman, once in fair control of her circumstances, ends up in being vulnerable to all kinds of threats including social crimes.

In addition to this economic-based displacement, rural women also face displacements because of conflict and disasters like earthquakes, floods and droughts. All such phenomena of displacement and dislocation play very heavy on the psyche of rural woman. It is similar to a situation when some wildlife is forced to leave its habitat—it finally becomes extinct. No doubt the injustice has existed in the history and the women in the past were also living in an atmosphere of male-dominance and discrimination and today no woman should be advocating for the return of the past; still the rural woman has lost an instrumental place in the society by being pushed away from the agricultural production system and is gradually entering the service sector of the rural life. The social domain and space of the rural woman has been curtailed more than anything else. In a prototype traditional village set up, she would become a grandmother at the age of 30-33 years and would command a proud influence in all spheres of village life (for various reasons the fertility was far less than in the modern era). And now, earlier she marries more vulnerable to health hazards she is. In that environment rural woman was in control of herself, her household and the world surrounding her. Today, she, once an inheritor and promoter of a civilization, is virtually on a deathbed. It is time to resurrect her.

In Pakistan this woman has many faces. She is a woman of a bonded farmer family (called bonded *Haaris*, meaning peasant) in various parts of rural Sindh. She is generally a Hindu, extremely poor, having no freedom what so ever, continuously under the threat of various oppressions including the sexual abuse from the landlord and even her men can’t protect her. If she is freed from this virtual captivity due to some human right campaign, she faces another horrible scenario in the absence of any legal identity, place to live or a skill to work; rather faces a lot of stigma being a Hindu in Pakistan. Her usual face is of a woman of a small farmer or peasant family; being adult as a daughter or wife she works round the clock, extremely malnourished and not able to have full meal twice a day. In another avatar, she is a displaced rural woman, under trauma and stress, struggling to understand why God has done this to her. She earns an extremely small amount of money for her family, which is barely enough to survive, as the men can’t find work. Another face of a rural woman, which is not much known, is the woman not involved in agriculture but is involved in traditional professions of artisanship and lives in the rural area. The most miserable form is of the woman of indigenous people of South Asia who used to live along the rivers’ banks and depended on fishing and forests. Once these had the ability and system of moving/traveling/shifting along the rivers’ banks; now they are stuck in little islands in the beds of the rivers continuously threatened by the land-grabbers and the government to leave their settlements. In whatever form, rural woman is calling for and is struggling to:

- Have the right to stay on the land she has been living and working for centuries. Government must ensure her right to life and food without dislocating her.
- Reclaim her dignity which was based on productive status and decision making power.
- Regain her land which had been taken away from her over a period centuries, in various ways; it is government’s obligation to remove this historical anomaly.
- Demand an integrated rural development program and policy to save her from extinction.

Contribution by Zeidy Chunga Liu from the University of Córdoba, Spain

Hello Jan Michiels:

My name is Zeidy Chunga Liu; I am specialized in Rural Development and have had the opportunity to work in rural areas of Peru, and to analyze carefully some cases in Andalusia, Spain.

Your questions are quite complex to answer, in that sense I agree with Khadim Hussain, but I'll try to answer based on what I have seen.

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. Most rural areas have communication problems because of the geographical complexity and / or demographic dispersion, and also feature problems of environmental sustainability, either due to exploitation of resources, or due to their abandonment. Social problems such as disadvantages in education, health, leisure services and state registration services also prevail. Migration, especially of the younger population who does not see in the rural areas a place to develop their aspirations, causes other problems such as aging and lack of generational replacement.

Despite this, the demands placed on the rural areas are high:

- They are the main resource generating areas; including water and energy
- Rural areas are suppliers of raw materials, especially food,
- They are the cradle of biodiversity and vast cultural heritage,
- Rural areas provide areas with beautiful scenery and peaceful atmosphere, with comprehensive services for days of rest and vacation,
- They are expected to retain its population to prevent fuelling urban poverty.

It becomes clear that agriculture is just one of the many components that shape rural areas, reminding that we must not forget the non-farm rural areas (areas of fishermen, hunters and gatherers, or protected areas where agriculture is restricted).

However, I can say that in some areas thinking has not evolved and continues to promote rural development from a strictly agricultural approach.

This results in the implementation of projects with serious limitations, general objectives that fail because they are targeting only a very specific sector.

In Peru assistance programs for farmers are applied under the name of rural development, forgetting that not all rural areas are dwelled by farmers as farming is only one aspect part of rural areas and that in many cases agriculture is not the main economic factor in rural households. In Andalusia, and many other parts of Europe, the administrative structure of rural development is subordinate to the administrative structure of agriculture.

It is very difficult to answer your question about the essential components of a modern strategy, simply because each rural area has its own reality. By definition strategies are plans developed based on space and time, ie, are inherent to the conditions and time in which they were developed.

