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Sustainable Livelihood Approach in ESCWA




While we are only five years away from achieving the first Millennium Development Goal of eradicating poverty and hunger, the economic conditions of rural people are still characterized by poverty and complexity. Young people and children make up the largest group among poor rural populations, and rural inequalities are a major obstacle to sustainable development. Typically, rural people depend on agriculture for their livelihoods as farmers, nomadic herders or fishermen. They deal with animal production, transformation and marketing of food and non-food agricultural products and services.

In this context, the early 1990s saw the emergence of a new concept, called "Sustainable Livelihood Approach"

(SLA). A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living and it is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and can maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both in the present and in the future while not undermining the natural resource base. SLA is a framework that helps to understand the status of people along the poverty line and as such allows the derivation of meaningful development strategies. The positive impact of applying SLA could extend well beyond its initial intended objective. In fact, the benefits could continue to accrue progressively as the years and decades pass and as SLA is consistently mainstreamed in all programs and activities.


When talking about the Arab region, the causes of rural poverty are many, varied and complex in nature. Limitations and mismanagement of natural resources - land and water - combined with unstable climatic conditions may be considered the main economic and physical causes.

ESCWA has therefore organized an Expert Group Meeting on "Promoting Best Practices on Sustainable Rural Livelihoods in the ESCWA Region," on 24 and 25 November 2010 at the UN House in Beirut. The EGM brought together a few high-caliber experts from the regional commission's member countries and from regional organizations with relevant expertise. In addition, 

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EGM on Urban Divide in the ESCWA Region

ESCWA hosted on 25 and 26 November 2010 an Expert Group Meeting entitled "Bridging the Urban Divide in the ESCWA Region: Towards Inclusive Cities". Participants in the meeting were national and regional urban development experts, practitioners, decision-makers, UN agency representatives as well as representatives from key regional organizations. Discussions revolved around urban inequalities in the ESCWA 

ESCWA holds a Workshop on Environment Statistics in Sudan

ESCWA organized a training workshop on Environment Statistics and Database from 2 to 4 November 2010 in Khartoum. The training, hosted by Sudan's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), was attended by 30 officials from the CBS, the Sudanese ministries of environment, water and irrigation, industry, petroleum, mineral resources, agriculture, health, Wilayat Al-Kahrtoom, the Environment Research Institute, the Remote Sensing Center, and the University of Khartoum.

The training focused on the data collection and methodologies for water and waste statistics, air pollution, land cover/

land use and biodiversity statistics, and the system for environmental economic accounting for water (SEEAW). ESCWA provided CBS with two laptops equipped with ESCWA Statistical Information System (ESIS), a database that allows compilation and reporting of environment and water statistics as well as customized social and economic indicators.

Recommendations were made on organizing environmental data that are highly scattered in the different departments, establishing coordination mechanism through strengthening the role of the Higher Council for Environment, and



the establishment of a coordination committee on environmental statistics with the CBS as a main player in official environment statistics. ■

Sustainable Livelihood Approach in ESCWA (Cont.)

Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and other Non Governmental Organizations took part.

Participants discussed and proposed measures for developing appropriate capacity-building initiatives to include policy guide-

lines and field projects in order to enhance a framework for developing related projects for SLA-based rural development in the region.

They also discussed the draft guide on "Application of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach in the ESCWA Region" and a number of substantive presentations. In addition, experts reviewed current practices in rural development programs and sustainable livelihoods, assessed achievements made at the country and regional levels, provided constructive comments on the various parts of the guide, and enriched it with practical examples and/or case studies from their countries. ■



EGM on Urban Divide in the ESCWA Region (Cont.)

region, lessons from experience and policy recommendations to concerned central and local governments.

The EGM focused on three thematic areas: unbalanced growth and the challenge of inclusive development, urban dualities and the role of urban planning and management, and urban poverty and targeted development initiatives.

The urban divide is one of the major paradoxes of our times. As the number of people living in urban areas has crossed the

50-percent threshold and is projected to reach 70 percent in 2050, cities worldwide are becoming hubs of complexities and contradictions. On the one hand, they are the centers of wealth and the engines of economic opportunities and growth. On the other hand, they are often stricken with poverty and deprivation. The "urban advantage" that most people seek in cities is often available only to those who are able to get access to adequate housing, social services and job opportunities. However, for a large number of urban dwellers the advantage of a city location is never realized due to gaping urban inequalities and steep invisible barriers. ■

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