Education for rural people in Africa

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Contents

Foreword to the series

Education for rural people is crucial to achieving both the Education for All (EFA) goals, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, ensuring universal primary education by 2015, promoting gender equity and ensuring environmental sustainability. In 1996, the World Food Summit in Rome stressed increased access to education for the poor and members of disadvantaged groups, including rural people, as a key to achieving poverty eradication, food security, durable peace and sustainable development. The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, also emphasized the role of education.

As the majority of the world's poor, illiterate and undernourished live in rural areas, it is a major challenge to ensure their access to quality education. The lack of learning opportunities is both a cause and an effect of rural poverty. Hence, education and training strategies need to be integrated within all aspects of sustainable rural development, through plans of action that are multisectoral and interdisciplinary. This means creating new partnerships between people working in agriculture and rural development, and people working in education.

To address this challenge, the Directors-General of FAO and UNESCO jointly launched the flagship programme on Education for rural people (ERP) in September 2002 (http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/), during the World Summit on Sustainable Development. This initiative involves an inter-agency approach to facilitate targeted and co-ordinated actions for education in rural areas.

It is within this framework, and to provide inspiration for the flagship initiative, that the FAO's Extension, Education and Communication Service and UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) have jointly launched a series of publications. This series is co-ordinated and edited by David Atchoarena (IIEP) and Lavinia Gasperini (FAO).

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List of abbreviations

ABEK	Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja
ABET	Adult basic education and training
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
ANFE	Adult and non-formal fducation
ARD	Agriculture and rural development
BREDA	Regional Office for Education in Africa
CEBNF	Centre d'éducation de base non formelle
CHANCE	Child-centred Alternative Non-formal Community Based Education
COBET	Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania
COPE	Complementary opportunities for primary education
CPR	Centres of Rural Promotion
CSTC	Community Skills Training Centre
DGCS	Italian Development Co-operation
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
ECD	Early child development
EFA	Education for All
ELSE	Empowering Lifelong Skills Education (in Masindi)
ERP	Education for Rural People
EMIS	Education management information system
ESDP	Education Sector Development Programme
FAL	Functional adult literacy
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GER	Gross enrolment rate
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome
ICT	Information and communication technology

IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IZZ/DVV	Institute for International Co-operation of the German Adult Association
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MGT	Multi-grade teaching
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NER	Net enrolment ratio
NFE	Non-formal education
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PEDP	Primary Education Development Plan
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RD	Rural development
SARD	Sustainable agriculture and rural development
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal primary education
WFP	World Food Programme
VET	Vocational Training Centres

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Executive summary

To implement the goals of the World Conference on Education for All and the World Food Summit, new partnerships and multi-sector and interdisciplinary alliances need to be forged between those working in agricultural and rural development and those working in education. There is a link between educational level and income, productivity, maternal health, infant mortality and social cohesion. In realization of this, several international and national initiatives were launched, including four regional events organized by FAO and UNESCO/IIEP between 2002 and 2004 in Latin America and Asia. It was in the course of these programmes that FAO, IIEP and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) decided to work together to hold a regional seminar on Education for Rural People (ERP) in Africa in 2005.

The meeting, held from 7 to 9 September 2005 in Addis Ababa, brought together ministers of education, agriculture, rural development and fisheries from eleven African countries (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania). It was also attended by representatives of the African Union and other African organizations, including civil society organizations, as well as a variety of bilateral and multilateral development organizations. The meeting was funded by the Italian Development Co-operation (DGCS), the Norwegian Trust Fund and the World Bank.

The seminar was part of the general effort to raise the aid education of rural people to the rank of a top priority in national policies and strategies in aid to Africa, and provide education and training for rural people by strengthening policies, capacities and investment in ERP and poverty reduction. To this end, the situation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Education for All (EFA) goals and rural people in sub-Saharan Africa were analyzed, the progress made by the respective countries in ERP was examined, the main policies and strategies needed for addressing inequalities were discussed, and policy recommendations to address education rural inequity were made.

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The MDGs and EFA goals are concerned with the whole world population. However, the vast majority of the world's 852 million chronically undernourished people live in rural areas in the developing world. So do most of the 860 million illiterate adults (a majority of whom are women) and the 130 million children (mainly girls) who do not go to school. In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in particular, the vast majority of the population is rural. The seminar thus noted that, in order to achieve the MDGs, a special effort must be made towards promoting rural development and fostering better living conditions for the rural poor.

ERP is a strategic priority for SSA in the fight to reduce extreme poverty, hunger and malnutrition, and illiteracy. At present, rural people represent 71 per cent of the total population of SSA, and will remain the majority over the next three decades: It is projected that they will represent 58 per cent in 2030. The gender gap is more pronounced in rural areas since the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education, as well as that of literate women to men, is much lower in rural than in urban areas. These inequities in education directly threaten the sustainable development of the sub-Saharan region.

Most of the countries have made vast strides in the provision of education. However, although significant progress and impact have been made in ERP, much is yet to be done to address the gross inequities that marginalize rural people, and in particular access to education by girls and women, working children, people in inaccessible and remote areas, nomadic and pastoral communities, ethnic minorities, the disabled, refugees and displaced people.

The seminar noted that some good practices directed at improving access have been effected. These include participatory approaches, use of tools and resources, and interventions that have attempted to create a gender responsive learning environment. The enormity of the problems, however, calls for further innovation and concerted effort.

It was stressed that policies and strategies addressing the education needs of rural people should accommodate the needs of rural people in their diversity (agro-ecological, geographical as well as socio-economic and cultural) through a range of modalities. These include distance education, non-formal education programmes, school feeding programmes,

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strengthening early childhood care and education, establishing feeder schools and clusters, promoting multi-grade classrooms, reforming teacher recruitment and deployment policies, and promoting vocational education for rural development and sustainable livelihoods.