The components are therefore very specific to the territory to which we refer, and to the development priorities identified. Many of the failures in development efforts are due to the implementation of strategies imported and transferred from elsewhere.

Perhaps it would be necessary to say that any rural development strategy should analyze the region's resources, the degree of real governance that the community has, the levels of participation of the population, the type of administrative structure responsible for the implementation of development strategies and the degree of consistency with other public policies already in place.

The involvement of stakeholders in rural development has increased as governments, policies, and the general public have recently turned to look at rural areas and have begun to realize that problems in rural areas can trigger problems in urban areas resulting in country wide crisis.

However, this increase of awareness and involvement is no guarantee of success as sometimes the different development actors aim at different types of development, and act in an uncoordinated manner. In the case of Peru and other South American countries, rural development projects are being implemented by dozens of organizations, incoherent with each other, and often working towards totally opposite ends. Perhaps in this context the European experience to channel projects through Local Development Groups, many private entities, but recognized publicly, might prove useful. This would allow focusing efforts in one direction and avoiding duplication of efforts with the consequent waste of resources.

Zeidy Chunga Liu
Rural Development Researcher
University of Córdoba

Original message in Spanish

Hello Jan Michiels:

Mi nombre es Zeidy Chunga Liu, me especializo acerca del Desarrollo Rural y he podido trabajar en las zonas rurales de Perú, y analizar de cerca algunos casos de Andalucía, España.

Tus preguntas son bastante complejas de responder, en ese sentido comparto la opinión de Khadim Hussain, pero voy a tratar de responder basándome en lo que he podido apreciar.

Aún cuando existe toda una nueva visión acerca del desarrollo y del desarrollo en las zonas rurales; y existe una renovada actuación en ellas, las zonas rurales tienen en sí serios problemas de sostenibilidad.

Una buena parte de las zonas rurales tienen problemas de comunicación por la complejidad geográfica y/o por dispersión demográfica; tienen también problemas de sostenimiento ambiental, ya sea por la explotación de los recursos, o por el abandono de ellos; problemas sociales, como desventajas en servicios educativos, sanitarios, servicios de ocio, y servicios de registro estatal. Tienen problemas de migración, especialmente de la población más joven que no encuentra en la zona rural un lugar para el desarrollo de sus aspiraciones, ello ocasiona otros problemas que son el envejecimiento y la falta de relevo generacional.

A pesar de esto, aún se sigue demandando de las zonas rurales:

- Que sean generadoras de los principales recursos, entre ellos agua y energía
- Abastecedoras de las materias primas, especialmente de los alimentos,
- Guardianas de la biodiversidad y de los recursos patrimoniales,
- Zonas apacibles con bellos paisajes y a la vez, con amplios servicios para los días de reposo y vacacionales
- Museos vivos de la cultura tradicional, y que sobre todo,
- Retengan a su población para evitar los anillos de pobreza en las ciudades.

Bajo este punto de vista, la agricultura es uno más de los componentes de los territorios rurales, poniendo en claro también que no debemos olvidar a las zonas rurales no agrícolas (territorios de pescadores, de recolectores y cazadores, o zonas protegidas donde la agricultura está restringida).

Sin embargo, puedo decir que en algunas zonas el pensamiento no ha evolucionado y se sigue impulsando el desarrollo rural desde un enfoque sectorial agrario.

Esto trae como consecuencia la aplicación de proyectos con serias limitaciones, que no logran objetivos generales porque están dirigidos a un sector muy específico.

En Perú, se aplican bajo el concepto de desarrollo rural, programas de asistencia a los agricultores, olvidándose que no todos los territorios rurales tienen agricultores y que aún en los territorios agrícolas, los agricultores son sólo una parte del territorio, o que la agricultura ya no es, en muchos casos, el principal aporte económico en los hogares rurales.

En Andalucía, y en muchas otras partes de Europa, las estructuras administrativas impulsoras del Desarrollo Rural están subordinadas a una estructura administrativa del Sector Agrario.

Es muy difícil responder tu pregunta sobre los componentes esenciales de una estrategia moderna, sencillamente porque cada territorio rural tiene su propia realidad y porque por definición las estrategias son planes elaborados según el espacio y tiempo, es decir, son inherentes para las condiciones y el momento en el que fueron elaboradas.

Los componentes son, por lo tanto, muy propios del territorio al cual nos referimos, y de las prioridades del desarrollo que se quiera lograr. Muchos de los fracasos en los intentos del desarrollo se han debido a la implementación de estrategias importadas.

Quizás sí sería necesario decir que, para aplicar cualquier estrategia de desarrollo rural se debe analizar los recursos del territorio, el grado de gobernanza real que tenga la comunidad sobre ellos, los niveles de participación de la población, el tipo de estructura administrativa responsable de la ejecución de la estrategia de desarrollo y el grado de coherencia con el resto de las políticas públicas implementadas en el territorio, entre otros.

