

# 2004-2010 FRAMEWORK ACTION PLAN ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION

Adopted in Singapore on 7 October 2004

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### **PART I: INTRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

1. The Third Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (AMRDPE) held on 16 December 2002 called for a review of ASEAN cooperation on rural development and poverty eradication, including a reassessment of the mandate of the ASEAN Task Force on Social Safety Nets (established in December 1998). The review would also identify new priorities for ASEAN cooperation in rural development and poverty eradication to respond to challenges of globalisation, trade liberalisation and regional integration. An ASEAN Session on Revitalising Cooperation on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication convened on 20 June 2003 recommended the following new priorities:
  - Globalisation
  - Narrowing the Digital Divide, promoting the use of ICT as a tool
  - Social Protection
  - Employment and Income-generation
  - Partnerships, Decentralisation, Local Participation
  - Narrowing the Development Gap
  - Others
    - Voluntary movement for rural development
    - Possible exchange programme of young professionals dealing in rural development and poverty eradication
    - Public information
2. The ASEAN Secretariat was tasked to develop a framework action plan. Member countries which indicated interest to coordinate some of the priority areas would provide the ASEAN Secretariat with workplans. The 4<sup>th</sup> SOMRDPE held in December 2003 reviewed a preliminary draft Framework.

### **STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS TO RESPOND TO EMERGING TRENDS**

3. The Framework Action Plan is based on the AMRDPE vision (established in 1997) to eradicate poverty placing emphasis on “promoting the development of progressive, prosperous and self-reliant rural communities” towards “creating a caring society” in the ASEAN Member Countries.
4. The Framework Action Plan’s priorities would address the AMRDPE’s call for:
  - innovative and holistic strategies to facilitate access of the rural and urban poor to public utilities and facilities;
  - providing a conducive environment for income-generation and employment opportunities for the poor as well as assistance to link small rural economies to markets; and
  - building capacity and occupational skills of the rural people and urban poor – especially in the area of information and communication technology.
5. To realize the Leaders’ Vision of an ASEAN Community by 2020, the 9<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit (October 2003) identified three mutually reinforcing pillars namely political and security cooperation, economic cooperation, and socio-cultural cooperation. The ASEAN socio-cultural community

would be “a community of caring societies” where the “development and enhancement of human resources is a key strategy for employment generation, alleviating poverty and socio-economic disparities, and ensuring economic growth with equity”.

6. Additionally, the following on-going priorities identified since AMRDPE’s establishment in 1997 will continue to be addressed by the Framework Plan:
  - a. Facilitating regional networking among governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), private sector, business sector and research institutes;
  - b. Sharing of information, best practices, lessons learnt, research capacity and technical expertise;
  - c. Developing a regional rural volunteer programme; and
  - d. Promoting greater public awareness on the need to accelerate rural development and poverty eradication.

## **PART II: PRIORITY AREAS**

### **A. GLOBALISATION (COORDINATOR: ASEAN SECRETARIAT)**

7. Since its establishment, AMRDPE has sought to address the impact of globalisation and information technology in rural areas. Successive AMRDPEs have called for activities focusing on the longer-term impact of globalisation on the poor and marginalised.
8. ASEAN will carry out several activities to address poverty monitoring and the impact of trade liberalisation on social well-being. These include a study on the social cost of realising an ASEAN economic community; policy reviews to develop fast-track approach to fight poverty (including social protection policies and social investments); preparation of a Southeast Asia Human Development Report; enhancing poverty monitoring systems; and capacity development on risk and vulnerability indicators.
9. Initiatives that would complement these activities are:
  - a. Study the links between rural development and poverty eradication with trade liberalisation, globalisation and economic integration:
    - i. Convene a workshop to share strategies on the implementation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in ASEAN;
    - ii. Document effective policies and best practice cases from the region and elsewhere on the impact of trade liberalisation and (global) economic integration on rural development and poverty eradication; and
    - iii. Prepare and compile regional statistics on poverty, in collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat Statistics Unit, to enhance research, assessment and monitoring of poverty.
  - b. Build capacity of ASEAN officials to:
    - i. Develop integrated economic and social policies that would assist rural development and poverty eradication;
    - ii. Carry out research, assessment and monitoring of poverty, so as to improve poverty measurement methodologies in ASEAN countries;
    - iii. Establish and strengthen national social information and monitoring mechanisms; and
    - iv. Establish a regional poverty portal (database and information).