The effects of schooling on food security, sustainable rural development and poverty reduction for present and future generations depend not only on the number of years of exposure to the school system, but also on the quality and relevance of the education received. Hence, much has to be done to enhance the quality and relevance of ERP. The seminar acknowledged that learning materials are often not available to rural people; training and appropriate incentives for rural teachers need to be enhanced; the curricula needs to become more relevant by addressing cross-cutting issues important for rural livelihoods (such as HIV/AIDS and other health issues, nutrition, local knowledge, basic agriculture skills); and community ownership of school plans need to be strengthened. Beyond education, the infrastructure for basic social and economic services also needs to be improved.

Finally, the seminar indicated the way forward and made specific recommendations for action. The recommendations were classified for action by the respective stakeholders. The major recommendations include positive discrimination towards rural people; participatory approaches to planning, monitoring and evaluating ERP; intersectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration as well as co-operation among government, civil society, the media, the private sector and academia; and priority for ERP at national and international levels in resource allocation.

The recommendations were brought together in a ministerial communiqué and signed by the ministers who attended the seminar. The ministers agreed to join efforts to improve education in rural areas, including greater interministerial and intersectoral co-ordination and additional resources for ERP.

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Introduction

1. Background

The majority of the world's population lives in rural areas. Compared to other regions, sub-Saharan Africa has a greater proportion of its population living in rural areas, and of these people, a greater share is poor. As a region, sub-Saharan Africa has a high incidence of undernourishment and illiteracy, especially in rural areas. Girls in rural areas are particularly disadvantaged. Hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity erode cognitive abilities and the lack of education reduces productive capacity and contributes to poverty.

The achievement of the goals set for 2015 by the Millennium Declaration – especially poverty reduction, food security, universal primary education and gender equity – will require special efforts in rural areas. This is of particular significance in Africa where it is crucial to develop policies and programmes designed specifically to target 'the poor' and the 'disadvantaged' – thus principally rural people. In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of poor people rose steeply during the 1990s, and this seems likely to continue. Growth in the agricultural sector and improvements in education have a crucial role to play in creating opportunities and equipping rural people with appropriate knowledge and skills for strengthening their livelihoods, incomes and productivity – given their cultural, economic and natural environments. For example, new technologies and management are needed to increase productivity in areas with severe shortages of land or water, or with particular problems of soil or climate. These are most frequently areas with a high concentration of poor people where such technology could play a key role in improving food security. Literate people are more inclined to adopt new technologies and to protect their environment.

Recognizing that in most of the developing world, rural life often involves poverty, illiteracy and food insecurity, FAO and UNESCO launched, in September 2002, during the World Summit on Sustainable Development, an EFA flagship programme entitled Education for Rural People (ERP).

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This flagship initiative seeks to highlight the critical importance of ERP for the achievement of Education for All (EFA), the aims of the World Food Summit (Rome, 1996), and those of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Article 3 of the EFA declaration stresses the need to eliminate disparities in access to education by focusing on underserved groups, in particular the poor, working children and rural and remote populations. Article 5 of the same declaration evokes the need to broaden the means and scope of basic education by also focusing on basic skills training for youth and adults, including farming methods. There were several commitments made in the World Food Summit Action Plan that concern education. The first commitment focuses on the need to ensure an environment conducive to poverty eradication, lasting peace and food security for all. It also engages governments (Objective 1.4), in collaboration with civil society, to support investment in human resources such as education, literacy, and other skills training, which are essential to sustainable development. The second commitment (Objective 2.1) concerns the development of human skills and capacities through basic education and pre- and on-the-job training. It also stresses the need to promote access for all, especially the poor and members of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, to basic education by emphasizing access and support for complete primary education with particular attention to children in rural areas and to girls. The third commitment is to the pursuit of participatory and sustainable policies and methods to promote food, agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development. It also emphasizes the need to develop educational infrastructure in rural areas, as well as programmes for training, education and developing skills, and to give priority to educational investment focused on people. It is up to the international community to ensure that these commitments are kept as part of the follow-up to the Jomtien and Rome action plans.

To implement the goals of the World Conference on Education for All and the World Food Summit, new partnerships and multi-sector and interdisciplinary alliances need to be forged between those working in agricultural and rural development and those working in education. Pursuant to this goal, the Addis Ababa seminar, held from 7 to 9 September 2005, was organized by FAO, IIEP and ADEA and hosted by the Government of Ethiopia. The organization of the conference benefited from financial support from the Italian Development Co-operation (DGCS), the Norwegian Trust

Fund and the World Bank. The meeting brought together 96 participants: ministers of education, agriculture, rural development and fisheries from eleven African countries (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania). It was also attended by representatives of the African Union and other African organizations, including civil-society organizations, as well as a variety of bilateral and multilateral development organizations.

2.   Objectives and design of the seminar

The seminar aimed to:

- raise the education of rural people to the rank of a top priority in national policies and strategies in Africa;
- review policies, strategies and priorities for education and skills training that reduce poverty and impact on food security, and sustainable agriculture and rural development (based on national Education for All and rural development (RD) programmes);
- take stock of the current situation of rural development and education of rural people in Africa in terms of schooling and literacy, as well as training and skills development;
- foster and strengthen broader alliances and partnerships in ERP at national and regional levels, including mobilizing resources to address the national and regional agenda for ERP;
- issue a joint statement on priority policy areas of collaboration among ministries of education and agriculture to foster ERP as a key aspect of the commitment to the MDGs, particularly for reducing poverty and hunger, and ensuring Education for All.