La participación de agentes en el Desarrollo Rural se ha incrementado ya que los gobiernos, las políticas, y la población en general recientemente ha girado a mirar a las zonas rurales, y ha empezado a tomar conciencia que el mal – estar de las zonas rurales desencadena en un mal-estar de las zonas urbanas y consecuentemente de todo un país.

Sin embargo, este aumento no es garantía de éxito, ya que algunas veces los agentes apuntan hacia distinto tipo de desarrollo, y actúan de forma descoordinada. En el caso de Perú y otros países sudamericanos, resulta caótico el trabajo para el desarrollo rural cuando se ejecutan proyectos implementados por decenas de organizaciones, desarticulados entre sí, y muchas veces con fines totalmente opuestos. Quizás en ese sentido es útil la experiencia europea de canalizar los proyectos a través de los Grupos de Desarrollo Local, entidades muchas de ellas privadas, pero reconocidas a nivel público. Ello permitiría lograr enfocar los esfuerzos en una sola dirección y evitar la duplicidad de funciones con el consecuente desperdicio de recursos.

Zeidy Chunga Liu
Investigadora en Desarrollo Rural
Universidad de Córdoba

Contribution by Anura Widana from New Zealand

Hi Jan,

My name is Anura Widana, a Community Development Specialist by profession. During my 28 + years of professional career in Asia-Pacific, Africa and the European countries, I've been working as a rural /social and livelihood development specialist. Hence, I've much to comment on and provide by way of suggestions on this topic. I've also provided links to some documents for those interested in further reading on this subject.

Congratulations for selecting this challenging and hard-to-conclude topic on a "comprehensive" review of rural development (RD)! Now that RD has been in operation for several decades with loads of work still to be undertaken, it is high time that a full review is undertaken. What are we doing and where we have gone wrong? What are the successes achieved under what circumstances? These are some of the questions that we need to ask though solutions are not always available. It is my understanding that we practitioners seem to be making lots of mistakes (still) after all these years of work on RD!

The elements of a comprehensive RD program that I have outlined in this document are all based on modeling, trials, evaluations and personal experience by doing it. Over the past 3 decades, I've learned a lot about RD from others especially from the rural people in many countries. I've had the opportunity to review a number of RD projects/programs, design new projects, engaged my self as team leader/member and evaluate RD programs and projects in a number of countries. In addition, I've reviewed contributions made by other authors on this discussion forum before writing up this note. As several other contributors have commented on, the subject of this discussion is vast but that is what rural development (RD) is all about!

Yes, the word "comprehensive" is vital. In my experience, the majority of past RD program initiatives seemed to have not understood what entails RD. As such, the majority in my view did not have a comprehensive approach. It is axiomatic that a comprehensive program should include all aspects and processes that are relevant to rural people and their livelihoods. On the contrary, if RD approach is sector-specific, the people will soon become frustrated about the program as it does 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 as well.

I try to summarize below the essential components which I have personally experienced as a RD practitioner. I've inserted a brief discussion under each component so as to enable the reader to understand what exactly I've meant. I can follow-up and elaborate on any of the areas listed below. However, the space and time are not adequate to address all these concerns within the context of this note. There may still be several other issues that others may wish to pick up or add on.

It is important to note that there are several types of people living in rural areas. The rich are not very much concerned whether there is RD or not. They have the means and resources to obtain what they want for a living. Nevertheless, the rich will also benefit from RD. What is important is to draw any resources from the rich in favor of RD which is quite possible. It is basically the poor in many rural areas who suffer a lot by not having the basic necessities of life. Hence, they become the first tier beneficiaries of RD activity.

Although rural areas throughout the world differ by their composition and actors involved, there are some generic principles and components that are expected to be in any program of RD. These can be recognized as unique principles that work across all rural areas. Hence, professionally, I can't agree with Zeidy who raises the difficult to answer the essential components of a modern strategy simply because each rural area has its own reality.

The important components and processes of RD can be summarized as follows:

1. Multi-sectoral, simultaneous and integrated approach. What I mean here is that a successful RD program should essentially be multi-sectoral, i.e. work on several sectors (water, agriculture, employment, infrastructure, etc.) simultaneously. For example, a savings program is only effective if it is tied up with an income generation component. Hence, work on both savings and income generation must be simultaneous to achieve a good success in rural savings. Another dimension of the sectoral approach that is increasingly becoming important is the ecological focus. Thus we have “re-built the need to become ecologically friendly in production as described by Tesfaye. However, this particular dimension is not given sufficient attention in the sectoral approach which is widely spoken of. The word “integrated” means all bits and pieces relevant are incorporated into the program. However, it is necessary that field entry will have to be made through a specific sector, i.e. water, forest protection, etc. and will work through all sectors in turn. The entry point can be identified through initial social assessments. The entry points most probably correspond to the “felt needs” of rural people.

