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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE LANDLESS AND THE NEAR-LANDLESS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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I. Introduction

During the past five years there has been a shift in emphasis among those concerned with international development--away from macroeconomic growth as the main strategy and target of development and toward the alleviation of poverty. Attention and resources, as well as rhetoric, have been focusing increasingly on the "poor majority," most of whom still live and work in rural areas. Little precise attention, however, has been directed to the critical question of who are the rural poor to whom governments and development assistance agencies should be orienting their attention. To date, most efforts to assist the "rural poor" have focused on the hypothetical "small farmer" who owns and operates a modest holding as a family enterprise. With limited resources and traditional technologies; his small holding yields a bare subsistence income; with appropriate packages of modern technology and production inputs, however, it is assumed he can be made sufficiently productive to provide a decent family livelihood.

"Small farmer strategies" are appropriate in some circumstances, but they do not address the more pressing problems of rural poverty. A large proportion of the labor force, in many countries the majority, are not small farmers; they are landless workers, insecure tenants, and cultivators whose holdings are too small to provide a family livelihood. In order to survive, they must sell their labor and the labor of wives and children at very low rates of return. These are the landless and near-landless. They are much poorer than small owner-cultivators and their absolute numbers and proportions of the rural labor force are increasing very rapidly. Our concern here is not to pit small farmers against the landless and near-landless in competition for government programs and donor assistance. But we think it necessary to address the problems of the latter group, since any development strategy

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\*The principal associates were Norman Uphoff for Africa, Cheryl Lassen for Latin America, and Shubh Kumar and David Rosenberg for Asia.

which is seriously concerned with the poor majority must pay specific attention and indeed accord priority to the deteriorating conditions and dismal prospects of the landless and near-landless.

This project was an initial exploration of the literature on a very large, complex, and hitherto neglected topic. It included no original research. The literature is plentiful but scattered and much of it is impressionistic. Data that are collected and reported on land tenure, rural incomes, and living conditions often overlook the landless and near-landless or treat them as a residual category. Among and within countries, for historical, institutional and economic reasons, the specific statuses and conditions of the landless and near-landless vary greatly. Because of these variations and because no standardized categories have ever been developed for collecting and reporting data on the rural poor, comparative analysis of numbers, circumstances and trends is quite difficult. It involves considerable judgmental estimation, and is subject to considerable margins of error. Limitations in the data and in the resources available compelled us to focus on a limited group of countries in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. They represent, however, a fair cross-section of developing countries in the non-communist world. Thus we believe the quantitative estimates in the following tables on Asia and Latin America present a fair picture, by order of magnitude, of the incidence of landlessness and near-landlessness in the countries surveyed. For reasons discussed below, we cannot offer comparable quantitative estimates for Africa and the Near East.

Detailed information appear in the country profiles attached to the regional surveys in the Appendices to the Report. They also include the sources of data. Data from Asia indicate that in all the countries surveyed the landless and near-landless constitute a majority of the rural labor force; the figures approach 90 percent in Java, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. In Java, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, the landless alone comprise half the rural labor force. In every country surveyed in Latin America the landless and near-landless are a majority, exceeding 80 percent in Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic.

At prevailing rates of population growth and allowing for net out-migration from rural areas of one third of the projected population increase, the rural labor force will grow by at least 50 percent in most of these countries by the end of the century. Because of the slow rate of job creation in the industrial and service sectors and in the absence of fundamental institutional reforms, the great majority of these additions to the rural labor force will swell the ranks of the landless and near-landless. This means, for example, that in India the number of landless and

Table 1  
Landless and Near-Landlessness in Selected Asian Countries

<u>Country</u>	<u>Rural Labor Force as a % of Total Labor Force</u>	<u>Rural Labor Force (000's)</u>	<u>Landless as a Percent of Rural Labor Force*</u>	<u>Near-Landless as a Percent of Rural Labor Force</u>	<u>Landless &amp; Near-Landless as a Percent of Rural Labor Force</u>	<u>Landless &amp; Near-Landless-ness (000's)</u>
Bangladesh	85	24,288	28	61	89	21,434
India	83	150,000	32	47	79	118,215
Indonesia (Java only)	63	21,000	60	29	89	18,500
Malaysia	68	2,232	12	39	51	1,123
Pakistan	58	10,950	43	45	88	9,630
Philippines	69	9,240	55	26	81	7,450
Sri Lanka	80	3,440	54	19	73	2,505
Thailand	78	12,700	10	40	50	6,372

For Asia we classified tenants as landless because of the insecurity of their status and their very limited farm management responsibilities.