These objectives were addressed in four main ways:

First, there were plenary sessions where panellists discussed the current situation as an overall introduction to the seminar. These included: (a) the situation of rural people in Africa – the fight against poverty, hunger and HIV; (b) stocktaking on ERP in Africa – mapping rural disadvantage; and (c) ERP experiences and lessons from case studies.

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The second activity in the plenary session consisted of the exchange of country experiences on ERP in EFA programmes and in poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) and RD strategies. Each of the participant countries presented their respective experiences.

Plenary discussions were complemented with theme-based parallel groups on education for sustainable rural development as follows:

- Working group 1. Focus on schooling: access, quality and relevance of education for rural children.
- Working group 2. Strengthening rural communities through non-formal education.
- Working group 3. Vocational skills for agriculture and rural development.

The fourth and final task consisted of round-table discussions on the findings of the country-based groups, and conclusions on priorities and actions for ministries in addressing ERP as the key for the MDGs.

3. Seminar inauguration

The seminar was officially opened by the Honourable Wondwossen Kiflu, Vice-Minister of Education of Ethiopia, host country of the meeting. In his opening speech, he said that education has a crucial role to play in creating opportunities and equipping rural people with appropriate knowledge and skills for improving their incomes. He further stressed the need to raise levels of literacy so that farmers and workers would be more productive.

The other keynote speakers who addressed the meeting during the opening session were Marcella Villareal, Director of the Division on Gender and Population (FAO), Lalla Ben Barka, Director of the UNESCO Bureau in Dakar (BREDA), Mamadou Ndoye, Executive Secretary of ADEA and Guido La Tella, Honourable Ambassador of Italy in Ethiopia.

4. Organization of the publication

Based on the discussions held during the seminar, the research team (FAO and IIEP-UNESCO, with feedback provided by ADEA) produced this publication. It is divided into five parts. This introductory section forms the first part. The second deals with the analysis of the situation, while the third presents an overview of the progress made by the countries in ERP. The fourth part outlines the main policies and strategies for promoting ERP and the lessons learned. Finally, the fifth part presents the policy recommendations forwarded to promote equity.

Chapter 2

Analysis of the situation –
MDGs, EFA goals and rural people
in sub-Saharan Africa:
challenges and implications for ERP

This chapter deals with the MDGs, EFA goals and rural people in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), and the challenges and implications for ERP.

1. MDGs and EFA goals

The achievement of the MDGs is probably the most important priority on the international development agenda today. The eight MDGs are:

Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education.
Goal 3. Promote gender equality and empower women.
Goal 4. Reduce child mortality.
Goal 5. Improve maternal health.
Goal 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
Goal 7. Ensure environmental sustainability.
Goal 8. Develop a global partnership for development.

Each of the MDGs has specific targets by which to measure progress at the national level. All of the goals are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

The EFA goals, as reaffirmed in Dakar in April 2004, consist of the following six goals:

- *Expand early childhood care and education.* Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

- *Free and compulsory education of good quality*. Ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and are able to complete primary education that is free, compulsory and of good quality.
- *Promote the acquisition of life skills by adolescents and youth*. Ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.
- *Expand adult literacy*. Achieve a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
- *Eliminate gender disparities*. Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls full and equal access to, and achievement in basic education of good quality.
- *Enhance educational quality*. Improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensure excellence so that all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills, achieve recognized and measurable learning outcomes.

A comparison of MDGs and EFA goals shows that the MDGs have put an extra emphasis on two of the EFA goals directly (achieving universal education and gender equity in education by 2015). The other six MDGs have laid the basis for an enabling environment to see that EFA becomes a reality. Hence, there is an indivisibility of the goals, and a strong dialectical relationship between them.

The seminar thus noted that in order to achieve the MDGs, a special effort must be made to promote rural development and foster better living conditions of the rural poor. A basic question raised in this respect was with regard to the definition of 'rural people'.

2. Who are the rural people?[1]

It was stressed that a clear understanding of what is meant by 'rural' is essential before proceeding with the discussions. A clear definition of this term is vital to the correct classification of statistics and information. The

1. Subchapters 2, 3 and 4 are based on a paper prepared for the seminar by M. Avila and L. Gasperini.

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practice is usually to define 'urban' as the opposite of 'rural' and classify what is not 'urban' as 'rural'. Even then, defining 'urban' and 'rural' is not as easy as it seems. Many countries have their own ways of defining these terms. Thus, the country context is important to consider when using data and information termed 'urban' or 'rural'.

However, by common definition, rural areas comprise human settlements with small populations[2] and the rural space is dominated by farms, forests, water, mountains and/or desert. Typically, rural people have agriculture[3] as their main occupation; they are farmers, nomads, pastoralists, or fishermen. They deal with animal production, transformation and marketing of land and forest products and services. Rural communities are diverse culturally, socially and economically. By and large, their labour is cheap, because gainful employment options are limited and many rural groups are self-employed. Usually, rural people lack access to adequate basic social services because rural areas have low national priority and the rural people do not have a political voice, especially the poor. This happens despite the fact that they are the majority of the population in developing countries, and despite their critical role in determining food security and environmental sustainability, considering that agriculture is the primary interface between humanity and the environment.

The population of SSA doubled between 1975 and 2002, and it is projected to increase to 902 million by 2015. According to the *World population report* (2004), the proportion of the population that was rural averaged 83 per cent in 1975, declined to 70.6 per cent in 2002, and will continue to decline to 56.9 per cent in 2030. For 2015, the only countries expected to have less than 50 per cent in the rural areas are South Africa and Senegal; countries such as Uganda, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso and Niger will have more than 70 per cent. The meeting noted that these data are important because they indicate that, to achieve the MDGs in SSA, specific strategies

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2. The definition of the number of inhabitants varies from country to country, but the average is below 10,000.
3. The term 'agriculture' is to be understood in a broad sense, to include production and processing of crops, livestock, fisheries, marine products, as well as forestry and primary forest products.

