

## The first Millennium Development Goal: What do recent and forthcoming international reports on poverty tell us about policies for its elimination?

### Report summaries



**Chronic Poverty**  
Research Centre

#### **'The Chronic Poverty Report 2008-09: Escaping Poverty Traps' by the Chronic Poverty Research Centre, due for publication in July 2008**

*The Chronic Poverty Report 2008-09: Escaping Poverty Traps* is about the estimated 320 to 443 million people who live trapped in chronic poverty – people who will remain poor for much or all of their lives and whose children are likely to inherit their poverty. The chronically poor experience multiple deprivations, including hunger, undernutrition, illiteracy, lack of access to safe drinking water and basic health services, social discrimination, physical insecurity and political exclusion. Many will die prematurely of easily preventable deaths.

Through our research we identify five main traps that underpin chronic poverty – insecurity, limited citizenship, spatial disadvantage, social discrimination and poor work opportunities – and outline key policy responses to these. We argue that the development of a 'just social compact' between citizens and states must be the focus for poverty eradication. Development actors can nurture such a compact through social protection, public services, effective anti-discrimination action, gender empowerment, economic growth and fiscal policy, and the management of migration and urbanisation processes.

To show the human face behind the statistics and policies, we intertwine the life stories of seven chronically poor people from across Asia and Africa into the report. The descriptions of the lives of Angel, Moses, Txab, Vuyiswa, Bakyt, and Maymana and Mofizul, help the reader to better appreciate the complex and varied causes of chronic poverty.

Most people in chronic poverty strive and work to improve their livelihoods, and to create a better future for their children, in difficult circumstances. They need real commitment matched by actions and resources, to support their efforts and overcome the obstacles that trap them in poverty. We argue that tackling chronic poverty is the global priority of our time and that eradicating poverty by 2025 is a feasible goal – if national governments and international organisations are willing to make the necessary political commitments and resource allocations. It is our hope that this report will inspire deeper reflection on how to tackle chronic poverty effectively and – most of all – will stimulate action to make it happen.



#### **'From Poverty to Power: How Active Citizens and Effective States can Change the World' by Oxfam International, published in June 2008**

The twenty-first century will be defined by the fight against the scourges of poverty, inequality, and the threat of environmental collapse – as the fight against slavery or for universal suffrage defined earlier eras. *From Poverty to Power* argues that it requires a radical redistribution of power, opportunities, and assets to break the cycle of poverty and inequality and to give poor people power over their own destinies. The forces driving this transformation are active citizens and effective states.

Why active citizenship? Because people living in poverty must have a voice in deciding their own destiny, fighting for rights and justice in their own society, and holding states and the private sector to account. Why effective states? Because history shows that no country has prospered without a state structure that can actively manage the development process.

There is now an added urgency beyond the moral case for tackling poverty and inequality: we

need to build a secure, fair, and sustainable world before climate change makes it impossible. This book argues that leaders, organisations, and individuals need to act together, while there is still time.



**'The World's Most Deprived: Characteristics and Causes of Extreme Poverty and Hunger' by the International Food Policy Research Institute, published in October 2007**

*The World's Most Deprived: Characteristics and Causes of Extreme Poverty and Hunger* finds that 162 million of the world's poorest people – the 'ultra poor' – survive on less than 50 cents a day. If concentrated in a single nation, they would comprise the world's seventh most populous country.

The report is the first to use household poverty data from 1990 to 2004 to look below the dollar-a-day poverty line and examine who the poorest people are, where they live, and how they have fared over time. The report finds that the very poorest people have benefited the least from substantial reductions in poverty around the world during the past 15 years. Across developing regions, poverty reduction has differed markedly. The report also finds that despite a global trend of poverty shifting toward urban centres, poverty is still most acute and widespread in rural areas. Poverty rates are at least twice as high in rural areas, and the ultra poor are nearly four times more likely to live in rural areas than in urban areas.

As the world moves toward the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goal of cutting hunger and poverty in half, it cannot be content to focus only on the marginally poor and hungry—the desperate, grinding poverty of the world's absolute poorest must also be assuaged. A focus on policies and programs that are particularly effective at improving the welfare of the world's poorest and hungry is needed.



**'Promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction' by the International Labour Office, published in June 2008**

The *Promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction* discusses how to promote rural employment for poverty reduction. Approximately 3.4 billion people, slightly under half of the world's population, now live in rural areas. Climate change, soaring food prices, and the use of farm products for fuel are today key issues in the global debate on agricultural production. Rural markets and the world economy have been affected by globalization, whose costs and benefits have not been

equitably distributed either between countries or within them, and by increased urbanization - in most developed countries close to 80 per cent of the population now live in towns and cities, and many cities in the developing world are struggling to cope with the influx of rural migrants.

Clearly, the employment challenges of today's burgeoning cities cannot be met without addressing the need for full and productive employment in rural areas. Agricultural growth is highly effective in reducing poverty, but the pattern and distribution of growth will determine the degree to which it translates into job creation and poverty reduction.

The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of trends in rural employment and to offer insight into some of the key challenges facing policy-makers and the social partners in their efforts to tackle rural poverty at the beginning of the twenty-first century.



## **A preview of the rural poverty report by the International Fund for Agricultural Development's, due for publication in 2009**

The 2009 publication on rural poverty will draw on IFAD's field experience and that of its partners to present some of the most innovative and promising responses to the challenges of rural poverty reduction and rural development. In so doing, it will give the Fund the opportunity to further systematize its experience and thus enhance its knowledge management capabilities as part of the implementation of the IFAD Strategy for Knowledge Management. It is in its aspect of improving learning from development practice that the publication is timely and needed.

Fundamental issues that the 2009 publication on rural poverty will emphasize are the empowerment and capacity-building of poor people for agricultural and rural development, food security and poverty reduction. These are the cornerstones of IFAD's approach to rural poverty reduction. However, the publication will not be about IFAD, but about the people IFAD works with and their experiences. It will provide insights into how smallholders are responding to social and economic change. It will be based on an identification and understanding of what is actually happening in rural communities of developing countries, through a broad stocktaking exercise involving IFAD partners.

The publication will serve as a platform for other partner organizations to contribute their knowledge and field experience, for example the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Food Policy Research Institute, World Food Programme, civil society organizations, national research institutes and farmers' organizations. Emphasis will be given to the voices of the poor through consultation with various IFAD stakeholders.