

COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL POVERTY IN RURAL ROMANIA¹

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Poverty is largely analyzed at individual or household level. Its measurement at community and regional levels are much less elaborated but such an approach could be of high relevance for public action policies. The paper presents the first standardized approach of community poverty as applied at commune level in Romania.

The study proposes two measures for community COMDEV and for regional poverty DEVJUD95 as adjusted to the Romanian context and the action policies of Romanian Social Development Fund RSDF². Community poverty is defined as high probability of low private and public consumption of goods and services. Head count index of poverty and other existing measures of regional poverty are compared.

Levels and approaches in poverty measurement

Community /regional poverty is defined by high probability of low consumption at the level of a community/regional level. "High probability" could be measured by extreme location of the reference unit toward the pole of maximum poverty on the development scale. The cutting

¹ The paper is based on the study I accomplished for targeting rural community poverty in Romania: Community poverty and disadvantaged groups. Study upon poverty targeting mechanisms of Romania Social Development Fund, World Bank, Bucharest, January 1998 and Community poverty in Romania rural areas Foundation for poverty alleviation by Romania Social Development Fund, WB, Bucharest, February 1998. The project officer from the Bank was Ana-Maria Sandi. She largely contributed to improving my paper.

The findings, interpretations and methodological approaches expressed in this study are entirely those of the author and should not be attributed, in any manner, to the World Bank who initially supported the study. While the project benefitted extensively from expertise of WB specialists in RSDF, the author is entirely responsible for the content of the report.

² Romanian Social Development Fund RSDF, a World Bank inspired institution for poverty alleviation, settled by the Law 129/1998. is intended to contribute to the alleviation of very severe poverty at community level, by short time actions of high impact, flexibility and transparency. Focusing on very specific and extreme cases of poverty, the fund could act as a bridge between the present situation of a quasi lack of poverty programs and the emergence of long-term effects of structural programs in the area. The targets of SDF are poor communities and disadvantaged groups. These are too broad targets to be used as such in the implementation process. Their specification is made by declared option for privileged types of intervention and for privileged spatial location of the poor. The specific interventions of RSDF are in the area of small infrastructure, social services and income generating activities. All these are specific for non-structural approach to poverty alleviation. By using them, RSDF makes explicit its nature of anti-poverty institutional arrangement, complementary to those oriented towards the structural measures of centralized nature. Beneficiaries of these types of interventions could be groups or persons with a certain poverty profile.