

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF RURAL WOMEN IN ROMANIA

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RURAL POPULATION

The rural area represents about 64% from the land fund and it includes 45.1% of total population (50.3% are women). This population live in 2700 communes (12.000 villages). The age of the rural population is in an increase. The share of the old age population in the villages is twice than the old age population in urban area (about 16.5% of the total in rural area consists, in 1996, of population aged 65 and more), women being the principal share. On the other hand, the villages have a resource of young population under 20 ylors, of about 30%. Another negative process is the depopulation of the villages in the last 30 years (from 76.46% in 1948 to 45.1% in 1996). Process stopped in 1996, because the internal migration departures was greater in urban than in rural areas. As a result of the considerable decrease in living standards and in social protection in 1996, it continues the increase of the principal demographic indicators: mortality rate, infant mortality rate and the decrease of the birth rate and natural grow rate. The family reduced their fertility, principally through abortion, resulting a negative population grow rate. Difficulties in obtaining a place to live, increased unemployment (6.9% in 1996) and the lack of Government policy to protect young families, all contribute to less motivation among young people to get married. The fall in number of marriages (6,4% in rural area than 6.9% in urban area) is an important factor in the decrease of the fertility rate. The mortality rate increased from 10.7% in 1990 to 12.6% in 1996 and it's higher in rural areas than in urban once (16.5% than 9.5%). The main causes are cardio-vascular diseases, tumours and respiratory diseases, genital cancer. Infant mortality rate remains

ABSTRACT

The land reform started in Romania in 1989 and has considerably modified the economic and social conditions of agriculture with consequences hard to be managed. The rural population represents about 45% of the total population with a high number of over-sixty five years old people. The presence of poor living standard, the high rate of mortality, the reduced rate of marriages, the lack of connections and infrastructures, the low technological level of the production means are the typical elements of rural life in Romania. This situation, that has worsened over the last years, requires planning and urgent actions to improve not only the life conditions of the rural population but to relaunch the Romanian agricultural economy.

RÉSUMÉ

Le réforme agraire amorcée en Roumanie en 1989 a modifié considérablement les conditions économiques et sociales de l'agriculture en donnant lieu à des conséquences difficiles à gérer. La population rurale représente environ 45% de la population totale avec un nombre élevé de mortalité, le faible taux de mariages, le manque de connexions et d'infrastructures, le faible niveau technique des moyens de production, sont les éléments qui caractérisent la vie rurale en Roumanie. Cette situation, qui s'est aggravée ces dernières années, requiert une programmation et des actions opportunes pour améliorer non seulement les conditions de vie de la population rurale mais aussi pour relancer l'économie agricole roumaine.

applied with medicines and other necessary consumable and lack trained personnel.

AGRICULTURE

Since 1990, with the re-establishment of ownership of agricultural land, a very large number of people, both in rural and in urban areas, have become owners of land. We must remark the great percentage of agricultural occupied population in private property. It should be notice that agricultural incomes are very small, because of the fact that most householders practice a subsistence agriculture, which is inefficient. Over 50% of the occupied population in agriculture, is over 50 ylors old compared to 27% of the total occupied population. An increase in the proportion of the population employed in agriculture, associated with an accentuated ageing and feminisation of the agricultural force, is a specific result of the crisis period, where agriculture offered a refuge for some of those persons made redundant in other sectors. About the structure of the occupied population by professional status, we remark the great percentage of the unpaid familial workers in agriculture. The activity rate in rural area (360 places/1.000 habitants) is under the normal rate

extremely high - 22.2% (25,5% in rural areas, 18.5% in urban areas). The lack of information regarding family planning results in one of the highest rates in Europe of mortality rate.