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and plans of action to address the basic needs of rural people are urgently needed.

3.   Needs and challenges

According to the Human Development Index (HDI), except for South Africa, the countries represented at the seminar are in the low-income development group. The data on the incidence of HIV, adult literacy and primary school completion explain the key causes and effects of low levels of development.

The proportion of those below the poverty line is much higher in rural areas, the difference being extremely large in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Uganda. Hunger and malnutrition are the first and most severe expressions of poverty. Hunger and undernutrition have a severe impact throughout the life cycle in terms of child mortality, stunted child growth, damage to physical and cognitive development, school enrolment and completion, reduced physical activity and productivity, susceptibility to infectious diseases, and even the transmission of their effects to the next generation. The undernourishment rates[4] for all the countries represented in the seminar were found to be relatively high. The good news, however, is that between 1997 and 2002, SSA experienced a drop in this indicator, from 36 per cent to 33 per cent.

Natural and human-induced crises seem to hit SSA all too frequently, and undoubtedly, rural people suffer the brunt of such disasters more than do urban people. For example, the recurrent droughts, agricultural pest infestation, civil armed conflicts and/or economic problems cause crop failure, uproot huge numbers of rural people and provoke widespread undernutrition and starvation (e.g. Darfur in Sudan, Niger in 2005). These emergency problems are exacerbated by the lack of timely response on the

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4.   *Definition*: 'Undernourishment' refers to the condition of people whose dietary energy intake is below that needed for maintaining a healthy and active life. 'The undernourished' refers to those in this condition.
Source: FAO: http://www.fao.org/faostat/foodsecurity/Files/Prevalence Undernourishment.xls and
http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_series_results.asp?rowID=566

part of governments and the international community and by the lack of political voice of those affected.

The main development challenges in SSA (including population changes, education, health and poverty) are to be found in rural areas. Yet, the international financial institutions have reduced their support to rural areas. Although rural livelihoods in SSA have seen some general improvements, the available data indicate they are far from being adequate. These are the main reasons why rural people, in particular the young and entrepreneurs, are leaving for the cities and foreign countries and more will follow unless timely strategies are put in place to address the problem.

The poverty reduction strategy initiative, set up in 1999 by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), resulted in new national strategies and processes to increase the effectiveness of aid in reducing poverty in many African countries. While most poor people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture (which could be a powerful engine for economic growth, employment and poverty reduction in rural areas), this sector has received insufficient attention and has been denied much needed investment. To address this deficiency, the FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the WFP and others are working together to engage the World Bank and the IMF in strengthening the national poverty reduction strategies to sharpen their focus on agriculture and rural development.

The benefits of agricultural growth for rural development include the provision of food, income, jobs in the agro-food chain, incomes for education and health services. For the national economy, it provides food for urban dwellers, investment and public revenue, skilled labour for other sectors, higher real wages due to cheap food, foreign exchange, job and income for all those involved in the general, technical and professional services in agriculture and rural development.

A recent study by the FAO and the World Bank identified 14 major farming systems (irrigated, tree crop forest based, rice-tree crop, highland perennial, highland temperate mixed, root crop, cereal-root crop mixed, maize mixed, large commercial and smallholder, agro-pastoral millet/sorghum, pastoral, sparse (arid), and coastal traditional fishing) in SSA. Developing the potentials of these farming systems for improving the livelihoods of rural

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people involves diversifying these systems, and improving the interactions with forestry and fishery components.

Smallholders, who represent the vast majority in SSA, have demonstrated many of their inherent strengths, such as making efficient decisions, using family labour efficiently, optimizing land productivity (even marginal lands), and being ready to adopt technology if appropriate. Research also indicated that availability to adopt new technology is linked to education levels. All of this is positive and should be built upon; however, can smallholders compete in local and international markets in an increasingly globalized world, and in markets with stringent consumer demands, food safety and health requirements? Will small farmers survive with increasing population density, inadequate services, competition from countries that subsidize their produces, and without investment to enable them to adopt new technologies that are capital- and skill-intensive?

The answer to the above series of questions seems to be contained in sustainable rural development. Sustainable rural development is understood as a process of constant change and transformation of the rural areas, encompassing a wide scope of processes and programmes such as:

- enhancement of governance at the local, district and provincial levels, including linkages with the private sector, civil society and government line agencies;
- development of productive sectors: agriculture, non-agricultural industry, mining, tourism, natural resources, environmental management, etc.;
- development of institutions and their capacities in key areas, i.e. education and training, health, research and extension, marketing, savings and credit, environment, transportation, etc.;
- development of rural infrastructure for roads, electricity, tele-communications, housing, water, sanitation, etc.

The goal of promoting rural development, particularly in developing countries, has been closely associated with the continuous, dynamic evolution of development models and approaches over the last 50 years, such as community development, small farm development, integrated rural development, market liberalization, participatory development, human development, sustainable livelihoods, poverty reduction strategies, food security programmes, Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development

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(SARD) and, since the year 2000, the MDGs. Each model has particular strengths in that it focuses attention on strategic resources, constraints and challenges, or desired objectives in rural development.

