

IDRC Scoping Study:

Productive Strategies and Empowerment of Poor Rural Families to Participate Successfully in Global Markets

Terms of Reference

Overview

As indicated in its prospectus (www.idrc.ca/rpe), the goal of the IDRC's Rural Poverty and Environment (RPE) Program Initiative (PI) is to support participatory action-learning-research, policy and institutional innovations and reforms. RPE will contribute to the development of networks, partnerships and communities of practice, in order to strengthen institutions, policies and practices that enhance the food, water and income security of the rural poor, including those living in fragile or degraded upland and coastal ecosystems. In order to accomplish this, RPE will support activities in four Outcome Areas: 1) Building effective environmental governance where all stakeholders, including marginalized groups, participate in environment and natural resource management (ENRM) decision-making, and policies are informed by field research and stakeholder needs; 2) Enhancing equitable access and use rights to natural resources by strengthening the negotiating capacity of the rural poor to defend or expand their rights to natural resources; 3) Strengthening communities' capacity to respond to and benefit from integration within wider social and economic systems (e.g. urbanization, globalization and market integration); and 4) Adaptive learning (adaptive ecosystem management, participatory ecosystem monitoring, experimental policy design), in key hotspots of rural poverty and environmental degradation.

In the context of the third outcome on strengthening communities' capacity to respond to and benefit from integration within wider social and economic systems, RPE intends to develop a programming activity on "Productive strategies and empowerment of poor rural families to participate successfully in global markets". The present document presents Terms of Reference for a consultancy to help RPE design a strategy to carry out this programming activity.

The discussion and debate about globalization and rural poverty is often emotional and usually bipolar. As a result, even though freer trade and globalized markets are steadily having more important but ambivalent implications for the living standards of millions of poor rural families, a slow-moving pro/anti-trade debate is a stumbling block. The RPE team believes that this debate needs to be better grounded in the needs and perceptions of poor rural people. Rural households and communities need to better understand and visualize the effects of freer trade and globalized markets so as to adjust and adapt to the new opportunities and constraints that are created.

Microanalysis that identifies and measures the positive and negative effects of trade liberalization on poor rural households and communities is urgently

needed. More importantly, rural people need to participate in this research/analysis in order to understand and visualize first hand the emerging opportunities and constraints associated with trade liberalization and the increasing segmentation and sophistication of markets for the goods and services they can or do produce. These will require new tools and studies that are undertaken and applied in a disaggregated manner, accounting for qualitative and quantitative variables that often interact in complex manners. Important among such variables or factors are: social class, gender, ethnicity, location, etc., which are fundamental in defining political power, economic power and social institutions in rural communities. Although markets, globalization and poverty reduction are topics that suggest a clear role for economic science, it is evident that significant progress in understanding how to make freer trade and globalized markets work for the rural poor can only come about from an interdisciplinary approach that also includes other social (e.g., sociology, anthropology, etc.) and natural (e.g., agronomy, engineering, etc.) sciences. To be effective, researchers must also work with communities to assist them in visualizing the emerging context of opportunities and constraints for improving their productive strategies and to find ways to strengthen their participation and influence in debates and negotiations about markets and trade liberalization.

Goals and objectives of the scoping study

The overall goal of this scoping study is to guide RPE as it decides on the nature of projects it will fund during the next funding cycle, within the context of the programming activity “Productive strategies and empowerment of poor rural families to participate successfully in global markets”.

Specifically, the scoping study should enable RPE to prepare an agenda of priority research areas within the theme; highlight crucial issues regarding methodologies; identify on-going work within the scope of the theme by other donors and related institutions; identify potential partners; and provide recommendations that enable RPE to build a coherent programme in collaboration with other IDRC Program Initiatives..