Table 2 Landlessness in the Latin American Region

Country	Rural Labor Force As % of Total Labor Force	(000)s of Workers	Landless * as % of -----Rural Labor Force-----	Near- Landless as % of	Landless + Near-Landless as % of	Numbers of Landless + Near-Landless (000)s
Argentina	15	2,184	24	46	70	1,529
Bolivia	63	1,733	38	45	80-85	1,431
Brazil	44	19,000	40	19	59	11,247
Colombia	44	4,551	20	46	66	3,005
Ecuador	53	1,548	28	45	73	1,129
Mexico	45	15,200	30	20	50	7,600
Peru	43	3,850	23	37	60	2,316
Costa Rica	46	720	35	15	50	363
El Salvador	63	1,094	38	52	90	997
Guatemala	64	1,890	29	59	88	1,663
Dominican Republic	51	816	35	52	87	716
Jamaica	40	405	24	56	80	324

\* For Latin America we classified tenants as near-landless because of their relative security and their role in farm management.

near-landless will increase from about 120 million to 180 million by the year 2000; in the Philippines from 7.5 million to 12 million; in Brazil, despite its buoyant economic growth, from 11 to 16 million; in our neighbor Mexico, also a fast growth economy, from 7.6 million to nearly 11 million, and in the absence of migration to the U.S., even more. The numbers are very large; unfortunately their ranks are not declining but are increasing rapidly. Indeed no real assault has yet been launched against what the World Bank calls "absolute poverty" in rural areas. The number of the "absolute poor," now estimated at 650 million, is destined to grow to 1.1 billion by the end of the century.

In Africa and the Near East the quality of available data prevented us from making quantitative estimates. We were unable to produce a regional summary for the Near East but we included Egypt in our discussion of Africa. Landlessness in Egypt, estimated at nearly 50 percent of the rural labor force is increasing very rapidly. There are important pockets of landlessness in Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi, Burundi, Rwanda, and Morocco, and an increasing number of pastoralists in such countries as Botswana are animal-less, the pastoralists' equivalent of the landless cultivator. In most of tropical Africa, the immediate problem of rural poverty seems not to be absolute land shortage, but very low productivity resulting from poor soils, limited and uncertain rainfall, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient public services, and inadequate technologies. The acute poverty in much of rural Africa is reflected in very low per capita incomes and very large migratory movements. The trends, however, are disquieting. With rapid rates of population growth, good lands are being exhausted, cultivated area and food production per capita are declining, and traditionally communal lands are being taken over by private interests. Before the turn of the century, even allowing for substantial out-migration, there will be insufficient land and insufficient employment opportunities to occupy the rural labor force and to provide for subsistence livelihoods in much of tropical Africa.

## II. Living Conditions

The diverse conditions facing the rural majority are detailed in our country profiles. They can be summarized, briefly, as poverty, insecurity, underemployment, and powerlessness. Substantial concrete differences occur between and within countries. The landless and near-landless are heterogeneous occupationally and diverse in their specific statuses--the landless have many kinds of jobs, agricultural and non-agricultural, as well as different relations with employers; there are numerous classes of tenants with complex rights and various shares in production; constrained cultivators find numerous ways of deploying their family labor power to put together a family livelihood. Still a number of general statements can be made.

### 1. Poverty

The fundamental fact of life for the landless and near-landless is that they have insufficient access to land or to remunerative employment to earn minimal family livelihoods. Their incomes are insufficient to provide for basic needs-- nutrition, housing, clothing--at levels required to maintain healthy and decent lives. There are observational and survey information from many areas reporting destitution and insufficient and inadequate diets especially among infants and young children. Estimates from Asia claim that more than 50 percent of rural people are undernourished and live below the poverty line, although there are disagreements among experts about the degree and incidence of nutritional deficiency and about what "poverty lines" really mean. In rural India, however, there are reliable data to indicate the chronic threat of malnutrition; 80 percent of incremental household income is used for food, including 60 percent for grains.