Since rural people are the majority of the SSA population, since agriculture is a key sector for rural development and economic growth, and if governments are serious about meeting the MDGs in SSA, then there is need for significant public and private investment in smallholder agriculture. The challenge for all is how to apply improved technologies to make small-scale farmers viable and profitable, for example by building their capacity, organizing them for greater co-operation, strengthening their positions in the market place, and giving them a voice in policy-making and institutional reforms. These will increase their productivity and enhance their contribution to the MDGs. However, success in realizing the potentials of African agriculture will depend largely on that crucial factor of education.

4. Implications for ERP

The correlation between illiteracy, food insecurity and poverty is high. The fact that hunger, illiteracy and lack of schooling affect many of the same areas and people is no coincidence. Nor does it merely reflect the fact that both hunger and lack of education are facets of extreme poverty. Hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity erode cognitive abilities and reduce school attendance. Conversely, lack of education reduces productivity and earning capacity, and increases vulnerability to hunger and extreme poverty. There is, however, a low level of awareness among decision-makers of the impact of rural illiteracy on development. Moreover, weaknesses of basic education services in rural areas are related to the fact that countries lack knowledge, trained people, experience, resources and infrastructure to plan and deliver effective basic education services to rural people. In addition, weaknesses in the co-ordination mechanisms between ministries of education, ministries of agriculture and civil society are not yet addressed in most developing countries.

As a result, although ERP is of high importance, the reality in the low-income SSA countries leaves much to be desired. Among the major limitations are:

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- *Low access.* The opportunities that rural people have to access and complete basic education in low-income countries are much lower than in the urban areas. The 'school under a tree', still a very common situation in some low-income countries, symbolizes the unequal distribution of school buildings among urban and rural citizens. Often, while urban people find a school for their children in their neighbourhoods, rural communities are deprived of such opportunity.
- *Gender inequity.* The gender gap in rural areas in many low-income countries is often two to three times higher than in urban areas. Addressing gender equity in rural areas requires consideration of more than just the number of girls versus boys enrolled in school, as is often the approach. Parity constitutes a first step, but true equity requires equal opportunities to attend school, equality in the learning process, of learning outcomes and of job opportunities and earnings. In no country is this yet the case; however, increasing the school enrolment of girls is a priority aim for many governments.
- *Quality and relevance.* For rural people, issues of relevance and quality of education are closely related to cultural social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable agriculture and rural development. The effects of schooling on food security, sustainable rural development and poverty reduction for present and future generations depend not only on the number of years of exposure to the school system, but also on the quality and relevance of the education received. However, the curricula and textbooks in primary and secondary schools are often urban-biased, with content not particularly relevant to the needs of rural people and seldom focusing on the skills needed for improving their livelihood. The margin for adapting the curriculum to fit local learning needs is often too limited.
- *Perception of rural communities and parents.* Rural people in Africa often send their children to school with the objective that their children exit the rural community. They rear them to aspire to urban employment. Parents and children value performance at school in line with this objective. In this context, it is imperative that education at all levels be relevant to the livelihood options of the rural people. Otherwise, education will simply be a passport for emigration from rural areas, which is quite often the case.

Chapter 3

An overview of progress made by countries in ERP[5]

The countries represented in the seminar reported the status of ERP in their respective countries. This section highlights the main points of the presentations according to five major areas. These include early childhood care and education; primary education; curriculum; language of instruction and adult and non-formal basic education.

1. Early childhood care and education

The participant countries have not made much progress in the pursuit of early childhood care and education. Financial constraints are often cited as the main factor limiting this development. Very few countries have early child development (ECD) policies in place.

From the countries represented in the seminar, South Africa reported that the ECD programme has had a 12 per cent growth in participation in the first year since 2000, signifying the expansion of access to quality foundations for education by 5-year-olds. The other countries that reported on progress made in the implementation of ECD policies were Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Uganda.

In Burkina Faso, preschool education is nearly non-existent. In 2004, only 1.17 per cent of children under 6 had access to preschool infrastructures in Burkina Faso. The very few existing infrastructures are in the cities, and only the wealthier children can attend. Moreover, these structures focus on preparing children for primary school, which does not respond to the need of the majority of children, especially in rural areas where the focus should be on teaching basic life skills. An interesting development in Burkina Faso in this respect is the creation of the Bi-Songo centres. The Bi-Songo provides a family setting in villages for children between the ages of 3 and 6. They

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5. This chapter is based on the country reports presented at the seminar.

seek to teach children basic life skills (in the fields of health, nutrition and hygiene) and to stimulate their sensory-motor and psycho-affective levels. The programme is run by villagers, known in the community as 'little mothers' and 'little fathers'. It is generally placed next to existing formal and non-formal schools in order to ensure continuity in the education supply.

In Ethiopia, this subsector caters for children aged 4-6 years. The gross enrolment rate (GER) for this level was found to be only 2.2 per cent, which shows that no significant improvement has been made in this direction. It seems that the subsector is left to NGOs, communities and private organizations, and rural children are totally excluded.

Early childhood education in Uganda is mainly in the hands of private agencies and individuals. Most of the nursery schools and kindergartens are in urban areas and many children enter primary school with little preparation for the intellectual tasks it requires. Such students come from families in which parents may not have attended school, or where the home environment has no exposure to reading materials or incentives to learn to read.

The major challenge in ECD delivery seems to be the lack of political will in most countries, evidenced by the absence of national policies on ECD. There is a poor conceptualization of the importance of ECD.

2. Primary education

Most of the countries have made vast strides in the provision of primary education. Progress however, has not been equal across all countries. South Africa has approached near-universal compulsory education. Educational interventions have ensured sustained participation of over 95 per cent in schooling since the mid- to later 1990s, and sustained increases in enrolment in all age groups at education institutions. These participation rates are comparable to those in most industrialized countries.

