

HITTING THE THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Ensuring that everyone benefits from progress towards the MDGs requires a global focus

Global efforts to eradicate poverty (income of less than US\$1 a day) have in recent months focused on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The eight goals, first articulated by the United Nations in September 2000 (see facing page), have been in place for five years. In many areas considerable progress has been made, and awareness of the issues of poverty is very high.

Much of this awareness focused on the plight of the poor in sub-Saharan Africa, but this is not the only centre of deprivation, with the Asia-Pacific region also home to widespread poverty.

In Africa some positive achievements have been delivered. ACIAR's involvement in a project to develop a vaccine against Newcastle Disease (ND), a particularly prevalent and virulent disease affecting village poultry, has led to initiatives in Mozambique, supported by AusAID and a number of NGOs, working with government agencies.

Sra Luisa Arnaldo, a 36-year-old widow with three children, living in Chirodizi-Ponte, Mozambique, saw her efforts to rear chickens hampered by ND outbreaks. Using a traditional production system, Luisa has been unable to rear any more than three chickens at a time, barely enough for her family.

In 2003 she participated in the AusAID program, using the ACIAR-developed vaccine, to vaccinate chickens against ND. After her initial outlay of US\$0.25 per bird, by October 2004 she had 25 chickens, including five roosters, which she sold for US\$2.25 each.

Some of the money Luisa used to invest in buying a goat, which has subsequently produced offspring. Much of the rest has been used to allow her three children to attend primary school.

Work is now underway to ensure other countries have access to the same vaccine, and the benefits available through its use. Several of those countries are in the Asia-Pacific region, the main focus of ACIAR's operations.

The region, despite receiving less than a third of the amount of global aid directed to sub-Saharan Africa, has double the number of people living in poverty, more than 700 million. Fourteen of the world's Least Developed Countries are also in the region. Population in the Asia-Pacific region is also expected to rise by around one billion people in the next 45 years.

Smallholder farmers, and those relying on forestry and fishing, make up the bulk of the poor and hungry. Helping to create and accelerate growth in agricultural and rural sectors can make a genuine difference in eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, by helping rural areas and smallholders gain from the economic growth underway in many countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Poverty in the Asia-Pacific region is often overlooked due to the successful development occurring in many countries. Vietnam provides an excellent example – with an emerging economy (growing at five per cent a year), stable governance systems and WTO accession, poverty does not spring to mind.

Yet almost 30 per cent of Vietnam's population (around 25 million) live below the poverty line (Vietnam Households Living Standards Survey (GSO2003)).

In some rural provinces this rate reaches 45 per cent, many of these people being smallholder farmers.

For many rural poor throughout the Asia-Pacific region agriculture is still the main food provider, income generator and employer. ACIAR's past and present research is tackling a range of problems constraining agricultural productivity in a variety of systems.

In countries like China, India and Thailand, this research is helping smallholder farmers access the benefits of WTO accession and a growing economy. Increasing productivity creates a leverage for market entry and can help poor smallholders exploit any comparative advantage they may have.

For other countries, the benefits of WTO accession and trade are still more likely tomorrow than today. Despite this, agriculture still presents the best opportunities to many rural peoples, including smallholders.

ACIAR's approach is to work with partner countries to meet their identified needs, such as diversifying agriculture beyond the rice-dominated system of Cambodia, or to introduce improved food staples, such as in East Timor.

Other examples include work in Papua New Guinea on developing more equitable income flows in palm oil plantations, that is boosting incomes, empowering women and helping children access education. In the Solomon Islands, project work aimed at boosting food security is delivering improved management options for fishing resources, such as village sea cucumber fisheries.

While ACIAR projects may deliver outcomes that address targets and goals across the MDGs, most align with Goal 1 – Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and Goal 7 – Ensure environmental sustainability. ACIAR's partnership mode of operation links to Goal 8 – Develop a global partnership for development.

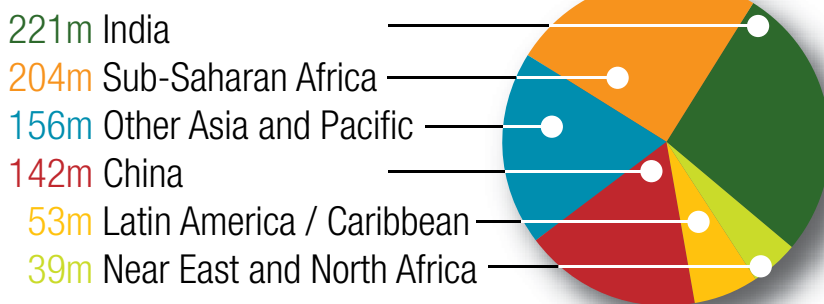
ACIAR's research will continue to work with partner countries in the Asia-Pacific region to meet the agricultural needs of those countries. In doing so, projects that reduce poverty and help to improve the sustainable management of natural resources will continue to produce results that also help progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. ◀

TARGET



Vietnam's economy is growing at almost five per cent a year, yet almost 30 per cent of the country's population (around 25 million) live below the poverty line.

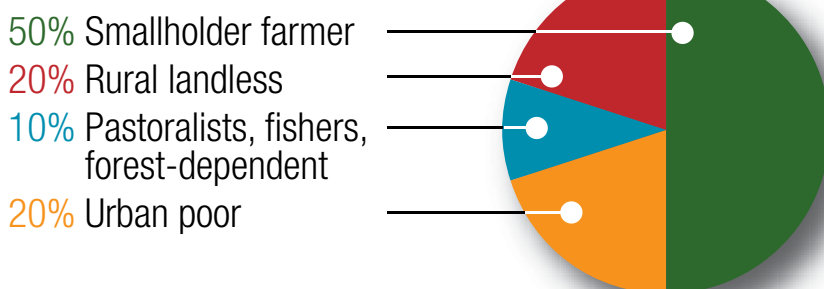
WHERE ARE THE HUNGRY?



Source: FAO 2004

Total numbers of undernourished people in the major regions of the developing world. A further 37 million undernourished live in the industrialised countries and countries in transition.

WHO ARE THE HUNGRY?



Source: UN Statistics Division, Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, 1990–2005, Goal 1– Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

UN MILLENNIUM DECLARATION GOALS

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development