### 2. Insecurity

Moreover their access to land and to jobs is often insecure. They can be evicted from tenancies or discharged from employment at the discretion of employers. They are especially vulnerable to natural disasters, such as crop failures, and to economic disturbances such as price inflation from which they have little capacity to protect themselves. Employment opportunities have not kept pace with increases in the labor force; as a result of intense competition for jobs, combined with price inflation, real wages and real incomes for the rural poor have been declining in many areas, especially in Asia. Most of the rural poor are in debt at usurious interest rates with little prospect of extricating themselves from what often amounts to debt bondage or peonage; chronic indebtedness creates conditions for severe exploitation. Many hundreds of thousands of landless and near-landless must migrate seasonally or for longer periods, often over great distances and under arduous and unhealthy conditions in search of cash income, severely burdening their women and children whether they participate in the migrations or are left behind. In Guatemala, for example, it is estimated that 50 percent of the rural labor force migrate annually in search of work.

### 3. Underemployment

Where families own a bit of land but not enough to provide a family livelihood, the household head must seek part-time employment; the available labor of his wife and children must also be deployed to maximize the meagre family income. In Colombia the poorest 50 percent of rural inhabitants earn 75 percent of their family incomes as laborers. Because child

labor is the required norm, large numbers of children of the landless and near-landless do not attend school, which helps to account for the absolute increase in illiteracy in many developing countries. It also insures that successive generations of illiterate rural people will remain landless and near-landless.

In many rural areas of the world, under prevailing institutions and with the technologies and economic resources not available, large numbers of able-bodied persons are economically redundant--there is not enough work to occupy their available labor time, however desperately they need income. This is why in some areas adult males are idle for long periods; this helps to explain the high incidence in many rural areas of drunkenness, family abandonment, violent crime, and other evidences of social demoralization, the effects of which are felt especially acutely by women and children. This is why the rural poor must migrate in search of work, often over long distances; this is why women and children from the ages 6 to 8 must seek and find what work they can. The geographic and occupational mobility of large numbers of the landless and near-landless is an impressive indication of determination and adaptability, of intricate and even imaginative family survival and coping strategies under difficult conditions--a visible refutation of the vulgar myth of the passive, indolent, and tradition-bound peasant.

#### 4. Powerlessness

Organization among the rural poor for advocacy purposes and for collective bargaining is rare, thus contributing to their powerlessness. It is difficult to organize the rural poor along class or occupational lines, in part because such organizations tend to be actively discouraged and repressed by governments. They are also likely to be harassed by land owners who fear such organizations and have the economic and political resources to exact reprisals, often violently, against active members of such organizations. The final element in this sad litany of poverty, insecurity, underemployment, and powerlessness is the growing evidence that the rural poor have begun to ravage their environment--through deforestation, overgrazing, the mining of good soils, and the exploitation of lands which are unsuited for agriculture. Out of desperation, they are undermining the natural resource base on which their livelihoods and livelihoods of their progeny must depend.

### III. The Causes of Landlessness and Near-Landlessness

There are several factors which, in various combinations, explain the growing magnitudes and intensity of rural poverty. The most obvious is surely the current rapid rate of population.

growth which is expanding the labor force far more rapidly than remunerative jobs are being created on the land and in industrial and service activities. For the most part, government-sponsored family planning services have not effectively penetrated rural areas. Indeed some governments are still pro-natalist in their attitudes, including Brazil and until recently, Mexico. More importantly, many rural families believe it is in their rational economic interest to have many children, especially sons, because more hands will be able to produce more income for the family, perform the many labor-intensive chores required by poor rural households, and provide some measure of old age security for parents. While the societal effect may be cumulatively devastating, from the individual family perspective, having many children makes economic sense. There are scattered reports that rural family size is beginning to decline in some areas, especially where economic conditions are so desperate that even migration to urban areas no longer produces income above the landless rural norm, but no such trend was evident in the data available to us.