**B. NARROWING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE, PROMOTING THE USE OF ICT AS A TOOL  
(COORDINATOR: MALAYSIA)**

10. AMRDPE has committed to promote meaningful participation of the poor and the marginalised in the new global economy, especially through improving access to social services and to information and communication technology. This would support the commitment of the ASEAN Leaders to reduce the digital divide in the region.
11. Regional activities would focus on enhancing IT awareness and utilisation among the rural populace in ASEAN countries, to facilitate the transition from traditional agro-based communities into those adequately prepared for regional economic integration. A good example is the project on "Sharing Best Practices on Empowering Rural Communities to Utilise ICT as a Tool to Enhance Income" implemented by Malaysia from 31 May to 2 June 2004. National strategies to bridge the digital divide could include the computerisation of rural schools, provision of internet access, ICT-training for the rural communities and urban poor, and other innovative ways to promote the use of ICT as a tool for rural development and poverty eradication.
12. Other recommended activities at the regional and national levels are:
  - a. Increase the use of ICT as a tool by rural development practitioners and coordinators for operational efficiency:
    - i. Improve networking with regional and international agencies that carry out relevant capacity-building activities on ICT access to enable participation of ASEAN Member Countries in their ongoing and planned activities; and
    - ii. Develop work plans (at national level) to facilitate access of ICT to the rural population.
  - b. Provide the basic ICT infrastructure in rural areas:
    - i. Network the rural areas through computerisation of rural schools and provision of internet access to rural areas.
  - c. Enhance IT awareness and utilisation among the poor and marginalised to improve access to social services:
    - i. Assist ongoing national-level policies and programmes that promote ICT awareness and skills among the local and rural communities; and
    - ii. Provide ICT-training for the rural communities and urban poor.

**C. SOCIAL PROTECTION  
(COORDINATOR: PHILIPPINES)**

13. The 4<sup>th</sup> SOMRDPE in December 2003 agreed that SOMRDPE's work in this area should give priority to social protection for agricultural workers and the informal sector.
14. The ASEAN Task Force on Social Safety Nets (ATFSSN) was dissolved in December 2003, as it had completed its core functions. Building on the work that had been done on Social Safety Nets, e.g. the joint ASEAN-AusAID Social Safety Nets Project (May 2001 - March 2002) SOMRDPE would henceforth address priorities for social protection, particularly:
  - capacity-building of civil society organisations in social services delivery;

- increasing of the involvement of non-governmental and civil society organisations; and facilitating adjustment to economic restructuring (proactive social protection).

15. Some other recommended activities are:

- a. Assess the social protection needs of individual member countries based on vulnerabilities beyond those linked to industrial restructuring:
  - i. Study the impact of rapid urbanisation and internal migration, cultural disintegration, overseas work and migration of both men and women, and others.
- b. Strengthen and establish effective capacity of civil society organisations and private sectors groups not only for social services delivery, but more prominently for facilitating and intensifying local community and/or local government roles in social safety and protection:
  - i. Build capacity through inter-country training cum exchange projects;
  - ii. Document and evaluate lessons from community-driven development programmes and social funds; and
  - iii. Establish a digitally-linked network of private groups and civil society organisations that implement social protection programmes by themselves, and with government.
- c. Enhance analysis and interpretation of data and statistics on poverty:
  - i. Coordinate with national, regional and UN statistical data agencies in order to share strategies, lessons and tools; and
  - ii. Establish a comparative pool of regional data bases that can provide cross-country analysis.
- d. Prioritise the agricultural and informal sectors:
  - i. Identify effective policy measures for improving social safety/protection (in collaboration with the ASEAN Senior Officials on Social Welfare and Development);
  - ii. Build on ongoing efforts/initiatives for social protection as a proactive approach which advocates promoting employability through training; and
  - iii. Develop activities to address the impact of trade liberalisation on the competitiveness of the agricultural sector in collaboration with the Senior Officials Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry (SOM-AMAF).

#### **D. EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME-GENERATION (COORDINATOR: THAILAND)**

16. AMRDPE has emphasised the importance of human resources development through greater investments in education, skills training and lifelong learning to promote employability and financial security of the marginalised groups. Sustainable rural development and poverty eradication must be based on the principle of self-reliance through job development, community empowerment, capacity building for local government and resource mobilisation at the local level. To accomplish this, conducive environments are necessary to facilitate income-generation activities, provide employment opportunities, and improve market access of small rural economies. The role of the private sector, as well as synergistic linkages with relevant ASEAN committees addressing health, agriculture, labour, women, and social welfare, are also important.
17. Future collaborative activities would address the following priorities of the Framework Plan:

- Microfinance
  - Economic entrepreneurship
  - Development of rural enterprises
  - Productive economic activities
  - Market networking
  - Job training
18. Thailand has developed a proposal for an ASEAN Regional Workshop on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication, sharing its experience on the “One Tambon One Product” initiative as an innovative strategy to create productive economic activities for the rural poor. Thailand has also offered to open up to interested ASEAN countries its ongoing bilateral programmes with Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam, on capacity-building for community saving groups. Suggested activities are:
- a. Promote economic entrepreneurship and the development of rural enterprises:
    - i. Collaborate with the private sector to promote large-scale production and marketing by small rural businesses to link small rural economies to the larger market;
    - ii. Convene a regional workshop to share experience on community enterprises (eg. Thailand’s “One Tambon One Product” approach);
    - iii. Facilitate access of rural population to micro-financing;
    - iv. Invest in education, skills training and lifelong learning to promote employability of the poor;
    - v. Conduct a joint exercise with the ASEAN Senior Labour Officials Meeting (SLOM) to share experiences on informal sector development; and
    - vi. Conduct a joint exercise with the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Youth (SOMY) to share experiences on rural youth entrepreneurship.
  - b. Build the capacity of officials in rural development and poverty alleviation administration:
    - i. Conduct workshops on financial management for low-income housing development;
    - ii. Conduct study visits on integrated farming; and
    - iii. Include an exchange of views on micro-financing and employment/income generation strategies as a regular item on the SOMRDPE agenda.

**E. PARTNERSHIPS, DECENTRALISATION, LOCAL PARTICIPATION  
(COORDINATOR: ASEAN SECRETARIAT)**

19. The importance of shared responsibilities and partnerships for poverty reduction is increasingly being recognised. Partnerships are not only among government agencies and NGOs dealing in rural poverty reduction, but also local community participation.
20. The ASEAN Secretariat and the World Bank are currently implementing a project promoting local participation approaches as a strategy for rural development in the region. The project aims to assist ASEAN countries to develop country action proposals highlighting the role of local participation in poverty reduction efforts, and in so doing, strengthen in-country capacity across sectors involved in rural development and poverty eradication. These country action proposals would be shared at a regional workshop in October 2004 with interested donors/partners to assist ASEAN countries in implementing their action proposals.

21. An activity that could be implemented on a rolling basis under this priority area would build on a previous project "Training of Facilitators on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication," which Indonesia implemented in 2001 for ASEAN officials. A second training activity has been proposed, focusing on mid-level professionals and practitioners dealing with rural development and poverty eradication. This activity would also address the need for capacity-building of officials in rural development and poverty alleviation administration, highlighted in the priority area on employment and income-generation.
22. Indonesia will also coordinate a regional activity to facilitate experience-sharing by ASEAN countries involved in the World Bank initiative on Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) preparation. This regional activity would assist ASEAN countries identify common concerns and approaches in poverty reduction, and facilitate the promotion of ASEAN priorities to interested partner agencies such as the Asian Development Bank, World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), among other partners.
23. The recommended approach and actions for this priority area:
  - a. Strengthen in-country capacity across sectors involved in rural development and poverty eradication to promote local participation:
    - i. Increase the local communities' knowledge and awareness of rural poverty initiatives to facilitate local participation in development initiatives;
    - ii. Coordinate activities to train mid-level professionals and practitioners dealing with rural development and poverty eradication; and
    - iii. Coordinate a regional experience-sharing forum for ASEAN countries to identify common concerns and approaches for poverty reduction, and to facilitate promotion of ASEAN's priorities to ASEAN's Dialogue Partners and interested international agencies.
  - b. Develop activities that facilitate active involvement of all rural development stakeholders in policy formulation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation:
    - i. Work with the World Bank Institute to implement a project that assists ASEAN countries in developing country action proposals that highlight the role of local participation in poverty reduction efforts; and
    - ii. Conduct intra-ASEAN sharing of experience and lessons learnt in devolving responsibility to local governments in the design, management and sustainability of social programmes.
24. An important regional priority relevant to cooperation on rural development and poverty eradication is ASEAN's own process of closer regional integration. In November 2000, the ASEAN Leaders launched the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) to facilitate the integration of ASEAN's newer members – Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Viet Nam (CLMV). An IAI Work Plan addressing the special needs of the CLMV countries was adopted in 2002. Among other priorities, the Work Plan's objectives include poverty alleviation in the CLMV. Regional experience-sharing activities such as those proposed by Indonesia under the priority area on partnerships, local participation and decentralisation would also assist the CLMV countries in developing strategies for poverty reduction.
25. The IAI Work Plan's component on human resource development is relevant to SOMRDPE's work. In 2002, SOMRDPE discussed the possibility of closer links with ASEAN Senior Labour Officials. The ASEAN Secretariat could facilitate the SOMRDPE's participation in IAI activities addressing labour and employment priorities which are relevant to SOMRDPE (e.g. social protection).