The list that follows enumerates (albeit not exhaustively) key points that might be considered:

- Obstacles and/or barriers to the effective and equitable integration of poor and small-scale producers in national and regional economies. These may be caused by factors such as: inadequate infrastructure, scale of operation, logistical complexities, technical standard requirements, or insufficient human capital.
- Strengths and weaknesses of existing productive strategies of the rural poor in a globalized market. Attention should be given to the inclusion of non-traditional products: e.g., non-timber forest products, aromatic and medicinal plants, ecotourism and crafts as well as value addition through storage and processing capacity.
- Strategies for managing and mitigating risks associated with external shocks as the rural poor enter globalized markets. Issues that could be

considered under this include the effect of contract farming and emergence of supermarkets and their buying power.

- Potential conflict between productive strategies and protecting the environment and the natural resource base. The critical issue here is to determine how to manage the natural resource base while participating in and benefiting from expanding opportunities in global markets.
- Potential for adding value to products in order to increase the share of the international price that reaches the rural poor.
- Opportunities and constraints for regional and inter-regional trade that takes into account the comparative advantages, specificities and complementarities of productive strategies.
- Strategies to improve market information systems that enable poor rural families to visualize the opportunities/constraints offered by trade and to make better decisions in the production and marketing of their products. These should include attention to the role of farmers' organisations, the private sector and civil society organisations.
- Systems for protecting intellectual property rights of poor rural communities through labelling, certification, etc.
- Means of strengthening the capacity of the rural poor to participate and successfully compete in debates and negotiations about market entry, share and prices in the context of trade liberalization (producers associations, partnership with external interest groups, information and training).

Methodology

Without attempting to provide a detailed methodology for the consultants, it is hoped that they will draw on their extensive experience in the regions, in order to survey and review current literature and undertake extensive consultations with key stakeholders. It is also expected that the consultants will be cognizant of gaps in existing knowledge and understanding, will take into consideration on-going and planned work by regional research centres and funding organizations. The consultants are also encouraged to engage with RPE and other IDRC programming units team members to identify opportunities for inter-program collaboration (explore joint-project funding and so on).

1. This will be funded as one research project, to a maximum amount of \$CAD 350,000, although consultants are encouraged to incorporate cost-efficiency in the design of their proposals. The project might consist of a global lead organization with regional partners or a consortium of regionally based consultants. If the latter, the project should be organized in order to be funded as a global project with one organization designated as the leader.
2. RPE team members have identified an initial shortlist of potential global and regional research centres that have the potential capacity and reach to develop effective partnerships to implement the scoping study. See the list at the end of this document.

3. From the shortlist, RPE will solicit pre-proposals from a selection of the research centres. Pre-proposals will be a maximum of six pages in length (including a preliminary budget). CVs of key researchers should be attached. The pre-proposal is due within 30 days of the call. All potential candidates are welcome to form voluntary alliances to submit pre-proposals.
4. RPE team members will select the best pre-proposal and invite a more complete proposal. The selected candidate will be requested to submit a detailed budget and timeline. An important criterion for the choice of the winning pre-proposal will be evidence of regional knowledge and contacts/links/partnerships to expertise located in the regions.
 - a. Regional studies should be for a maximum of 30 consultant days for two consultants in each of the three regions (Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean), plus one consultant in the Middle East/North Africa region.
 - b. A global synthesis should indicate the similarities and differences in priorities and research gaps across the three regions, and within each of these regions.
 - c. An interim report containing the regional studies and global synthesis should be submitted to RPE.
 - d. The project should include a workshop bringing together all the consultants from the different regions and RPE team members (plus other interested IDRC staff) to discuss the regional studies and global synthesis. This will be scheduled following the submission of the interim report.
 - e. The final version of the report should be submitted after the workshop.
5. The consultants will have some flexibility in setting the time schedule for implementation, but the project will last no longer than nine months.

Potential timeline

TORs approved and sent to the short list of consultants: August 26, 2005

Pre-proposals received by September 23, 2005

Winning proposal selected October 5, 2005

Selected proposal detailed work plan and budget received by: October 19, 2005

Contract signed by October 26, 2005

Final report no later than July 31, 2006