2. Participatory principle. The word “participation” suggests that each phase of RD should be undertaken through a participatory process where all actors, the rural people in particular, need to be actively involved. The participation of rural people is not only to be encouraged but a must. RD can't be effective and sustainable unless it has the active participation of all actors, not to mention the very rural people. The participatory principle often is not understood sufficiently well. This trend is quite apparent through review of contributions in the present discussion. A true participatory process involves rural people (ultimate beneficiaries of the program) who will actively engage in planning, implementation, decision making, monitoring, evaluation and benefits sharing. For this to happen in an effective and sustainable manner, it is necessary that representatives of the rural community work together with other actors (government staff, NGOs, private sector representatives, Banks, etc.) in making decisions and to provide leadership in implementation. The rural people should take full control of implementation, supervision, education of fellow rural people and benefits sharing. The participation means not providing incentives, by way of cash, food, etc. for rural people to work. There is some “participation” in here which is recognized as passive participation. The essence is that the local people should be the focus and they should do planning, implementation and benefits sharing; in the interim, they may not be able to do all above activities by themselves and hence a facilitator is needed. Many RD programs secure the active participation of rural people in the analysis of resources, preparation of profiles, etc. but it is lacking through implementation process. Programs similar to above are examples that fail to deliver final goals with a low level of sustainability. The participation involves all people and occupations in rural area. The people, women and children in particular, in many instances, are little brought to the scene. Again, I do not include any discussion on the importance of women the subject already dealt by Khadim. Participation of all occupations is important. This means not only farmers but also forest dependant people, fishermen, herders, hunters, bee gatherers and so on. The need to involve occupations other than farmers has been amply demonstrated in the submission by Zeidy.

3. Evolving plan. Like any other activity, RD should have its own plan. However, a RD plan is different from others as it is not a blue print! In other words, the basic plan will undergo several changes before being implemented in the field. The main reasons for frequent changes of the draft plan are that we as RD practitioners do not have a perfect knowledge about rural area and the people living there. Hence, what is needed to implement in order to bring about an effective development of the area and its people is not clear at the outset but becomes clear only through its implementation. Secondly, one has to adjust the program to several changes that are obvious during the process of plan implementation. In accommodating changes, the draft plan will have to be changed accordingly. It is likely that changes will evolve together with progress of implementation by rural people. As new lessons are learnt, the draft plan and planning process itself will undergo changes.

4. Facilitation / strengthening of organizations. This is an area that has not been brought up by other contributors in the context of the present discussion. Hence, more discussion supported by further reading is provided. There are several organizations that exist in rural areas which provide

key inputs into RD process. Hence, these organizations should be facilitated and strengthened to produce better results and for the sustainability of what has been achieved. There are two issues that are to be highlighted. First, the formation of a village “committee” to take over the responsibility for RD is quite evident. All relevant stakeholders will merge at this committee which will be the focal point for planning, implementation, monitoring, funds allocation, and coordinating the program. This committee should be based in rural area (e.g. village) where the program is being implemented. It must hold public meetings on a regular basis to present to all rural people on what is being done, report program progress, resolve conflicts and to make important decisions covering all aspects. There are several good examples where this mechanism has been implemented with eventual good success. The second aspect is the formation (if there are no groups) and/or strengthening (if groups are already functioning) of small to large groups. Such organizations are called user organizations of which examples are farmers’ organizations in Sri Lanka, marketing organizations in Ghana, forest user groups in Nepal, fisheries and dairy co-operatives in India, etc. The grouping is done in a particular manner whereby every household in the area covered by the RD program is included in groups. Grouping is the essential mechanism to secure participation of all beneficiaries in an organized manner which will also address many other needs of rural people from savings to income generation and conflict resolution. The mechanics of grouping may have several tiers depending on the social composition and complexity of the rural area where the program is being implemented. The field-based groups will have to be federated to higher level to form federated organizations such as district federated forest user groups in Nepal, district farmers’ federation in Sri Lanka, etc. A federated user organization is a right step forward to strengthening the entire group structure from grassroots to the district and higher levels. There are large numbers of successes with poor people working through group formation and functioning in several countries. The main reason appears to have contributed the low level of sustainability of most RD program is the absence or ineffective grouping.

5. Coordination with other actors. Rural areas are characterized by the presence of several other organisations and individuals who have their own programs and priorities. Such programs include existing government programs, local private entrepreneurs, private companies with their agenda, community organizations, NGOs, other projects etc. There are also private contractors who have their own programs in rural areas. All these programs will certainly impact RD in different directions. It is to be expected that the impact of private programs will be purely on a few households but consequences will be on the entire community as a whole. A good example is the impact of timber extraction by private individuals. Their work will benefit themselves while causing many problems for rural people such as damage soil, accelerate silt deposit into reservoirs, contribute to loss of food, medicine, etc. In order to bring about an effective and sustainable development of rural areas, it is of paramount importance that programs of various actors are coordinated. The coordination is important for several reasons such as to fill gaps within the domain of RD, to remove harmful elements and to minimize work duplications. There are a number of examples that illustrate the increased effectiveness of RD after developing links with other actors. There are several levels within which this coordination is produced. Some possible levels are the district, division and the village. The author’s practical experience is that coordination is implemented at several levels in order to make it effective with higher degree of sustainability. The author is personally aware of a number instances where coordination has been attempted at the district or centre only and have resulted in several weaknesses.