26. Recommended approach and actions for this priority area:
- a. Support and leverage on the work of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) work plan:
    - i. Continue participation in the IAI's priority area of human resource development and seek participation, through SLOM, in IAI activities addressing labour and employment priorities which are relevant to SOMRDPE (e.g. social protection);
    - ii. Convene a regional workshop on the development of poverty mapping for ASEAN countries to learn from each other and share strategies for poverty eradication, and support the improvement of poverty measurement methodologies in ASEAN.

### **G. OTHERS**

27. Three other priority activities have been identified:

Capacity-building:

- a. Develop a regional volunteers' movement for rural development incorporating a home-stay and work programme in the rural areas of participating ASEAN countries
  - b. Establish an exchange programme for young professionals dealing in rural development
  - c. Public Information:
    - a. Increase national and regional public awareness on rural development and poverty eradication
28. The recommended activity on voluntary movement for rural development aims to tackle a yet-to-be-addressed priority identified since AMRDPE's establishment. This priority calls for the development of a regional rural volunteer programme, possibly including activities to empower and build the capacity of volunteers, facilitators and rural development workers through exchange programmes involving home-stay and voluntary work in the rural areas of participating ASEAN countries. Based on the outcome of the rural volunteer exchange programme, future exchange programmes of young professionals dealing in rural development and poverty eradication could be further developed, emphasising the role of youth leaders/youth workers in sustainable rural development. Indonesia has expressed interest to coordinate both activities.
29. With regard to public information activities, the Philippines will develop a focused project on promoting awareness on rural development and poverty eradication taking into account the importance of sharing information and best practices of ASEAN in addressing poverty and existing initiatives in this area, including the ASEAN Secretariat homepage section on poverty.
30. Non-project activities to raise awareness and share experience on rural development and poverty eradication could be started through a regular SOMRDPE agenda item on exchange of views on rural development and poverty eradication priorities, using as topics the lessons/experiences identified by AMRDPE. Follow-up activities generated by the discussions and exchange could be developed into projects for implementation as appropriate. In this context, the role of NGOs in advocacy and monitoring of inclusive poverty eradication policies and programmes also merits consideration.

## **PART III: OPERATIONALISATION STRATEGIES FOR PROJECTS**

31. To move forward regional cooperation more effectively, ASEAN Member Countries have agreed:



- to take into consideration the need to engage relevant partners from both within and outside ASEAN to jointly implement activities of mutual interest, and to use, where possible cost-sharing mechanisms in implementing priority projects; and
  - to use the ASEAN Secretariat to ensure coordination with other relevant ASEAN bodies in implementing commonly shared concerns for rural development and poverty eradication.
32. Options for potential donors in supporting ASEAN's priorities for rural development and poverty eradication would include
- a. Donor/international agency identifies ongoing and planned activities which are relevant to the priorities in the Framework Plan;
  - b. Align ongoing country programmes/activities with relevant concepts/priorities of the Framework Plan;
  - c. Build a regional component for related on-going projects and activities at bilateral or sub-regional level already running in several ASEAN countries;
  - d. Consider joint development of detailed proposals for planned activities whose implementation could be co-funded or cost-shared with donors/partners; and
  - e. Invite the participation of representatives from the relevant ASEAN bodies in social development (e.g. labour, social welfare and development) in activities addressing commonly shared concerns/priorities.
33. Cooperation with other ASEAN bodies is also an important consideration, to further ensure complementation of activities, and avoid unnecessary overlap in formulating and implementing priorities. The ASEAN Secretariat can serve as the channel of communication to aid closer coordination among the various ASEAN committees and senior officials' meetings dealing with common concerns.
34. Similarly, closer coordination and linkages can be further pursued with relevant international and regional organisations that share ASEAN's priorities for rural development and poverty reduction. The ASEAN-World Bank joint activity is a good example of such coordination. Other entities with which linkages/joint activities could be considered are the UNDP, the ADB, the Centre for Integrated Rural Development in Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), and the UNESCAP's Emerging Social Issues Division. The Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia (AsiaDHRRA), an NGO affiliated to ASEAN since May 2004, can also join hands with SOMRDPE in addressing regional priorities.