Rapid commercialization of agriculture is now a world-wide trend, stressing profitability of the farm as an enterprise rather than employment or even output. Farm owners, whether they be large hacienda owners and international agro-business firms in Latin America or "middle farmers" capable of producing marketable surpluses in Asia, are prone to mechanize, to adopt more efficient tools and processing equipment, and otherwise to rationalize farm operations in order to reduce costs and to cut back on the use of labor. At the very time that the supply is increasing rapidly, demand for labor is being restrained. According to one estimate, tractors have displaced 2.5 million laborers in Latin America during the past two decades. While the employment impact of the "green revolution" in several Asian countries is still a controversial subject, there is evidence that the substantially increased labor requirements for planting high yielding varieties have in many areas been largely nullified by mechanization in the harvesting and processing stages. There are reports that middle farmers in many Asian countries are now contracting out their planting and harvesting operations--60 percent is the estimate in Java alone--to avoid using local labor according to traditional practices which involved the sharing of work among large numbers of local people. This expression of commercialization reduces labor costs to the land owner, although it produces destitution for thousands of families of displaced laborers who have no alternative employment opportunities.

With commercialization, the traditional "feudal" bonds between land owner patrons and tenant or worker clients are seriously eroded. Increasingly committed to profit maximization, their appetites for cash income whetted by urban values, land-owners are inclined to slough off traditional obligations to

clients and to deal with them increasingly on commercial terms. This movement from status to contract tends to deprive the rural poor of an important source of social support to which they had been accustomed for generations--the traditional practice being that the patron provides subsistence and protection for client families, in exchange for service and deference. As this source of security is withdrawn, the rural poor are thrown back increasingly on their own resources including what remains of a sharing ethic within hard-pressed kinship groups.

This may in turn, lead to a search for new patrons--labor contractors, local political bosses, or other "big men" to whom they can attach themselves on a particularistic basis for employment, help and protection. However, the security long available from traditional patron-client links is not adequately replaced by the new forms of patronage that are emerging. Thus the commercialization of agriculture, which is on the increase worldwide, reduces employment opportunities for the expanding rural labor force, depresses real wages because of intense competition for limited tenancies and employment, and strips the rural poor of sources of social and economic support that they once enjoyed.

Among the principal causes of rural poverty are institutional rigidities and inequities, particularly land tenure arrangements. Since land is the principal economic asset in rural areas and income depends very largely on land ownership or access to land, inequitable distribution of land results in inequitable distribution of income. It condemns large numbers of persons to tenancy or to wage labor under very unfavorable market conditions and on terms which leave them dependent and insecure. The weak bargaining power of those who own no land or too little land to provide subsistence, and who must therefore sell their labor and the labor of their family members is impaired, as previously noted, by the absence of organization. Since very few of the landless and near-landless are effectively organized for collective bargaining they are forced to accept terms which landowners impose under labor surplus conditions on people who are often their debtors. In some cases, oppressive conditions are reinforced by institutionalized patterns of racial and ethnic discrimination--the most publicized but by no means the only example being the untouchables who comprise a large proportion of the landless in India.

In many countries, macroeconomic and macrosocial policies contribute to rural poverty. These include systematic biases in government investments, expenditures for public services, and incentives for private investment which favor urban areas and industrial activities, while neglecting and effectively discriminating against rural areas. Medical and health services, for example, are five to ten times more available in urban than in rural areas. The willingness of most governments to allow and even to encourage tariff free entry of labor-displacing mechanized

equipment and to facilitate its purchase with subsidized loans, bears adversely on the precarious employment opportunities of the landless and near-landless. Chronic inflation in many developing countries caused in part by excessive public expenditures in response to demands by urban constituents extracts further penalties from rural laborers whose purchasing power and real wages tend to suffer in times of inflation. It appears that the logic of the macroeconomic and macrosocial policies of most of the countries in this study is that the landless and near-landless should be allowed to shift for themselves until they can be absorbed into the modern sector of the economy. This, unfortunately, seems unlikely to occur in most third world countries in the foreseeable future. Rapid growth based on an industry-first strategy will not relieve underemployment and acute poverty in the rural areas of most developing countries.

#### IV. Policies and Programs to Alleviate Rural Poverty

We have noted the complex strategies employed by the landless and near-landless to maximize employment and income earning opportunities. To supplement these efforts, governments, often with help from international assistance agencies, have adopted policies and program measures designed to alleviate the conditions of the rural poor. These measures can be summarized in five categories:

1) Reducing population growth. Several governments have launched family planning programs, but such programs to bring down the rate of rural population growth have enjoyed little success. Where the long awaited demographic transition seems to have begun, as in Sri Lanka, parents appear to be motivated by a combination of high literacy rates, more equitable distribution of land and public services, and economic prospects that assure them a subsistence livelihood and some security in their old age. Organized family planning programs among the rural poor appear to be successful only when parents are already motivated by such factors as these.