6. Funding. Adequate funds to support RD are essential. Funds may come from outside the area or from within. There are large amounts contributed by local people which more often than not are unaccounted for. The coordination principle described above will help bring about a better balance in funding of RD. However, it is necessary that some funds are initially channelled from outside to spur the process of RD. Areas that can be worked through by local people and areas that need outside support should be clearly identified. If outside funds are required, it is necessary to examine the impact of sustainability after withdrawal of outside funding. Decision to fund everything from outside is weak planning. There are several ways that required funds can be generated from within. A principle that the author has learned is that a RD program that

supports 100% funds from outside is clearly unsustainable. This will create a high level of dependency of rural people on the program.

7. Income generation and savings. The twin-components are a must for success in RD, especially to secure the participation of poor people. For the poor, income generation and savings should be targeted at group level together with engaging other actors providing micro finance. The RD programs need to develop, support and actively facilitate income generation methods for local people. Another principle is to plan to save part of the income thus generated while the other part is utilized to build a community fund. The income generating activities that can be made available for rural people are vast and all such opportunities are to be explored and actively supported by the RD program.

8. Program continuity. This principle has not been understood by many agencies that support RD. It is not effective to plan for RD with a pre-conceived idea of support for a certain number years, say 4 years. The continuity in implementation is equally important as introduction of the program itself. The continuity does not mean that the modality of support throughout the implementation phase remains unchanged; indeed it should change. The author's personal experience in this area is that the RD program should be well supported until such time organizations are sufficiently strong enough to take control of it and that there is sufficient savings funds generated.

9. Dedicated staff. This is a very essential component of RD. Experience suggests that it is not possible to depend on the government staff to provide a high level of dedication to RD. They have numerous other tasks to attend to and the interests of staff may also vary. Many a government staff lack experiences in participatory planning and implementation. Therefore, a well-experienced and a core team of specialists should be involved in RD from its inception until such time the rural organizations and groups are sufficiently strong to plan and continue implementation by themselves. It is a must that the team should have an experienced specialist in rural or community development.

10. Awareness, education and training. These three components are indispensable for successful RD. The role of trio elements is vast. Muhammad has extensively contributed to the importance of education in general. Hence, I will add on awareness and training. The role of awareness creation and training is to share the knowledge on techniques, methods as well as processes such as conflicts resolution, group formation, etc. They will also develop necessary skills in rural people so that they are able to pass this knowledge to others within the community. The "training of trainers" has found to be a successful method to impart training of rural people.

11. Monitoring and documentation. These are two very important components of RD but unfortunately missing from many programs. How many of the successes are closely monitored and documented so that others could learn from?. The responsibility and role of monitoring should be discussed and agreed at program commencement. This should be discussed at regular meetings of the village committee referred to earlier. Groups should discuss and generate documentation. Some important documents should stay with the local people rather than filling shelves in a district office. Many other contributors have recognized the fact that there are several agencies at work. This is a healthy sign as long as there is some coordination and their work is documented. The external agency providing support to RD should not take the burden of monitoring and documentation. This is bad planning. The rural people should be assisted to write articles to local press and other media incorporating findings from their own monitoring work.

12. Conflicts resolution. Another basic item that contributes to success in RD. However, this component has not adequately discussed in the context of RD. The fact that several agencies are working and all rural people are included lead to many potential conflicts. Some components of RD program may affect business and other actors in a rural area. As an example, forest protection which will limit timber extraction by rich and powerful people will generate conflicts

between timber merchants and rural people. If there is no mechanism to resolve such conflicts, it is obvious that the conflicts will undermine the success achieved by RD. It is for this reason that an effective conflict resolution program should be recognized as part of the RD program. The conflicts will have to be resolved at different levels. The groups are able to resolve many conflicts that arise from member's interactions at the local level. The village committee is able to resolve conflicts that are common to the entire village. There may be other local arrangements to resolve conflicts all of which should be carefully harnessed. There are established mechanisms to resolve conflicts at district level. All these mechanisms should effectively be harnessed.

13. Village food security. This issue has been addressed by others and will not be elaborated in here. Suffice to mention that the cultivation of cash crops has threatened food security and lack of food for rural people in many countries. Examples are tea cultivation in Sri Lanka, growing of exotic trees in Nepal, sugarcane in Fiji, industrial cassava in Cambodia, tobacco in Sudan and the list goes on. The village food security is threatened not only by the replacement of food crops and livestock but also by the introduction of new practices such as pesticides application required for introduced crops. The resultant loss of local creatures which provide essential diet, income and livelihood support for rural people, as a result of chemicals in the environment should be highlighted. The negative impacts of threatened food security are significant especially among women and children.

