



GUIDANCE MATERIAL

Quick reference for addressing rural employment and decent work

This handout can be used as a quick reference tool for addressing rural employment and decent work (RE&DW) issues. It outlines why RE&DW is so important for rural development, for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and for contributing to FAO's own work. Four brief checklists (one for each pillar of the Decent Work Agenda) are provided overleaf to guide FAO country offices when promoting RE&DW. Please refer to the **Guidance on How to Address Rural Employment and Decent Work Concerns in FAO Country Activities** for more detailed information, resources and tools.

do not ensure decent levels of income and sustainable livelihoods. Working conditions are poor. Labour legislation is rarely enforced. Social dialogue is weak.

While the ILO leads the Global Employment and Decent Work Agenda, FAO has a crucial complementary role in promoting RE&DW. FAO has strong comparative advantages in terms of employment in rural areas – particularly with regards to agricultural employment, employment in agro-processing and rural marketing enterprises and industries, and with employment in the informal economy.

To this end, the employment implications of all FAO interventions and particularly of alternative agriculture and rural development policy options should be considered systematically. Often, the challenge is not to create a new programme or project to address RE&DW specifically, but to consider RE&DW aspects within an ongoing programme of work.

Several entry points exist:

- UN-wide level mechanisms, e.g. Common Country Assessments/United Nations Development Assistance Framework.
- FAO-government overall cooperation, e.g. National Medium-Term Priority Framework/Country Programming Framework formulation.
- FAO ongoing activities and programmes.
- In connection with regional and global mechanisms.



Millennium Development Goal 1 Target (1B)

“Achieve full and productive employment and decent

work for all, including women and young people”

The inclusion of Target 1.B in MDG 1 (“Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger”) highlights the central role of employment and decent work in achieving food security and poverty reduction. This is especially true for

rural areas, where labour is often the only asset that rural people own, and where most workers are represented in the low-productivity segment of the rural economy. FAO country offices need therefore to seize all available opportunities to promote RE&DW as a powerful driver for rural development.

“Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for

Rural employment is comprised of **agricultural** employment, which includes both *on-farm* self-employment and wage employment in the agricultural sector, as well as **non-agricultural** employment, which includes *non-farm* self-employment and wage employment.

families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.”¹

Poor people in rural areas face various forms of decent work deficits, gaps and exclusions. Rural labour markets are distinguished by high levels of informality, a preponderance of casual employment relationships, high rates of self-employment, labour force fragmentation, information asymmetries, and the uncertainties and specificities characteristic of agricultural production. Most rural jobs

Priority groups for FAO

- Small-scale producers, including contributing family workers
- Agricultural workers in paid employment, including casual workers and those in the informal economy
- Non-farm self-employed people in micro and small businesses in rural areas, particularly in the informal economy
- Workers engaged in paid employment in secondary/tertiary activities directly linked to food production and agriculture, particularly in the informal economy
- Women and youth within the previous categories
- Specific vulnerable groups (child labourers, migrant workers, landless people, refugees, internally displaced people, demobilized soldiers, the disabled, people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS, indigenous people, and the elderly)

¹ ILO Decent Work FAQ. For more information see also ILO website on [Decent Work](#).

Promoting rural employment & decent work

Checklists for main rural employment issues to address under the four pillars of decent work

PILLAR 1 Employment creation and enterprise development



- RE&DW addressed explicitly in agriculture and rural development policies, strategies and programmes
- Women and men small-scale producers supported in accessing markets and modern value chains
- Employment creation programmes piloted in rural areas, in particular for youth and women
- Agribusiness and marketing micro, small and medium enterprises supported in accessing markets, training, financial services and other productive assets (e.g. land)
- Vocational and educational training programmes on technical and business skills for rural people supported
- Employment-centred livelihoods diversification mechanisms supported, particularly for emergency prevention and post-crisis recovery
- Capacities of national partners supported to collect and analyse age and sex disaggregated data on rural labour markets
- Impact of technology options on the number and quality of jobs created taken into account

PILLAR 2 Social protection



- Promote productivity-enhancing social protection schemes
- Mechanisms to extend social protection to small producers and informal workers supported, involving producer organizations and communities/households
- Occupational safety and health measures for the rural workforce adopted by promoting safer technology for small-scale and commercial agriculture in extension programmes
- Safer technology for small-scale agriculture supported through extension programmes
- Labour-saving technologies developed for rural poor households in HIV- and AIDS- (or other diseases) affected areas and to reduce women's domestic and care tasks
- Improving working conditions in rural areas, including effective maternity protection and minimum wages in agriculture

PILLAR 3 Standards and rights at work



- Socially responsible agricultural production supported, specifically to reduce gender and youth-based discrimination
- Child labour focal point established in the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and MoA participation in multistakeholder child labour prevention mechanisms
- Mechanisms to prevent child labour supported by tackling its root causes (poverty, lack of education) and providing livelihoods alternatives to poor households
- Compliance of national labour legislation promoted in the rural areas
- Restrictive regulations on producer organizations and informal workers' associations revised
- Analysis promoted on prevailing labour contractual arrangements in the informal economy, worst forms of child labour and situations of discrimination

PILLAR 4 Governance and social dialogue



- Countries supported in strengthening democratic organizations and networks of producers and workers, particularly in the informal rural food economy
- Representation of the rural poor in social dialogue and policy dialogue through their organizations supported
- Participation of rural poor in local decision-making and governance mechanisms supported
- Rural women and youth groups empowered to be involved in these processes from the initial steps
- Synergies built between organizations, programmes, countries and producer-to-producer learning opportunities created