The United Republic of Tanzania reported a net enrolment ratio (NER) of 90.5 per cent in 2004. The United Republic of Tanzania was exemplary in achieving universal primary education (UPE) during the 1970s and early 1980s, but declined thereafter. Some of the major reasons accounting for the decline included: under-funding of education by the government; the poverty of Tanzanian families (making them unable to afford the costs involved in having all their children attend and complete school); and the

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low capacity of primary schools to enrol more children because of the shortage of buildings (latrines included), water supply, classrooms and supply of teachers. Efforts by the government to rectify the situation were addressed in 2000 through the Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP), with the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) as a first outcome in the sector-wide approach. The PEDP works concurrently within the context of an overarching national development framework of the vision 2025, which aims to achieve a 'learned society' linking closely with the Poverty Reduction Strategy II.

Uganda's primary enrolment rates have risen remarkably since 1996, when the government eliminated fees in a bold attempt to achieve universal primary education. At present, over 7.7 million (about 89 per cent) of primary school age children attend primary school.

Over the last five to seven years, impressive progress was recorded in Mozambique on access to primary education. The number of students enrolled at this level rose from 1.7 to 2.8 million. The net enrolment rates increased from 44 per cent in 1997 to 70 per cent in 2003. The primary school network also expanded from 6,114 in 1998 to 9,489 in 2004.

In Ethiopia, the number of primary schools grew on average by about 3.5 per cent over the last five years. Enrolment has reached a little more than 9.5 million with an unusual growth rate of 10.2 per cent. Although this seems a reasonable growth, gross enrolment ratio stands at 68.4 per cent, while the net enrolment ratio was only 57.4 per cent in 2003/04. This means that more than 42 per cent of school-age children are still out of school.

In Niger, in 2002, enrolment rates in primary education were low (42 per cent nationally of which 52 per cent in urban areas and 38 per cent in rural areas). The reasons why enrolment is low in rural areas include the long distances children have to travel to go to school, the incomplete cycles offered by many schools and high opportunity costs.

Madagascar reported that education and training is especially difficult in rural areas, and 56 per cent of the children are not schooled. The majority of schools in rural areas are small schools. They face a number of constraints, which include a high degree of geographic isolation, high levels of poverty and parents with little or no education.

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Although the participation rates were not reported, it was indicated that in Burkina Faso children in rural areas (and more specifically girls) are the most disadvantaged. Among the explanatory factors are the impact of socio-cultural traditions, the scarcity of schools in rural areas, and the lack of a second opportunity for children excluded very early from the schooling system.

The Senegalese report indicated that there are huge disparities between rural and urban areas, be it in terms of registration or effective enrolment rates. Most children in rural areas can access primary school without leaving home, whereas most of them have to move to a city to further their education beyond primary level.

Generally, all the countries represented in the seminar have made substantial progress towards widening access to primary education in the past few years. However, enrolment has increased more rapidly in urban areas than in rural areas, and increasingly the majority of children out of school are rural children. Repetition rates and drop-out were perennial problems, and completion rates low. However, between 1990 and 2002, the completion rate improved for all countries, dramatically so for Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guinea and Mozambique.

It appears that many of the countries have taken positive steps to increase female enrolment and participation in school. The mainstreaming of gender into national policies and programmes has led to an enabling environment for the development of gender-sensitive education systems. Schools have been made safer and more girl-friendly (e.g. separate toilet facilities for boys and girls). The presence of more female teachers in schools and in leadership positions means that parents are more willing to send their daughters to schools. However, in countries where the enrolment rates are relatively low, the gender disparity is still high, particularly in rural areas.

3. Curriculum

The relevance of the curricula used in primary schooling and other basic education programmes in rural areas influences their appeal to learners and their effectiveness at meeting basic learning needs. Experience suggests that the curriculum should combine the core national content with local content, taking into account context, customs, livelihoods and rural development

activities. On the contrary, the curriculum of many of the participant countries has tended to be too academic, theoretical and examination oriented. Aware of this, a number of the participant countries have carried out curricular reform.

In Ethiopia, the curriculum was revised following the adoption of a new education and training policy in 1994. While the syllabus for the primary schools is national, the writing of the textbooks is decentralized and leaves room for inclusion of local conditions. Mozambique developed a new curriculum under the framework of the Education Sector Strategy Plan I (SESSPI), which was an important move to addressing 'demand-side barriers' in education. Bringing the school closer to communities and making the national curriculum more relevant to the varied local realities has also been addressed in the new curriculum by the introduction of locally-defined teaching content. In fact, 20 per cent of the primary school curriculum is expected to be defined at the school level, with the support of school councils, communities and district education directorates.

In Niger, the curriculum is organized in modules. Some modules are common to all schools and pupils, while others are tailored to the specific needs of the areas served. The school-year calendar is also made more flexible to adapt notably to nomadic life styles.

The South African report indicated that the curriculum has been modernized to make it more relevant to the needs of citizens of a developing country aiming to achieve sustainable economic and development growth. The development of scarce skills has been a major area of focus. Mathematics, science and technology have been identified as key development drives for the country. Dedicated schools of mathematics, science and technology, called Dinaledi schools, have been established as part of a national strategy for mathematics, science and technology aimed at: (a) raising the participation and performance of black learners (especially females) in mathematics and science at senior certificate level; (b) providing high-quality education in the three subjects to all learners; and (c) increasing and improving human resource capacity to deliver education in the subjects.

Uganda is the other country that reported curriculum reform. Curriculum renewal is now being actively implemented, covering the whole range of subjects at primary and secondary level. This is aimed at producing school

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leavers at all levels that are adequately equipped with practical skills and knowledge, and which enables them to be more employable and able to become productive members of society.

