Targeting rural poverty to achieve Millenium Development Goal 1

Extreme poverty is a world-wide scourge. About 1.1 billion people are poor, struggling to survive on less than US$ 1 per day. About 880 million people still live in hunger. Three-quarters of the poor live in the rural areas of the developing world. Poverty is not simply a measure of income. It is also a lack of access to education, to even the most basic of health care services, and to the economic opportunity that people need. Poverty means inequality between income groups, between rural and urban people, between men and women. This is unacceptable to the world community.

The United Nations member states adopted, in 2000, the Millennium Declaration and established eight objectives, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to renew their commitment for a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. The first goal, MDG 1, is to halve by 2015 the number of people living in extreme poverty and suffering hunger.

The Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (GDPRD), a joint initiative of 25 donor nations and organizations, has committed itself to contributing to the achievement of the first Millennium Development Goal.
To achieve the first Millennium Development Goal means above all investing in rural areas to spearhead dynamic poverty reduction:

**Poverty is mainly rural.** Attacking poverty means tackling the problems of rural areas where about three-quarters of poor people live. They have limited access to resources and struggle day-by-day to improve their situation, adopting many different survival strategies.

**Rural areas are driven by agriculture.** Agricultural production is the main source of employment and income in rural areas. Without development of the agricultural sector – the “engine” of pro-poor growth – poverty levels will persist.

**Investing in rural areas pays off.** More equal access for rural women and men to resources such as land and water, local and international markets, and financial, health and education services, will help slash rural poverty. Investments to improve living standards in rural areas will have a large impact on poverty and will mean fewer poor people flocking to cities. But focusing on cities may do little to improve the lot of rural people and governments need to redress the urban bias in their development strategies.
Many more resources are needed. The first Millennium Development Goal will only be achieved if national governments, the donor community and private enterprises invest more in rural areas. Although Official Development Assistance is increasing, an estimated gap of US$ 100 billion each year still is needed to achieve the MDGs. Investment in agricultural research and development, rural roads, irrigation, infrastructure, education, rural financial services and marketing is needed.

The rural poor need a fair chance to help themselves... The rural poor deserve better access to markets. Industrialised countries should end protection and abolish market distortions.

... and a say in what is done. Poor people need to be involved in the elaboration and execution of development strategies to overcome their marginalization and poverty. Governments need to decentralise real decision-making power to local levels. Simply making more funds available and improving institutions will have no lasting impact on poverty without addressing power relations and decision making.

The GDPRD has published an analysis on “Reaching MDG1 through agriculture and rural development”. Please refer to www.rdxl/resourcelibrary/MDGs for the complete document
The Global Donor Platform for Rural Development is a unique attempt to coordinate development assistance in the spirit of the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness, in order to reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth in rural areas. It aims to:

- Ensure long term national and international commitment to rural poverty reduction and aid coordination
- Bring investment in agriculture and rural development back onto the agenda of governments and donors
- Put national governments in the driver’s seat – making nationally-owned development strategies, sector-wide approaches, and direct budget support the centrepiece of assistance
- Reduce duplication and unnecessary competition in development assistance

Every human being is entitled to live in dignity with adequate food, shelter, education and health. The rural poor are denied that fundamental right. Basic human rights are being violated and individual and collective potential to act on their own behalf is not being recognized. Unless action is taken to reduce poverty by increasing agricultural productivity, the prospects for economic and social development will be lost. Hunger spawns social and political instability, rising crime, civil war and terrorism, and environmental destruction.

Meeting the Millennium Development Goals and giving the rural poor a decent future is a tremendous challenge. The necessary resources and the knowledge for rural development that will enable all people to live in dignity already exist. They must be put to good use.

Members of the GDPRD:
French Development Agency (AFD), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Austrian Development Agency (ADA), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Department for International Development (DFID), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), European Union, DG for Development (EU), Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Interamerican Development Bank (IADB), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Italian Ministry of Finance and Economy (MFE), KfW Entwicklungsbank (KfW), Ministry of Foreign Affairs-France (MAE), Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Luxemburg (MAE Lu), Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Finland (MFAF), Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Austria (MFA), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA), The World Bank (WB), United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

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