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FOCAL POINT FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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INFO FLASH RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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EDITORIAL

This is the first edition of the Info Flash of the SDC Focal Point for Rural Development. It provides flashlights and new documents on rural development issues, and informs on rural development activities within SDC.

The Info Flash will appear approx. 4 times per year and is distributed by e-mail. Two of the editions will appear also in print within the magazine Rural Development News (the successor of the BeraterInnen News published by LBL).

The Info Flash is a part of our promotion strategy to establish the Focal Point as a useful, not to be missed, platform for current rural development issues.

For the Focal Point Management Team

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WHAT IS THE FOCAL POINT FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT?

Most readers by now have heard about the SDC Focal Point for Rural Development. For those who have not, we recommend a visit to the FP's web platform at www.sdc-ruraldevelopment.ch. Here we just repeat the very basics: The FP is a joint initiative of SDC's thematic divisions to revive the discourse on rural development and provide cutting edge information on current issues. It is mainly addressed to actors of SDC and its partner organisations. It aims at effective management of knowledge, learning and joint work across sectors, thematic specialisations, and globally dispersed programmes and partners.

KEY SERVICES OF THE FP

Here a selection of the services provided by the FP are presented:

Coffee Shop. The coffee shop provides space for web-based thematic debates. Currently debates on [Skill Development in Rural Areas](#) and [Value Chains in Rural Development](#) are running. We would like to encourage you to come up with suggestions and mobilise people for further discussions. On the [coffee shop page](#) you find information on how to initiate a discussion.

Information Desk. At the [information desk](#) you can get answers on your current challenges in rural development, and links to people and organisations that have experience in particular rural development issues. We cordially invite you to make use of this service. Though this service is new, it has high utility potential – thus, see for yourself whether you get useful answers.

Rural Development Briefing. A face-to-face service for professionals from partner countries (primarily NPOs in COOFs and staff of partner organisations) visiting SDC head office is being developed. The service offers the visitors the opportunity for a two to four hours exchange on rural development topics with specialists within SDC head office. This enables on the one hand an exchange in which both sides can learn from each other, and on the other hand enhances the personal links between field and head office staff working on similar topics. Interested? Contact sdc-ruraldevelopment@sdc.net or the management team for further information.

Bookshop. The [bookshop](#) is a central resource of the FP. On the one hand it makes remarkable resources from international sources on current rural development topics available. On the other hand it offers a showcase for stories, articles and other documents on practical experiences and innovative ideas from SDC programmes and partners. Its contents are continuously being further developed. Some thematic sections are still rather empty, others provide already a lot of useful materials.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BOOKSHOP

Here we present two bookshop sections which are already well stocked, as well as a few individual publications which provide useful reading.

[Value chains and marketing](#). The section on value chains and marketing provides a wide range of documents, from tools and methods over practical experiences of SDC programmes to theoretical background information.

[Rural finance](#). This bookshelf is also well stocked with basic papers by SDC, useful documents from other sources and a range of links to other sites with important resources on rural finance.

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[Biodiversity and development: strategic approach](#).

This document addresses the issue of integrating biodiversity into development cooperation policy and practice. Although this paper (which was published in 2001) is not an official SDC paper, it is now used as the SDC guideline for work on biodiversity-related issues.

[Rural finance: recent advances and emerging lessons, debates, and opportunities](#). This report (by the Ohio State University) examines lessons about rural finance and provides useful guidelines on how to expand and make more effective the provision of rural financial services.

[Measuring empowerment in practice: structuring analysis and framing indicators](#). There is much talk about empowerment and many programmes have it as a main goal, but how can we understand progress towards this goal? This brand new World Bank working paper outlines a framework for analysis and provides examples of its application, partly from rural areas.

[Making business service markets work for the poor in rural areas: a review of experience](#). This paper by the Springfield Centre seeks to look at the extent to which concepts and principles of BDS market development are helpful in enhancing access of poor people in these areas to know-how and other services, based on practical experiences, and it identifies some key implications for external interventions to develop services in weakly integrated areas.

[Addressing poverty through local economic and enterprise development](#). This paper by the Natural Resources Institute (NRI) reviews some of the current literature on LED with particular attention paid to rural areas and small and intermediate urban centres.

[The notion of accompaniment](#). In this document the Village and Farm Forestry Project in Bangladesh presents the notion of "accompaniment" - a form of coaching which puts the target people really in the driving seat, and contrasts it with participatory approaches where the development workers remain in the driving seat.

[Commercialisation vivrière paysanne, marchés urbains et options politiques au Burkina Faso](#). This document is the final synthesis report of a joint research project supported by SDC, which investigated the commercialisation of food crops, and makes recommendations on policies to favour an intensification of commercial food crop production and to improve the supply of cereals to urban areas. (in french).