Some people argue that a convenient legal environment as a factor contributing to success in RD. It is suffice to say that conducive laws are important but the legal field is not an essential factor in RD. If other areas mentioned above are effectively taken care of, then legal barrier could be over thrown.

Many past RD initiatives have had some of the above elements already included. However, the author is unaware of any single RD initiative that has incorporated all of the above elements. This by itself explains either the weak performance or low level of sustainability or both that is characterized by the majority of RD programs that have been implemented to-date. That said, it is also to be mentioned that there has been a progressive increase in the number of RD programs that try to include many aspects from the above list.

Impact on paradigm change

The evidence of impact of this paradigm on RD is hard to find. This is because the large majority of past RD programs is focused on the technical with insufficient consideration on social issues, especially group formation, coordination, conflict resolution, etc. Although the current knowledge base is rich, this has apparently not reflected in the actual practice of RD. Another issue worthy to note is documentation on RD approaches and successes/failures which is extremely weak. This makes it difficult to make an assessment of performance of RD. As mentioned before, there is no clear evidence of success in overall RD. However, there are a number of instances where bits and pieces of RD have registered remarkable successes. Some examples in this connection are group-based microfinance, water management through farmers' organizations, community forestry, hydro-power generation, small-scale savings and income generation, to mention a few.

It is to be highlighted that all above components are important for sustainable RD that is able to produce positive impacts on rural people. At the same time, a RD program built around a few components will only produce partial success. This has important implications on resource allocation and external support. What this means is that not a single agency by itself is able to implement a successful RD program. It is the involvement of a large number of agencies working in a well-coordinated manner that can produce good success in RD. This last point has important implications for donor agencies and governments which should try to approach RD through groups supported by multiple agencies in a framework of effective coordination and continuity of assistance.

Comments are welcome!

Anura Widana Ph D
Community Development Specialist

Contribution by Patricia Methven from the Cairngorms National Park Authority, UK

Dear All,

Please find below my answers to the questions:

1) What are the essential components of a modern comprehensive rural development strategy/ approach and if possible could you share case studies which encompass your views?

LEADER GROUPS have been given local rural development funds, which may also be used to assist agriculture. However, the work has not been carried out to engage with the sectors who in Scotland have not been introduced to the concept of working with other areas of the community. The essential element in my opinion are more people, on the ground, to work with farmers and assist them in identifying areas where there might be mutual benefit

Scottish farmers are extremely traditional and it will take a number of years before attitudes change. Also the more remote the farm the more difficult it is to identify such areas, in many areas of Scotland animals on the landscape are part of the heritage of the area but it is uneconomic to keep them there without subsidy. If they are removed this affects the bird and overall wildlife of the area, therefore, is some form of heritage management subsidy a necessity?

To assist in this process Cairngorms National Park Authority have put two Land Based Support Officers in place as it is essential to have people on the ground working directly with farmers but who also understand the bigger picture. Further information on their activities is available if required.

Funding is in fact the main essential component.

2) Can you provide evidence to-date on the impact and effectiveness that the shift of paradigms/approaches have had in a developing or transition country context?

We have not seen any real evidence of the benefit of change to agriculture. Scottish Government bureaucracy is monumental in the extreme to apply for funding through the Scottish Rural Development Programme and farmers have great difficulty with the technology required to access the forms and it is only on the internet. Farmers may also not have access to Broadband which makes it impossible; how they can diversify in other ways has not been made clear and is not always an option.

Funding is again the key

If governments want farming to be abandoned and young people not to want to enter into it, then this strategy is working in some farms.

3) What are the effects of this evolution based on existing evidence, and what implications are there for a conducive environment for RD?

Although more areas in Scotland are involved in LEADER, restrictions on spend and activity make it harder and harder to assist communities in relevant activities, 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.

The administration of funding needs streamlining, too many EU funds, too many administrations, also these funds have no mechanism to talk to each other and duplication of effort takes place. Clarity of what was available on what subject from a central point maybe with satellite offices based on LEADER partnerships would be good.

Governments also need to be sincerely behind the bottom up approach and listen to the needs of their own people.

Match funding for EU funds is becoming increasingly difficult and the rationalisation of funds and effort would help enormously but the administration should be a partnership, not Government or local government dominated. However, without the support of government to some extent this will always be difficult.

Hope this helps.

Patricia Methven
Grants Programme Manager
Cairngorms Local Action Group
Cairngorms National Park Authority

Contribution by KV Peter from the World Noni Research Foundations, India and Member of the Food and Nutrition Security Community of Solution Exchange

Transformation of a sleepy island village of Kumbalanghy in Cochin in the Southern State of Kerala India to the present model village of India speaks volumes what proper planning and peoples planning can do to the betterment.