2) Increasing employment opportunities. Governments have attempted several kinds of activities to increase employment and income earning opportunities among the landless and near-landless. These include a) rural works programs, which provide publicly financed jobs for building, repairing and improving the rural infrastructure--roads, irrigation channels, drains, forests, public facilities. In addition to creating employment, these projects are intended to improve social amenities as well as the productivity of agriculture. Rural works programs on a sufficient scale can substantially relieve rural poverty but they involve large and continuing public expenditures. Though they may increase the supply of permanent jobs, often the longer term

benefits accrue to landowners whose properties are made more productive because of these programs. They cannot be sustained on the basis of voluntary or contributed labor and they tend to be most effective when the choice of projects and management responsibilities are decentralized to local communities.

b) Intensifying agriculture. Intensifying land use, especially by irrigation, but also by the introduction of high yielding varieties, multiple cropping, interplanting, fish farming, live-stock production, etc., increases the productivity of land and expands the demand for labor both on and off the farm. For governments uninterested in institutional reforms but prepared to increase expenditures and improve public services in rural areas, intensification is the most promising route for increasing labor utilization and providing additional job opportunities and incomes in rural areas. Governments, however, must be prepared to enforce measures which prevent premature and unnecessary mechanization by landowners who might be inclined to invest their growing profits in mechanical equipment or in acquiring additional land--the net effects of which would nullify many of the employment benefits of intensification. c) Settlement projects. Extending the land frontier is the classical way of relieving overcrowding on the land and avoiding land reform. In a few countries, mainly in Latin America, some good lands are still available for settlement. In most areas, however, particularly in Asia, there are few opportunities for land settlement projects, and in Africa, most of the land still uncultivated tends to be of poor quality. The costs of opening most available land to settlement and of moving and establishing the settlers are usually very high per acre and per settler family. In a few cases, such as the colonization and village expansion schemes in Sri Lanka, settlement projects have benefited large numbers of the landless. Most settlement schemes, even when successfully implemented, have not provided sufficient livelihoods to make more than a small dent in the growing under-employed rural labor force. d) Industry and other forms of off-farm employment. In most countries from 20 to 50 percent of the time of the rural labor force is spent in off-farm employment--including public works, construction, small industry, handicrafts, trade and services. There is, however, an over-supply of labor and excess productive capacity in nearly all such occupations. Though governments continue to speak of the need to stimulate and support industrial employment, especially small processing and handicraft industries in rural areas, and though this appears to be a fruitful hypothesis for employment-oriented development strategies, there is little evidence to date of effective government programs to increase non-farm employment in rural areas, except for some recent experiences in the People's Republic of China.

3) Reforming institutions is considered by many observers to be essential, indeed, prerequisite to the alleviation of rural poverty. Among the more moderate efforts that have been attempted are the enactment of minimum wage provisions intended to protect

landless workers and tenant security measures intended to limit rentals and prevent arbitrary evictions of tenants. Under conditions of intense competition for jobs and access to land and given the superior power of landowners, these laws, even when enacted, are hard to enforce and provide little real protection to intended beneficiaries, unless the workers and tenants are effectively organized. As previously indicated, the organization of the landless and near-landless for advocacy, self-help, and collective bargaining is seldom encouraged or even tolerated by governments; where they manage to survive the indifference of governments and the often violent hostility of landowners, organizations for the rural poor tend to be coopted into official political and bureaucratic structures. With few exceptions, governments have been unwilling to sponsor or protect organization among the landless, and rural elites look upon the organization of labor as a first step toward what they most fear--land reform.

Land reform is the most fundamental of structural changes since it shifts the ownership and control of productive assets. Thus, it is likely to be bitterly resisted by those scheduled to lose land, and becomes inevitably a critical and explosive political issue. Land reform in the form of consolidation and distribution of holdings to be owned and cultivated by individual families or in the form of collective or cooperative ownership and cultivation--there are many concrete variations of both forms--can greatly benefit the landless and near-landless by insuring their access to land and to employment. Experience with land reforms since World War II indicates, however, that neither pattern necessarily results in either of these benefits for reasons too complex to detail in this summary.

