

Info flash rural development

The Info Flash Rural Development is a periodic information service by the SDC Focal Point for Rural Development which appears approx. 4 times per year. It is distributed by e-mail, though two issues per year are additionally included in the Rural Development News (as this one). The Info Flash provides highlights of rural development resources, and informs on key activities of, and in relation to, rural development within the SDC environment.

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WANTED: your contributions to the SDC Focal Point for Rural Development

Most readers by now have heard about the SDC Focal Point for Rural Development. Those who have not will find information on what the FP is and what its purpose is, on its web platform at www.sdc-ruraldevelopment.ch.

The Focal Point provides you with an opportunity to share your ideas, experiences and in rural development practice with a wider audience. Unfortunately this opportunity has so far not been utilised much. We think that contributions from users – rural development practitioners from COOFs, programmes and partners, are an important success factor for the Focal Point. Therefore, we would like once more to encourage you to contribute your experiences and ideas. Write up your experiences, ideas and challenges and send them to us. We can also coach you on how to do this. Contact the Focal Point Team (sdc-ruraldevelopment@sdc.net).

Highlights from the bookshop

First some new documents that were produced with SDC involvement – financial and other:

Ending poverty with water control and market access (booklet and CD). The booklet describes a highly successful approach that can assist small farmers to move out of poverty. It is based on three pillars – affordable water control technologies, functioning markets that make these technologies available on a large scale, and access to profitable markets for agricultural products. The approach originates from experiences in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and a range of other countries around the world (http://www.sdc-ruraldevelopment.ch/resources/resource_en_130.pdf). The CD presents the above approach in an attractive way – a self-explanatory powerpoint presentation leads through the approach, complemented by video clips in which involved actors explain their views. Hard copies of the document and the CD are available from urs.heierli@msdconsult.ch and elisabeth.katz@agridea.ch.

Donor Interventions in Value Chain Development. This working paper draws together the learning and insights from the internet debate platform on Value Chains for Rural Development (VCRD) that was set up by SDC's Employment and Income Division for exchange and joint learning between practitioners and conceptualists (www.sdc-valuechains.ch).

SDC's Performance towards Empowerment of Stakeholders from the Recipients' Perspective. A new independent evaluation assesses SDC's performance in empowerment of communities by examining its interactions with implementation partners and, in turn, their interactions with the communities, appraises SDC's approaches to building on capacities and sensibilities of implementation partners' organisations to be responsive to community needs and priorities. Country case studies from Bolivia and Burkina Faso

illustrate significant empowerment strategies of SDC (http://www.deza.admin.ch/de/Home/Aktivitaeten/Evaluation/Abgeschlossene_Evaluationen/ressources/resource_en_152746.pdf).

In the following a range of helpful documents from diverse sources:

Approaches to linking producers to markets. A review of experiences to date. This paper by FAO examines success factors in development interventions attempting to link farmers to markets. Issues discussed include the choice of markets, the capacity of the linking organizations, and the relationship between the private sector, NGOs and farmers. Experiences with group organization are reviewed, as is the question of finance. Problems faced by farmers in maintaining linkages are examined and sustainability and scaling-up of linkage activities considered. The paper also considers the enabling environment that governments must provide if linking farmers to markets is to prove successful, and provides a check-list of issues to address when planning market linkages (<http://www.fao.org/ag/ags/subjects/en/agmarket/linkages/agsf13.pdf>).

The decline in public spending to agriculture: does it matter? Public spending on agriculture is recognised to be an important means of promoting economic growth and alleviating poverty in rural areas. However, this paper reveals that agricultural spending is not being prioritised within current budgets and, in many cases, is actually falling. The paper is based on a recent study by Oxford Policy Management, which reviews global trends in public spending on agriculture using evidence from six case-study countries: Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Argentina, and Vietnam (<http://www.opml.co.uk/document.rm?id=876>).

Hot topics in rural development. This document lists “hot topics” – ten issues in rural development, which the members of the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (in which SDC is represented) consider to be of global significance (http://www.donorplatform.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=386&Itemid=37)

Fair deals for watershed services in Bolivia. Although Bolivia is one of the countries with the most water per capita in the world, and demand is about 1%

of supply, localised water scarcity continues to breed conflicts. This report assesses whether market tools can improve watershed management, and the livelihoods of watershed residents. It describes the studies commissioned as part of the analysis, what they were intended to assess, and their findings. The report concludes by offering lessons learned for negotiating fair deals for watershed services in Bolivia (<http://www.iied.org/pubs/pdf/full/13536IIED.pdf>).

Understanding market-based livelihoods in a globalising world: combining approaches and methods. Although there has been much research on markets and on livelihoods, it tends to be carried out by researchers from different disciplines. The study of markets is dominated by an economic approach often using quantitative methods. Non-economic social scientists and practitioners, who tend to pay more attention to the context, and to rely on qualitative and participatory methods, usually carry out livelihoods research. The purpose of this paper is two-fold: to argue that a multidisciplinary approach is useful, and to provide some pointers on how to build an integrated methodology (<http://www.iied.org/SM/markets/documents/MethodsMarketBasedLivelihoods.pdf>).