HEALTH POLICY

The number of persons per doctor is higher in rural areas (1.461 than 372 in urban areas). Material conditions are less favourable concerning equipment, the network of medical centres, hospital beds, etc. Private medical practices only resolve an extremely small proportion of the demand for services. Dispensaries ought to provide basic medical services, but the infrastructure is insufficient, they are poorly equipped, irregularly sup-

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Table 1 Demographic indicators.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Rural population as % of total	46.8	45.7	45.9	45.7	45.5	45.3	45.1	45.1
Population aged 65 years and over (as % of total)	10.1	10.4	10.7	11.1	11.4	11.7	12.0	12.2
rural	13.3	14.0	14.3	15.1	15.5	15.9	16.3	16.5
urban	7.3	7.4	7.7	7.8	8.0	8.2	8.5	8.7
Internal migration departures (1,000 persons)								
total	192.9	786.5	262.9	293.2	240.2	266.7	289.5	292.9
rural	143.4	616.1	183.2	181.7	144.1	149.4	153.7	144.0
urban	49.5	170.4	70.7	111.5	96.1	117.4	135.8	148.9
Birth rate %°								
total	16.0	13.6	11.9	11.4	11.0	10.9	10.4	10.2
rural	16.8	14.3	12.9	12.9	12.7	12.7	12.3	11.9
urban	15.1	12.9	11.0	10.2	9.6	9.3	8.9	8.7
Mortality rate %°								
total	10.7	10.6	10.9	11.6	11.6	11.7	12.0	12.6
rural							15.4	16.5
urban							9.1	9.5
Life expectancy at birth								
total	69.4	69.6	69.8	69.8	69.5	69.5	68.5	69.3
rural	68.6	68.7	68.9	68.8	68.8	68.7	68.7	68.4
urban	70.2	70.3	70.4	70.5	70.7	70.7	70.0	70.1
Fertility rate %°								
total	66.3	56.2	48.7	46.6	44.3	43.3	41.1	39.8
rural	80.5	70.5	63.7	62.1	60.7	60.6	58.2	56.3
urban	55.5	46.7	39.2	36.7	33.9	32.5	30.7	29.8
Total abortion rate	1.18	6.08	5.29	4.35	3.61	3.24	3.04	
Natural grow rate	5.3	3.0	1.0	0.2	0.6	0.8	1.6	2.4
Marriage rate	7.7	8.3	7.9	7.7	7.1	6.8	6.8	6.7
Divorce rate	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.3	1.4	1.7	1.5	1.5
Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live birth)	168.1	83.0	66.0	59.9	52.9	60.0	47.5	
Infant mortality rate %°								
total	26.9	26.9	22.7	23.3	23.3	23.9	21.2	22.2
rural	29.3	29.7	25.8	25.7	26.4	27.2	23.9	25.5
urban	24.3	24.1	19.6	20.8	19.7	20.1	18.2	18.5
Population per doctor								
total	552	555	551	536	565	567	565	555
rural	971	1,094	1,189	1,192	1,245	1,356	1,426	1,461
urban	400	393	379	386	410	382	378	372
Population per health worker-total								
total	171	176	189	183	186	175	177	176
rural	512	555	590	591	603	523	555	557
urban	107	112	116	119	122	113	113	112

Source: Human Development Report, NCS, 1997.

(440-500 persons/1.000 habitants). This type of structural change, only serves to reinforce inequality and inequity, and encourage poverty, given that agricultural holdings have been divided into tiny parcels and that subsistence farming is now practice on a large scale with far greater inefficiency than in the non-agricultural sectors.

SOCIAL SECURITY

There is no special assistance for single parent families, for long term unemployed and for elderly people who are not covered by any of the present pensions systems (in non-colectivisation areas). The extremely low levels of farmer's pension, show that the average farmer's pension in December 1996 was only 21% of the average state

pension and only 8% of the average wage. Farmer's pension for those who were fully insured covered only 40% of minimum expenses while for those who were not fully ensured, this fell to 25%. There are important differences between rural and urban areas, as well as between one district to another. The most important negative aspects linked with the low level of technic equipment of the villages are: water facilities, roads, electricity, etc. From the total length of the communal roads, 24.6% are non-modernised, only 18.6% of the total villages have water facilities centralised system and about 40% of villages are not linked to the telecommunication network. Only 3.3% of villages have not electricity facilities and 12.3% are partial electrified. There are inequalities in liv-

Table 2 Occupied population by group of age, sex, % (1996).