Six decades back the Island was inhabited by mostly fishermen and men and women with livelihood from coconuts and inland fishing. Three churches, 3 temples, one mosque, one high school, three primary schools and one primary health centre with one doctor were the visible structures. Public road was lateritic and sandy. Drinking water was from open ponds. Latrines were open and people were barefooted. Anaemia was endemic. Petty crimes were settled by village courts. The island was connected to the mainland by a bund only in one side. There was demand for a bridge connecting Kumbalanghy to Perumbadappu.

The establishment of the High School brought much change in the village. Establishment of Cochin Harbour brought employment. Outboard and inboard boats made marine and inland fishing labour friendly. The presence of back waters and possibility of fishing as a tourism avocation brought people from all over the world to Kumbalanghy. Local based political leadership with peoples support brought eco-friendly innovations. Crime rate is so low that no police station is required in the village. Campaign and strict enforcement made the village plastic free and cigaret smoking free. Homestays are now good income to the villagers. The rural food festival organised every year brings out the best in the culinary art of the villagers. Local arts like "kaikotti kali" and "chavittu nadakam" got resurrected. The local political leader who transformed this sleepy village to the present well known is none other than the present Union Minister of State (Agriculture) India Prof.K V Thomas. He wins the elections with 90% votes from this village.

A transformation worth studying.

Prof KV Peter Ph D
Director, World Noni Research Foundations,
Perungudi, Chennai

Contribution by Jan Michiels from FAO Italy

Dear Members of the FSN Forum,

Thank you for the contributions you have made on this topic so far, I will come back to them further on.

I would like to propose you to focus particularly on the country situation, where a lot can be said and achieved.

In fact it is now well recognized that there has been a conceptual shift in the thinking of rural development from sector focused approaches to more holistic approaches that aim at achieving broader objectives of area development and livelihoods' improvement applied to the rural space.

The question is however whether this shift is reflected in coherent rural development strategies and approaches implemented at the country level.

In our view, despite many countries attribute high importance to RD and the active contribution by various actors, the implementation is still often characterized by fragmented interventions and weak overall coherence reflecting sectoral priorities and often resulting from unclear institutional management responsibilities.

Could you share with us some examples of countries that have been able to overcome these problems? How has this been achieved?

I look forward to share with you your experience,

Thank you and best regards to all.

Jan Michiels

Contribution by Max Blanck from FAO, Italy

Dear all,

As I think it is relevant to our discussion, I would like to point to the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) website. The ICARRD conference was held in 2006 in Porto Alegre, Brazil to explore new development opportunities. The particularity of the conference and its outcomes was, that every country presented its very own experience of rural development in general and agrarian reform in particular, allowing for a very productive exchange. These national reports can be found here: <http://www.icarrd.org/sito.html> .

They give a good overview on the different approaches taken in tackling the challenges of a comprehensive rural development.

Best regards,

Max Blanck

Contribution by PK Thampan from Peekay Tree Crops Development Foundation, India

Dear Members,

Each rural area has diverse socio-economic problems. In rural development multi-sectoral approach may seem to be ideal, but it is likely to encounter with contradictions and incompatible sectoral interests causing disharmony within the local community. Also varied political affiliations and interests of the people are likely to thwart the progress of rural development in the desired direction. To obviate these problems the expressed aspirations and felt needs of the local community are to be listed and prioritized for inclusion in the rural development strategy. This approach shall facilitate efficient utilization of resources in the prioritized areas rather than dissipating among multiple sectors, some of which may have only marginal interests for the majority of the community members.

Before formulating a development plan for a rural area it is essential to have a clear understanding of the needs of the local community as expressed by them in group sessions. For elucidating the views of the community the members are to be organized into group sessions with the support of the local self-government institutions and other agencies functioning locally. The facilitating agency shall encourage free discussion in such meetings based on a semi-structured questionnaire with arrangements for recording the views, suggestions and

recommendations made by the participants. The prioritization of the findings of the session shall, however, be made after testing their validity under field conditions by the facilitating agency. Depending on the extent and population of the rural area more group sessions and subsequent follow-up studies are to be conducted. From each group session a few members are to be elected to represent the locality and the members so elected from different sessions shall function as the promoters for launching a registered community-based organization (CBO) to conceive and execute development plans by mobilizing local and external resources and encouraging self-help and group action among the people for promoting community welfare. It is the task of the facilitating agency to ensure harmony among the members of the CBO, without being shadowed by diverse political and other interests, for devoting wholeheartedly to the cause of rural development.

