



Conference on  
**Rural Economic Development:  
Opportunities and Challenges in Future Growth Strategies**

**8-9 April 2008, Copenhagen, Denmark**

**Venue:** Eigtveds Pakhus, Asiatisk Plads 2G.

## **1. Background**

Three-quarters of the world's poor live in the rural areas of developing countries and most of these depend, directly or indirectly, on agriculture for their livelihoods. Economic growth in rural areas – with agriculture as a key element - is therefore essential to meet the Millennium Development Goal on “halving the proportion of people suffering from extreme poverty and hunger”.

After two decades of international focus on social sectors, there is now an increasing focus on supporting economic growth, both in national policies and donor assistance. However, recognising the close linkages between development in rural and urban areas - and the challenges emerging from globalisation – economic development in rural areas needs to be viewed as a multidimensional concept covering a wider area than agriculture. An increased focus on local level development is emerging through the concept of “territorial development”, which aims at improving regional cohesion within a country and thereby unlocking the specific potential of its different territories.

The steps towards the creation of a global development partnership have urged donors to rethink rural development policy in different ways. The Joint Donor Rural Concept (JDRC) and the identification of “Hot Topics” developed by the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development and the focus on ‘Agriculture for Development’ in the World Bank report 2008 are two examples of this.

Along with the focus on aid effectiveness stated in the Paris declaration, the Danish development support is in a process of revision. The Danish development support is being concentrated in two or three sectors in each programme country, and a process of increased integration of sectors is ongoing. This process – linked with the increasing focus on a more integrated view in partner countries on economic development in rural areas – leads to the emergence of support for broader programmes within the productive sectors.

The changing contexts of development policies and the rethinking of rural development policies among donors open up new opportunities for contributions from researchers and the knowledge resource base. A broad understanding of rural development and a subsequent need for cross-disciplinary analyses and methods are some of the challenges, which this new context poses.

The demand for relevant knowledge and research results on issues beyond agricultural production and technical issues, such as governance, rural services, power relations including gender, market access and others has increased and knowledge within these issues becomes vital in order to achieve the goals of poverty alleviation and pro-poor economic growth.

## 2. Purpose of the conference

The purpose of the conference is to highlight and reflect on current trends in development assistance to rural economic development and to discuss how knowledge and research can inform and inspire policies and practices on rural economic development.

The conference has the following specific objectives:

- To highlight current trends in international and Danish development strategies and policies on rural economic growth in developing countries.
- To present focus areas and gaps in Danish and international research on rural economic development (stocktaking).
- To rethink and strengthen links between research and development.

## 3. Expected outcome

- Participants better informed about international development trends and research on rural economic development.
- Opportunities and challenges of the new development trends identified and discussed.
- Suggestions on ways to enhance the dialogue between researchers and development practitioners/policymakers.

## 4. Programme

The conference will start with a half day plenary session in which key note addresses will be presented on 'the World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development' and 'rural economic development from a territorial approach'. The afternoon sessions on the first day of the conference (8 April) will focus on trends in Danish development assistance to rural economic development and areas and gaps in recent research on rural economic development.

These presentations will provide the overall framework for a more detailed exploration in two thematic workshops on how knowledge and research on rural economic development can contribute to current thinking on pro-poor growth strategies and policies. Inter-linkages between knowledge and development trends within these areas will be identified and discussed. With a view to focus discussions on a limited number of key issues of relevance to rural economic development the following workshop themes have been identified:

**1) Governance and rural economic development.** Governance affects people in many ways and poor governance especially affects the poor and those without access to assets. Issues such as government and institutional effectiveness, corruption, decentralisation, civil society and private sector participation, legal systems, land tenure, public sector management etc. are all elements that influence economic development in rural areas.

**2) Rural markets and business development.** Minimising rural-urban inequity and preventing the marginalisation of the rural poor involve the improvement of livelihoods in rural areas. A broad approach to rural economic development stressing the diversification of small scale farmers' livelihoods and recognizing the links between urban and rural areas is needed. Agribusiness and value chains development have the potential of providing small-scale farmers with a better access to markets.

The two parallel workshops will start on 8 April and continue on the second day of the conference (9 April). Finally, the outcomes of the two thematic workshops and the conclusions of the conference will be presented in plenary sessions.

**6. Registration** by mail to Lone Frederiksen, ([lf@ddrn.dk](mailto:lf@ddrn.dk)) no later than **April 1, 2008**.