Occupied population by group of age, %					
	15-24 years	23-34 years	35-49 years	50-64 years	65 years and over
Total economy	13.8	23.5	35.7	18.9	7.9
Agriculture:					
Men	15.1	13.7	19.4	30.2	21.3
Women	12.3	11.4	22.0	33.3	20.8
Total	13.8	12.6	20.7	31.7	21.1

Source: AMIGO (Household workforce survey, NCS, 1996) (fourth quarter).

Table 3 Occupied population by property, sex, % (1996).

Occupied population by property %					
	Public	Private	Mixed	Cooperatives	Another
Total economy	47.0	49.0	2.6	0.9	0.02
Agriculture:					
Men	10.1	88.3	1.3	0.1	
Women	3.7	95.9	0.3		
Totale	6.8	92.1	0.8	0.07	

Source: AMIGO (Household workforce survey, NCS, 1996) (fourth quarter).

Table 4 Occupied population by professional status, sex, %.

	Employed	Managers	Individual Workers	Unpaid familial workers	Agricultural society or cooperatives
Total economy	62.8	1.3	19.5	15.8	0.4
Agriculture					
Men	14.2		59.6	24.7	1.3
Women	4.7		34.6	59.6	0.9
Total	9.4	0.05	46.9	42.4	1.1

Source: AMIGO (household workforce survey, NCS, 1996) (fourth quarter).

ing conditions and the access to infrastructure, access to education and health services, to cultural opportunities and to the change of information between urban and rural areas. These inequalities will have serious long term consequences on human development. In mountainous areas, almost completely isolated, these communities have no teachers, medical personal, no means of necessary communication, in order to use the services available in neighbouring areas.

The increases in the cost of transport and the closing of some public transport service will lead to the further isolation of many rural communities. Poverty rates are highest among households of unemployed persons and farmers. Half of this householders are living under the poverty level (51.78%, respectively 47.56%).

RURAL WOMEN AND EQUALITY

Most of the inherited inequalities (from the old regime) have become more pronounced. New forms of inequali-

ty have developed which a process of polarisation which ignore moral norms and legal conventions.

The inequalities between women and men are not as serious as those between urban and rural areas, although they has become more pronounced during the last few years. Men are better educated than women, and the urban population is better educated than the rural population.

They are most obviously through the decreasing status of women in the labour market, through increase wage differences between women and men through the low level of involvement of women in national and local level of politics.

THE DIRECTION OF THE REFORM

The choice made in 1989, for radical changes, is now being implemented with action of the reform in agriculture:

- Commercial state-owned agricultural companies unprofitable were liquidate and a lot of these will de privatised by the end of this year.

- Remove of restrictions and quotas on the export of agricultural products.

- Agricultural subventions are more transparent and are available direct for all producers.

- Legislation for free juridical circulation of land and the modification of

the land law, are prepared.

- Programmes of rural development: to establish the strategies and policies for rural development, to reduce the disparities between different regions, programmes for development of the unfavourably areas, are starting.

Also, the priority for the new Government, are the social protection programmes: the indexing of wages and social services for those with small incomes, increasing the children's allowances and suplimentar allocation provided for families with two or more children, increasing the length of maternity leave to two years, improving unemployment benefits with a special compensation for those who are redundant and for those who want to start a small private business, increasing agricultural pension and other categories of social assistance which are low and the radical improving of the social services, health-care and education. 1997, is considered a critical year for the acceleration of the reform strategy, but the positive effects of these policies will be visible in 1998. ●