Invariably, land reform entails political conflict and some exertion of political power on behalf of the poor. The prospects of successful efforts to restructure land tenure are not favorable in the foreseeable future in most of the countries surveyed in this research. Even where it would be possible to dispossess the largest landowners, a much more difficult problem arises in trying to redistribute the holdings of "middle farmers" who also own a disproportionate share of land. In many countries they have become the major rural power bloc, being more numerous than were the large landlords and having deeper social and economic roots in the countryside. They are likely to be assertive profit maximizers, politically active, determined in protecting their position, and uninclined to recognize traditional obligations of patronage toward tenants and laborers. They are likely to be regarded by many governments and foreign advisors as the "progressive farmers" who, because of their efficiency, should be favored by government policy and government allocations.

4) Meeting "Basic Needs". Though it has recently been embraced with great enthusiasm by many of the international development

assistance agencies--less so to date by governments of developing countries--there is little experience to draw from. "Basic needs" implies putting a floor under the living standards of the poor by providing them with essential subsistence requirements. Any basic needs program that would rely on market mechanisms would require substantial prior redistribution of assets. Efforts to redistribute incomes through improved non-marketed public services oriented to the rural poor would place heavy burdens on the redistributive capacities of government, primarily through taxation and public expenditures. Many countries, especially the poorest, lack the economic and financial means and the administrative capacity to provide needed public services to the rural poor, e.g., health, subsidized food, housing, etc. Others are likely to find this pattern of distributing incremental public revenues extremely difficult on political grounds, because the resources destined to the rural poor would have to be denied to such urban groups as military personnel, civil servants and the employees of modern enterprises who have developed high expectations, are politically mobilized and articulate, and thus have much greater political power than the unorganized rural poor. We are therefore skeptical that effective basic needs strategies can be implemented in most countries without intense political conflict.

We have encountered instances where something like a "basic needs" strategy has produced substantial improvements in the welfare and security of the rural majority under conditions of high population density, even at a low level of economic resources and under conditions of relatively slow economic growth. The State of Kerala in India has achieved much higher rates of life expectancy, literacy and low-end nutrition than other states in that country, though per capita income is not significantly different from the national average. Sri Lanka stands out in any statistical comparisons of LDCs. With a per capita income level around \$150, life expectancy now approaches that of the United States and population growth is declining. Literacy is almost universal for persons under 40, and there is no burgeoning urban growth. A strategy of providing subsidized food rations, free health and education accessible throughout the country, cheap public transportation, progressive taxation and income ceilings has shaped the use of national resources in a way that benefits the poor, even if not all can have access to land or employment. In both cases, change has been accomplished within a reasonably stable parliamentary system.

5) Orienting Investments and Public Services to the Rural Poor. Governments have tended to regard urban and industrial sectors as progressive and rural areas and agriculture as backward. They have thus allocated a disproportionate share of resources and incentives to urban and industrial purposes. With few

exceptions and despite increasing rhetoric to the contrary, few governments have modified this systematic discrimination against rural areas. Even if such shifts should occur--as now seems likely--the landless and near-landless will not automatically benefit. Those who enjoy disproportionate economic power and political influence will normally benefit most from the reallocation of government resources toward rural areas. Thus most agricultural research and extension efforts have focused on commercial and export crops that benefit the elites, rather than on subsistence crops grown by the smaller farmers. Deliberate policy and administrative measures are required to ensure that health, welfare, public goods, and production oriented services are targeted to and actually reach the rural poor, pursuant to strategies to shift resource allocation to rural areas.

#### V. Where Do We Go From Here?

1) Prevailing Panaceas. The terms of this research grant did not require us to prescribe solutions for the problems of the landless and near-landless. Clearly no simple or short term formulas are available for the heterogeneous groups that comprise the landless and near-landless. Given the variety of circumstances in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, it is evident there are no panaceas for rural poverty. Emphasis on meeting "basic needs," on accelerated economic growth, on technological fixes, on massive distribution of birth control technology, even rapid collectivization of agriculture are unlikely to redress the complex of resource, institutional and human barriers to broad-based advancement for the rural poor. We expect that any serious and sustained improvements for the landless and near-landless will be achieved by various combinations of the measures we have identified and analyzed in the previous paragraphs.

