

High-school dropout rates on the rise among rural teens

By Dan Sapos
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Only one-quarter of the teenagers in rural communities went to high-school last year, with poverty and children's involvement in farming works as the main causes of high-school dropout, according to a research report presented Wednesday by World Vision Romania.

According to a July 2007 report by the Presidential Commission for Education and Research Policies, quoted by World Vision, last year only 24.54 per cent of the children in rural communities attended high-school classes, as against 36.8 per cent in 2005.

The World Vision research found that the main cause of high-school dropout is poverty, with the largest number of cases reported in the

rural environment.

"Children are encouraged by parents to give up school even before they complete the compulsory education cycle, and take up farming - their only means of subsistence. For poor families, seasonal farm employment is the main income source, and more often than not children accompany their parents, at the expense of school attendance. On the other hand, during winter months, the income shortage results in high absenteeism rates, mostly caused by the lack of food or clothes," reads the NGO report.

According to a poverty research report drawn up by World Vision in late 2006, Romania has the largest proportion of rural population in Central and Eastern Europe: approx. 45 per cent of the people live in the

rural environment, accounting for 89 per cent of the country area.

"Areas with high education exclusion risks because of poverty are the rural areas in counties Teleorman, Giurgiu, Calarasi and Ialomita (south region), Botosani, Iasi, Vaslui (north-east region), and Vrancea, Buzau, Braila, Galati (south-east region). In these areas, over 30 per cent of the population over 15 years of age have not graduated from any school or only graduated from primary schools," reads the report.

The World Vision Romania analysis on rural community children's access to high school education has been based on studies and research carried out by public authorities as regards the Romanian education sector.