Education in an unfamiliar language is a major barrier to learning. Besides curriculum issues, a number of the seminar participant countries have adopted multilingual approaches that utilize local languages and mother tongues as languages of instruction. Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Southern Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda have adopted local languages as a medium of instruction, at least in the lower levels of primary school. In Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal, most schools use French. In Madagascar, Malgache was used as a medium of instruction from 1972 until 1992. French was reinstated in 1992. The country report indicated that the language changes had not been planned properly and the introduction of French very early in the school process tends to widen the socio-cultural gap between rural/urban and advantaged/disadvantaged children.

4. Adult and non-formal basic education

The adult illiteracy rate in most of these countries is high. The proportion of out-of-school children is also significant. In order to cater for both of these, most of the countries have launched adult and non-formal basic education programmes.

Burkina Faso offers literacy programmes for rural people as well as non-formal basic education to teenagers (aged 9 to 15) who have no access to education and training, either because they have never been enrolled in a school, or because they left school at a very early age. The literacy programme is an informal system run by NGOs as well as the Ministry of Agriculture. While it caters for adults (from the age of 15 to 50) there are three types of structures, which are centres of rural promotion (CPRs), private training centres for rural producers and training centres for field agents. The main objective of rural training is to improve and reinforce the organizational capacities of producers' organizations. The non-formal basic education centres provide non-formal education combining literacy and vocational skills.

The centres have been set up in rural and peri-urban areas, and work with teenagers, ranging from 9 to 15, who are not in school or who are early

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school leavers. Thus, they cater for a category of young people who would have had no educational opportunities without the Centre d'Éducation de Base Nonformelle (CEBNF). The CEBNFs are tailored to the specific needs of the area served to offer apprenticeships in particular fields. The training lasts for four years (six months per school year).

In Ethiopia, it was reported that the large regions have considered and started implementing adult and non-formal education as an alternative route to expand access in rural areas. Some NGOs and donors support alternative basic education (ABE), functional adult literacy (FAL) and literacy programmes. ABE centres serve children from 7 to 14, and adults who are 15 and over. Similarly, the adult and non-formal education programmes serve children aged 7-14, and youths and adults aged 15 and over.

It was reported that both NGOs and regions conducting ABE for out-of-school children use a curriculum that suits the needs of the community, and which is equivalent to the curriculum for formal basic education (Grades 1-4). It was noted that the larger regions have shown dramatic improvements in access and internal efficiency thanks to ABE programmes. The ABE centres use paraprofessionals (facilitators) who are recruited from the locality, based on their knowledge of the culture and their interest in teaching. Teachers in ABE centres receive continuous professional development. The number of children in the classes is also maintained low to enhance the teaching-learning process. Further, the close supervision made by the community contributes to the access, efficiency and quality goals in such centres.

The Institute for International Co-operation of the German Adult Association (IZZ/DVV) is one of the few organizations supporting adult and non-formal education (ANFE). IZZ/DVV concentrates on community-based non-formal livelihood skill training for adults and youth (especially for drop-outs below grade 10), and rural girls and women. Its aim is to help generate income and reduce poverty through self-employment or access to employment. This poverty reduction and capacity building through the livelihood skill-training model is referred to as EXPRO. The other packages strengthen CSTCs (community skill training centres) or VET (vocational education and training) centres to offer flexible skill training, which emphasizes livelihood needs, market needs, or training needs, or a combination of these. Programme facilitators are locally recruited and trained.

The Niger report indicated that non-formal and professional education programmes are not sufficiently developed, although the literacy programmes and training sessions run by the various NGOs and international organizations play a big role in the development of ERP.

In South Africa, the uptake of the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programme has been improving at a very slow pace, as has the retention rate. However, the adult illiteracy rates for South Africans are not high and have shown improvement over the years. The literacy rate for adults (15 years and over) was 14.6 per cent in 1991. Huge strides were made after 1994, and the literacy rate for the adult population increased from 67 per cent in 1996 to 89 per cent in 2004.

The United Republic of Tanzania has developed Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania (COBET) in order to provide an opportunity for out-of-school children, especially girls, to access quality basic education, life and survival skills and a route back to normal life. COBET is currently mainstreamed into PEDP and is used as a strategy for absorbing all out-of-school children aged 11 to 13 years who, after completing three years of the COBET curriculum, would mainstream into the formal primary school system. Older children (14 to 18 years old), after completing three years of the specialized curriculum, sit for the national primary school leaving examinations. If they pass, they transit into the formal secondary school, or opt for other post-primary education avenues, including vocational training. It was indicated that the COBET model contains a number of interesting features regarding curriculum materials development, learning process improvement and the involvement of the most vulnerable out-of-school children, especially girls.

In Uganda, the government caters for non-formal education mainly for children who still do not access education for various reasons (such as social, economic and environmental). These include over-aged children, children in pastoral areas and fishing villages, and those who are too old to return to school. Several initiatives have been undertaken by government in collaboration with other stakeholders with a view to enable the out-of-school youth to benefit from education through alternative education delivery modalities. These include: Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK), Complementary Opportunities for Primary Education (COPE), Child-centred Alternative Non-formal Community Based

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Education (CHANCE), Empowering Lifelong Skills Education in Masindi (ELSE). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have made a tremendous contribution in this field, and currently the enrolment in non-formal programmes stands at 20,567 boys and 27,248 girls in primary education.

Illiteracy in Uganda is 55.1 per cent among women, compared to 36.5 per cent among men. In rural areas, the gap tends to be larger and literacy rates are lower. Programmes to bridge these gaps have been introduced and they include 'functional adult literacy' (FAL). The functional adult literacy programmes involve other useful types of learning in addition to reading, writing and numeracy skills. The programmes are considered as a powerful tool for empowering the people, particularly if they can apply their new learning and skills properly.

