

Briefing Note on the IFPRI 2020 Conference
“Taking Action for the World’s Poor and Hungry People,”
Beijing, October 17–19, 2007
www.ifpri.org/2020chinaconference

The international conference “Taking Action for the World’s Poor and Hungry People,” drew about 400 participants. The conference examined who the poorest and hungry people are and what new and different actions are required to improve their welfare.

Key Findings

- Of the 1 billion people living on less than US\$1 a day, 485 million are living on between 75 cents and US\$1 a day, 323 million are living on between 50 and 75 cents a day, and 162 million, the ultra poor, are living on less than 50 cents a day.
- Three-quarters of the ultra poor live in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Among the categories of poverty below US\$1 a day, poverty among the ultra poor has been most entrenched. Since 1990, the rate of US\$1-a-day poverty has fallen substantially more than the rate of ultra poverty. The poorest are being left behind.
- The composition of the poor is changing and exclusion, ethnicity, gender, and disabilities are playing growing roles and need different policy foci.
- Poverty remains rural and is strongly tied to changes in agriculture and the rural economies.
- The optimal policy mix between growth and social protection needs revisiting.

What to Do (Priority Areas of Action)

1. **Focus on inclusive growth** that includes the poorest and hungry from the beginning—in many countries, such growth will generally involve accelerated rural and agricultural growth.
2. **Improve access to assets and markets** to give millions of smallholder farmers access to value chains and to give many poor households access to nonfarm rural employment.
3. **Phase in social protection more quickly and comprehensively** and rebalance policies that encourage "pro-poor" growth with social protection policies.
4. **Accelerate investments in health and nutrition programs**, particularly for children and women.
5. **Include the excluded** by requiring governance reforms that empower the poor and the excluded, provide accountability, and offer incentives to service providers.

How to Do It (Areas for Political and Institutional Change)

1. **Core political issues**—Countries need to take charge of their own future; conflicts and instability need to be overcome; governance, accountability, and rights need to come to the forefront in poverty reduction policies; sound fiscal and tax policy is critical; and macroeconomic policy and an open trade regime remain key.
2. **Scale**—International and civil society organizations should provide technical and financial support to facilitate the appropriate scaling up and transfer of projects.
3. **Political process**—Attention should be directed to the political process to create broad-based support for action.
4. **Local action**—Building community organizations and political institutions for and with the poorest is an important part of strengthening local action.
5. **Capacity to implement**—Improving capacity to implement programs requires that skill levels and organizational arrangements get more attention.