

Report of the International Training Workshop on "Achieving Sustainable Development Goals: Financial Inclusion and Rural Transformation"

Abstract

The post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, has set the agenda 2030 for development. The global community is now streamlining 'sustainability' in all the development programmes. One core issue that has been underlined in both MDGs & SDGs is "poverty" - a characteristic of underdevelopment and inequitable distribution of resources in developing countries. Poverty alleviation has been accorded the highest priority in both MDGs and SDGs. The world has made significant progress in reducing poverty and hunger in recent years. However, while the number of chronically undernourished people has declined by more than 200 million since 1990-1992, there are still 795 million people chronically undernourished in the world and a billion people live on less than US\$ 1.25 a day. Of these, at least 70 percent live in rural areas, and most are directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture (IFAD, 2015).

Without an economic and social transformation of rural areas that is both inclusive and sustainable, poverty eradication, food security and adequate nutrition for all cannot be achieved. The 500 million smallholder farms across the developing world, many of which are owned by women, will need to play a major role in the pursuit of this agenda. Undoubtedly, the key to achieving the SDGs is to unleash the wisdom, creativity and productivity of one billion individuals currently living in poverty - the vast majority of whom live in rural areas. Rural transformation based on right evidence-based policies, is thus a fundamental lever and most appropriate focus to eradicate human development shortfalls so as to imperatively achieve SDG's targets in these countries by 2030. Financial inclusion is often considered as a critical element that makes growth inclusive as access to finance can enable economic agents to make longer-term consumption and investment decisions, participate in productive activities and cope with unexpected short-term shocks.

Against this backdrop, AARDO, in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, organized an International Training Workshop on "*Achieving Sustainable Development Goals: Financial Inclusion and Rural Transformation*" at Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), Comilla, Bangladesh during 27 February-10 March, 2017.

In view of the utmost importance of the subject in many of AARDO member countries, the programme has been found immensely relevant, useful and appreciated. The overwhelming response from the member countries showed the importance and significance of the programme. It was attended by twenty seven (27) participants from nineteen (19) AARDO members, namely, Republic of China (Taiwan), Egypt, Gambia, Ghana, India, Iraq, Republic of Korea, Lebanon, Malawi, Malaysia, Nigeria, Oman, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Zambia, the host country-Bangladesh and Korea Rural Community Corporation (KRC), the associate member of AARDO. The main objective of the training workshop was to enhance the knowledge of the participants on the concepts and cross cutting issues of financial inclusion, poverty reduction, rural transformation in light of SDGs has been achieved through high level professional presentations, discussions and exposure visits.

During the various technical sessions, expert papers and country reports were presented and comprehensively analyzed by the resource persons and participants. Indeed it is highly appreciated that the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) has brought out the proceedings of the workshop in book form. The report contains country and expert papers presented by the participants and resource persons on various issues such as Paradigm Shift in the Concept of Financial Inclusion for Economic Growth; Measuring Financial inclusion; Financial Inclusion and Rural Women: the Future Challenges; Financial Inclusion through Cooperative Movement: Public Sector Initiative; Mobile Banking; An Innovative System for Financial Inclusion; Financial Services through Postal Department; Challenges of Rural transformation and the IFAD Strategic Framework for Rural Transformation; Stakeholder Analysis for Need-based Financial Inclusion of Rural Poor; BARD Experience on Rural transformation through Financial Inclusion; Microcredit: Bangladesh Experience; Role of Central Bank and Microcredit Regulatory Authority for Financial Service Especially for Rural Sectors; Financing through PKSF: An Innovative Model for Aligning Additional Fund for Financial Inclusion; Financial Inclusion: Experience of BRAC; Micro-Credit to Micro-Savings through Government Grant: A Sustainable Poverty Alleviation Philosophy of the Honorable Prime Minister, etc.



H.E. Eng. Wassafi Hassan El-Sreihin (middle), Secretary General releasing Report of the International training workshop in Khartoum, Sudan on 9th July 2017. On his left is Mr. Muhammad Maududur Rashid Safdar, Director General, BARD and on his right is Prof. Hellicy C. Ngambi, Vice Chancellor, Mulungushi University, Zambia.

It is worth to mention that this report was released by H.E. Eng. Wassfi Hassan El Sreihin, Secretary General, AARDO in the presence of Mr. Muhammad Maududur Rashid Safdar, Director General, BARD, Comilla, Bangladesh during the 5th Technical Programme Committee

Meeting of AARDO, held in Sudan during 09-11 July 2017. It is hoped that the report would be useful to policy makers, academicians, researchers and other stakeholders.