All rural development schemes conceived and put in to execution shall have direct participation of the beneficiaries. Apart from the contribution in the form of manual labour in development works, those beneficiaries associated with productive enterprises shall have financial involvement if the post project sustainability is to be ensured. An example of such financial participation by beneficiaries can be cited in a UNDP-GEF-SGP supported project presently under implementation in the Vayalar village in Kerala, India. Under this project one self-help-group consisting of 10 members came forward to establish one coconut husk defibering plant with a project cost of around Rs. 45 lakhs (Rs. 4, 5 million). In the village the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the processing unit are 370 families with 740 women workers. All these families have taken shares in the plant by paying Rs.300 each. The promoters rose about Rs.35 lakhs (Rs. 3, 5 million) through self and institutional finance. The project support is around Rs. 9 lakhs (Rs. 900,000). With the involvement of all these stakeholders the plant would continue to function even after the project period is over. Other examples that could be cited are 'Rural Technology Training Centre' and 'Karunya Women's charitable society', both part of the project and sponsored by women entrepreneurs in Aroor village in Kerala. Both these units will be sustainable during the post-project phase.

Another important requirement for the success of rural development projects is enlightened community members who are willing to help themselves as well as others in creating better livelihoods through the adoption of innovations in their spheres of activities. This is possible through a continued process of skill and entrepreneurial development initiatives. In the farming sector especially in household farming units innovative integrated farming systems are to be promoted to generate multiple sources of food, income, and employment from a unit area, time and inputs. Such an approach has been adopted in our project area where extension education and services were provided to over 665 farm-households for adopting intensive integrated farming in coconut holdings involving the cultivation of arable crops and medicinally important tree species with or without livestock components. The beneficiary farmers met 50% of the cost of livestock components. Through the adoption of this farming system the farmers have benefited from enhanced on-farm income and employment besides the availability of nutritious foods.

In a follow-up study on the benefits of integrated farming the additional employment created was found to range between 150 and 180 man-days per hectare per year in intercropped holdings. For coconut mono-cropping the range was only 60-80 man-days. In intercropped holdings with average size of 0.27 hectare, the share of intercrops in total on-farm income was 40%. This recorded income was derived from the sale of marketable surplus after satisfying the household dietary needs. Thus, apart from cash income, intercropping contributed to household food and nutrition security of the members of the families involved. In the profitability analysis the average net income per holding was found to be Rs.8, 047, which corresponded to Rs. 29, 635 per hectare per year excluding that from the main crop, coconut. In the holdings where livestock components were integrated the additional employment created was 200-250 man-days per hectare per year. The average net income from livestock alone over a period of 12 months was Rs. 8, 775 per holding or Rs.16, 250 per hectare. In a marginal holding of 0.075 hectare where intensive integrated agriculture has been practised by a 4-member family the average net income derived is over Rs.12, 000 per annum. This is equivalent to Rs.1, 600,000 per hectare per year.

The components integrated in the system include tree spices, root and tuber crops, pisciculture, rabbit etc. One biogas plant is also a part of the system.

Another requirement for the success of rural development is the quality of the facilitating agency. Although different government agencies are presently engaged in rural development they have functional limitations because of the bureaucratic system of administration. Perhaps, functionaries of NGOs will prove to be more efficient and purposeful in working with the rural people and in creating a change in their outlook towards achieving better livelihoods through self help and community effort.

Regards,

P.K.Thampan
Peekay Tree Crops Development Foundation
Kochi

Contribution by Patricia Methven from UK

I would suggest looking at the Scandinavian countries, they have much more established system of real involvement of rural communities.

However, I would agree that success stems from real commitment at the top in engaging at the grass roots level, without both, it does not work.

P Methven
Cairngorms Local Action Group
UK

Concluding Remark by Jan Michiels from FAO, Italy

Dear FSN Members,

Thank you for those who took time to answer my questions. The exchange of ideas provided interesting and useful comments on insights for improved formulation of rural development projects and programmes. The majority of the contributions touched upon various dimensions of rural development and I share most of your views and concerns.

It seems to me that we can summarise by saying that RD programmes can be better designed if a three-dimensional approach is used which would include a:

- The "structural" dimension identifying and assessing the main components of the socio-economic system of the rural space being analysed (economic activities, people, institutions, factors of production, the external environment (i.e., rest of the economy), local context (available asset base to the rural dwellers, the territory's topography, political stability of the area), etc.);
- The "behavioural" dimension which would analyse the interactions between the various components of the system (people buy and sell goods, they invest, they establish contracts and associations, etc.);
- The "time" dimension which would capture the evolution of key factors/ determinants influencing the behavioral and structural elements mentioned above and therefore affect the strategic focus of rural development interventions (priority areas for intervention may change over time due to exogenous factors or structural drivers);

The advantage of the above framework is that it can be used flexibly to reflect the specific needs and priorities of the space analysed while also suggesting that every action undertaken in one component of the system will have implications for the other components through the

"behavioural" dimension. The analytical tools available to assess the above dimensions as well as the impacts of changes induced by the interventions are many and their choice will depend on their appropriateness in the specific situation.

Thank you again for having taken time to answer my questions and having participated in this debate.

Best,

Jan Michiels