Can tourism offer pro-poor pathways to prosperity? This ODI Briefing Paper examines evidence on the impact of tourism on poverty. Recent empirical studies which suggest that, in the best cases, between a fifth and one-third of total tourist turnover in the destination is captured by the ‘poor’. But tourism can have important pro-poor impacts and these can be strengthened by deliberate public policy interventions (http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/briefing/bp_june07_tourism_ptp.pdf).

Assessing how tourism revenues reach the poor. Another new ODI Briefing Paper on tourism and poverty presents findings from the application of innovative diagnostic tools offer new ways to understand and boost revenues from tourism for the poor. Diagnostic tools applied to product value chains can usefully be applied to the service sector. Value chain analysis can be adapted to address poverty, as well as business, prerogatives. These tools can describe how value is distributed along the tourism value chain, but also provide a robust empirical basis for making changes

to it (http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/briefing/bp_june07_tourism_ptp.pdf).

Biofuels, agriculture and poverty reduction. The development of biofuels has generated vigorous debate on economic and environmental grounds. Our attention here is on its potential impacts on poverty reduction. The potential is large, whether through employment, wider growth multipliers and energy price effects. But it is also fragile: it will be reduced where feedstock production tends to be large scale, or causes pressure on land access, and its success can be undermined by many of the same policy, regulatory or investment shortcomings as impede agriculture. Whilst some of the factors facilitating, and impacts of, biofuels can be tracked at global level, its distributional impacts are complex, and point to the need for country-by-country analysis of potential poverty impacts (<http://www.odi.org.uk/nrp/NRP107.pdf>).

Aid allocation and the MDGs. How much should different countries get and why? 'Poverty-efficiency' is a simple and flexible principle for making aid allocation decisions. In terms of the MDGs, it would imply greater emphasis on global as opposed to country-level targets. Guidelines for donors can help ensure difficult decisions are evidence-based (http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/briefing/bp_april07_aid_allocation.pdf).

From PRA to PLA and pluralism: practice and theory. Robert Chambers presents his most recent insights on the development pathway of participatory diagnostic, intervention design and learning methodologies (<http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/bookshop/wp/wp286.pdf>).

Consumption risk, technology adoption and poverty traps: evidence from Ethiopia. Using fertiliser in Ethiopia is a high risk activity with moderately higher returns. This paper examines the differential ability of households to use risky production technologies, such as fertilisers, to avoid harvest failure and welfare consequences that follow. The authors propose insurance systems to reduce the risk of adopting agricultural innovations, as this will stimulate the spread of technologies, result in more efficient production choices by households and reduce poverty (<http://econpapers.repec.org/paper/wbkwbrwps/4257.htm>).

Multi-stakeholder processes for governance and sustainability – beyond deadlock and conflict. Rural development processes often require interaction between very diverse stakeholders. This book puts forward a framework for designing multi-stakeholder processes (MSPs), aiming to contribute to the advancement of such mechanisms as will produce practical solutions. MSPs seem a promising path, both around (inter)governmental processes and other types of partnerships (http://www.minuhemmati.net/msp/msp_book.htm).

Tools, Methods and learning

Follow the money: a resource book for public expenditure tracking in Tanzania. This toolkit provides different ways in which public expenditure tracking (PET) can be carried out in order to promote accountability and transparency of local government. The toolkit is not only for Tanzania, but provides helpful ideas for anybody involved in collaborating with decentralised government institutions (<http://www.international-budget.org/resources/library/PETSMannual.pdf>).

Link tips

CGIAR Virtual Library. Gateway to Global Agricultural Knowledge. The virtual library of the international agricultural research centres provides a search machine through which you can find countless documents on rural development. Among them are many valuable ones which would otherwise not cross one's way (<http://vlibrary.cgiar.org>).

World Vegetable Centre. Vegetables are an increasingly important cash crop for many farmers on the road between subsistence and commercial farming. The World Vegetable Centre (formerly AVRDC) provides diverse up-to-date, mainly technical resources on vegetable production and marketing in Asia and Africa (www.avrdc.org).

Case studies on market-oriented agricultural advisory services. On the website of the Neuchâtel Initiative (NI) you find now a series of case studies on market-oriented agricultural advisory services that were provided by projects and programmes in diverse countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America as a basis for a thematic

study on this topic undertaken by affiliates of the NI (an informal group of donor representatives and specialists on rural services) (http://www.neuchatelinitiative.net/english/Case_studies_market.htm).

Understanding and addressing spatial poverty traps.

An international workshop on this topic took place in South Africa earlier this year with partial funding and contributions by SDC and its partners. The aim was to consolidate lessons from recent analytical work on the drivers of poverty in 'spatial poverty traps' and to review experience from government and civil society policy experiments in such areas. On the site you find the workshop contributions, many of which are highly interesting for rural development practitioners (http://www.odi.org.uk/pppg/poverty_and_inequality/Events/2007_Spatial_Poverty_Traps/index.html).