One tempting "solution" is to concentrate on growing more food, but this is particularly deceptive no matter how intuitively reasonable it seems. Deeper analysis reveals that while more food is obviously needed to feed growing populations, merely growing more food will not necessarily help the landless and near-landless. It is true that they bear the brunt of shortfalls in food supply, and food price inflation affects them most cruelly. But how increases in food are achieved makes a difference. If the poor do not have income from their own labor and land, they will not be able to buy what food is available. Moreover, if government policy boosts food production by providing resources on favorable terms to the larger and more "progressive" farmers, they will likely use their profits to mechanize their operations and buy additional land. So the poor could be made worse off in the process of producing more food.

2) Research Priorities. We are convinced that correct diagnosis of rural poverty in developing countries will require a form of social-structural analysis which disaggregates the rural poor according to combinations of land tenure and occupational status of the type proposed in our Chapter 1. This type of social-structural analysis accounts for the rich variety of land tenure statuses and occupational roles which prevail among the rural poor, who are so often treated in statistical and narrative reports as a residual or homogeneous category. It requires analysts, planners, policy makers and administrators to conceptualize rural areas as political systems in which individual participants enjoy differential power and influence, depending primarily on their asset positions, particularly on ownership of land and animals. Those with meagre assets attempt to build security networks based on relations they maintain horizontally with kinsfolk and groups of similar status and asset position and on vertical links they can forge with patrons, political influentials, and others in more powerful positions. Rural poverty cannot be adequately analyzed by relative income and income distribution concepts alone; more important is an understanding of the positions people hold in on-going occupational and land tenure networks which indicate living relationships and relative power.

Research and data gathering should be oriented to such categories, so that both statistical and narrative information can be disaggregated according to employment, income, nutrition, housing, family size, health conditions, debt position, migration behavior, and condition of women and children using more precise and more meaningful tenure-cum occupational categories. Future researchers and program designers need better information to work with than was available to us. Equally important for the research agenda is the need to evaluate the effectiveness of various government policies oriented to the rural poor, not in aggregate terms but in terms of their differential impacts on specific groups of the landless and near-landless, similar to those identified and disaggregated in our Chapter 1.

3) The Priority for Development Programs. As we analyze the grim conditions and the very uncertain prospects facing the growing majority of rural landless and near-landless in most developing countries, as we recognize that no responsible observers and students can honestly propose simple or short-term solutions, we fear that some readers may despair at the sheer magnitude of the problem. Because it seems so vast and so intractable, many may feel that aside from providing famine relief, there is little that governments can effectively do. It may therefore seem more reasonable to concentrate resources on more modest but achievable tasks, like helping the small farmer who is also poor and for whom well-known packages of services can feasibly be provided at reasonable economic and

administrative costs, leaving the vast and hitherto neglected problems of the landless and near-landless for the future. We sincerely hope that this is not the response of most of our readers and that it will not require massive land invasions, violent protest, or similar evidence of the despair of the hitherto invisible rural poor to draw the attention of development specialists to their needs.

In this exploratory study of landlessness and near-landlessness, we have demonstrated conclusively that the "small farmer" or owner-cultivator does not represent the majority of the rural poor. Below the small farmer are rapidly growing groups who own no land or have too little land to provide for their families, and must deploy the labor of their entire families to eke out livelihoods that condemn them to poverty when they are lucky and to destitution when they are unlucky. It is this diverse group, poor, insecure, underemployed, and powerless as they are, who deserve priority attention from researchers, governments and international agencies committed to helping the poor majority. The few countries that have overcome rural poverty in recent years, among them Taiwan, South Korea and perhaps the People's Republic of China, have done so by according high priority to rural development, including comprehensive and egalitarian land reforms, heavy investments in rural infrastructure and in rural public services, attractive price incentives for major food crops, the organization of the rural poor for advocacy and self-help, and the promotion of labor-intensive industry. The alleviation of the conditions of the rural poor in these countries occurred under regimes with fundamentally different social philosophies, two of which have received substantial assistance from the U.S. government.

In some countries progress may require revolution and institutional transformation; in others it may come through numerous incremental improvements and reforms, including, but not limited to those surveyed in this report. What is essential, however, is that the problem be accorded the priority which the landless and the near-landless deserve. Public policy measures for developing countries should increasingly be designed for and evaluated by their impact on the employment, incomes, living conditions, and opportunities of the poor majority--the landless and near-landless.