METHODS AND LEARNING

Outcome mapping is increasingly used as an innovative project cycle management approach which focuses on behaviour changes as outcomes of development interventions instead of static results. OM also emphasises continuous learning from experiences made along the implementation pathway. What does this mean in practice? IDRC (International Development Research Centre) has developed a various [materials on OM](#). "[The challenges of assessing development impacts](#)" briefly describes OM. The manual "[Outcome mapping – building learning and reflection into development programs](#)" is for those who want to know more. For more information on outcome mapping contact [Daniel Roduner](#) at the Swiss Centre for Agricultural Extension and Rural Development (LBL).

[Power Tools](#). This site (by IIED) presents a range of tools which can be used by marginalised people and their allies to influence natural resource policy. These tools address power asymmetries between marginalised and marginalisers.

LINK TIPS

[Livelihoods Connect](#) is DFID's theme site (managed by IDS) where you find answers to all those questions on sustainable livelihoods which you always wanted to ask but never found time. Besides information resources it provides tools and learning materials, discussions on hot topics, practical lessons learnt, a section on livelihoods in relation to policies, institutions and processes, as well as an enquiry service including answers to FAQ (frequently asked questions).

[Developing Markets for Business Development Services](#). This inter-agency website for the exchange of information on service markets (co-financed by SDC) is dedicated to systemic approaches: developing whole markets for services, to maximise scale and outreach. You will find information from over 100 agencies, working in over 70 countries. While the site is not specifically dealing with rural issues, you find there many resources that are useful in rural contexts.

[Regoverning Markets](#). This is the site of a collaborative research project which analyses the growing concentration in the processing and retail sectors of national and regional agri-food systems and its impacts and implications for rural livelihoods and communities in diverse countries and regions. You find here studies, research documents and other papers produced within the frame of the project.



SPOTLIGHT ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT AT SDC HEADQUARTERS

[Skill Development in Rural Areas \(SDRA\)](#). Within the frame of the on-going internet Community of Practice on skill development in rural areas (see above) a face-to-face workshop was organised by E+I (Employment and Income Division). The workshop documentation is available on the SDRA website (main materials) and on a CD-ROM (all materials) which can be ordered at SDC's [Employment and Income Division](#) or at the [Swiss Centre for Agricultural Extension and Rural Development](#). A state-of-the-art paper which summarises the insights gained so far will be available shortly.

Services by thematic divisions' competence centres. Various thematic divisions of SDC mandate external competence centres to support them in specific fields. Some of these centres have special competences in particular rural development fields. These mandates also include ad-hoc advice to the thematic divisions' clientele. This means that you can address relevant questions directly to the centres which have the required expertise. In the following table you find a list of the competence

centres, mandated by the E+I and NRE divisions and the conditions for advice. Questions which do not fall under these themes you can address to the Focal Point [Information Desk](#).

Employment and Income

- Financial services ⇒ Intercooperation, [Isabelle Dauner](#)
- Skill development ⇒ KEK, [Matthias Jäger](#)
- Rural development ⇒ LBL, [International Department](#)

The centres are authorised to give you advice taking up to half a working day directly; for advice requiring up to 2 days the centres need prior approval by E+I; advice of more than 2 working days is not possible within the frame of these mandates.

Natural Resources and Environment

- Sustainable resource management and sustainable regional development ⇒ [Centre for Development and Environment](#) (CDE)
- Information search services on agriculture, forestry and natural resource management ⇒ [Inforesources](#) (free of cost for SDC staff und partner organisations)

Costly and time consuming services may have to be approved by NRE. For details contact [Willi Graf](#).

[Agri-pessimism or agriculture as a driver for pro-poor growth?](#) There is a continuous controversy among development thinkers on the role of agriculture in pro-poor growth. A new paper produced within the frame of a large multilateral initiative on Operationalising Pro-Poor Growth concludes that agricultural development and more broadly rural development can play important roles in pro-poor growth. On the initiative of the governance and E+I divisions a presentation-cum-discussion on this topic took place. The presentations of the event can be obtained from the [Focal Point team](#).

A LIVELY FOCAL POINT? IT NEEDS YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS!

Although the web platform of the Focal Point for Rural Development is a service by the thematic divisions at SDC, its success **ultimately depends you, on your contributions to, and utilisation of what the Focal Point has to offer.**

We, therefore, heartily encourage you to utilise the platform and its services, and to contribute your experiences and ideas or launch your initiatives - be it in the form of a discussion in the coffee shop or in the form of an article on your experiences with new ways of doing things.

Have a look at the web platform and give us suggestions for improvements. Tell us what needs to be available on the site so that you would visit it regularly (1 x month or so). Propose topics on which you would consider a package of materials helpful.