Chapter 4

Main policies and strategies for addressing inequalities and lessons learned

The seminar discussed the main policies and strategies for addressing inequalities in both plenary sessions as well as working groups. This chapter presents a summary of the issues under two major subtopics. The first deals with access and equity issues while the second is concerned with quality and relevance.

1. Access and equity for children, youth and adults

The seminar discussed the good practices that have displayed concrete results in improving ERP and the policies and strategies that need to be adopted in order to further enhance access and equity.

Good practices

The following were identified as good practices that have produced better results:

Participatory approaches

Several participatory approaches have been made functional in many of the countries. One of these approaches is the involvement of the community in various educational programmes. Community members take part in the establishment of schools, teacher employment and management, curriculum development etc. Such endeavours not only ease the financial burden of the educational system but also enhance the community's sense of ownership of the educational system.

Another approach reported is learner friendly and flexible scheduling of educational activities. As it is difficult for children to get access to school, some countries have also introduced flexible entry age.

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Familiarity of teachers with the community in which they work enables them to render better service. Accordingly, some countries have based the recruitment and deployment of teachers on their knowledge of the local language and culture.

Some other countries have attempted to integrate formal and non-formal education systems to ensure quality learning outcomes. Attempts have also been made to link literacy and skills acquisition to poverty reduction strategies.

A more interesting development reported in some countries is the establishment of a designated unit or ministry to develop and oversee the implementation of rural education strategy and co-ordinate planning. This should help provide focus and undivided attention for ERP.

Tools and resources (ICT)

Considerable attempts have been made in the use of tools and resources. Among these are the use of multiple modern and traditional communication channels for capacity building and the provision of a technical information and training workshop based on the principles of adult education and using interpersonal communication tools. It was reported that in some countries community radio stations have been established to inform the decisions of the community and to link communities, etc. Moreover, in some fishery communities, community drama forums have been organized to show theatre and plays about HIV/AIDS.

Gender-responsive learning environment[6]

Many efforts have been directed at improving access to education for girls. This has included the formulation of policies with specific targets to increase gender parity in enrolment.

Examples of interventions that have attempted to create a gender-responsive learning environment include the introduction of flexible timetables to accommodate subsistence activities, and the establishment of mothers' groups to garner support for eliminating early marriage and reducing the burden of household chores, so that girls can have time to

6. Based on the paper prepared by Penina Mlama, *Gender and education for rural people.*

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study. Other initiatives include provision of boarding facilities, provision of safe water in schools, and provision of separate toilets for boys and girls. The countries are also engaged in many other programmes such as gender sensitization of parents, community members, teachers and students (both boys and girls), and school management. The curriculum, teaching materials and methodologies have been reviewed for gender responsiveness. Some countries have also introduced legislation and school rules against sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Several of these interventions have already produced good outcomes, and some good practices, which countries could explore for possible replication. Of course, any replication must include a review of the potential for replication or adaptation since different countries have different local contexts, which may not necessarily render themselves suitable for some of the interventions.

Policies and strategies addressing the educational needs of rural people

Sub-Saharan Africa is lagging behind other continents in achieving the Dakar Education for All (EFA) goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This is due to the enormous challenges the continent is facing in achieving development as a whole. Poverty, bad governance, conflict and the HIV/AIDS pandemic have made the task of raising the development levels of Africa even more difficult to accomplish.

Addressing the educational needs of rural people through the traditional approach alone would be difficult, if not impossible. Hence, participants identified and agreed upon the following policies and strategies to be adopted.

Distance education

Distance education is an umbrella term that is applied to various types of educational provision that involve a tangible distance between the source and consumer of instruction, where instruction will no more bring the learner and the instructor within the confinement of a classroom. It transcends the barriers of time, space, gender, creed, community and religion. As such, it can be used extensively for various purposes. Since the demand for education, particularly in rural areas, cannot be fully satisfied with the limited capacity

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of the conventional education system alone, distance education constitutes a complementary approach to increasing access as well as improving quality. Rural radio already plays a great role in this respect.

However, provision of distance education also poses several challenges and problems. The most pressing challenges of distance education programmes in sub-Saharan Africa include funding constraints, infrastructure limitations and administrative problems.

Non-formal education programmes

Non-formal education (NFE) constitutes a key strategy to reach out-of-school children and adults. NFE recognizes individual ability differences and allows accelerated learning.

Whereas such programmes increase access and provide alternative channels to basic education for out-of-school children and growth, the challenges and problems include: (a) absence of a clear and responsive policy framework to guide and regulate stakeholders; (b) lack of recognition and acceptance of non-formal and alternative approaches seen as inferior/second grade education; (c) lack of financing for alternative delivery modes; and (d) lack of a standard assessment and certification system (and which competencies should be assessed).

In order to bring about effective change, the use of non-formal methods should not be undertaken in the expectation that it will provide cheap education. As it will be operating in areas of weak infrastructure and low population densities, there will inevitably be high investment and ongoing costs. It was stressed that it is essential to work on the principle that non-formal education should be expected to provide relevant, quality learning outcomes in its own right, and not merely function as a gateway to the formal sector.

School feeding programmes

Food security is essential if schools are to be effective, and education is necessary for food security to be realized. In many countries, governments (often with support from the World Food Programme – WFP), have been implementing programmes of bringing food into the classroom, such as

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school feeding programmes and take-home ration programmes. These interventions have three main objectives:

- getting children, especially girls, into school and keeping them there, by providing snacks and take-home rations;
- ensuring that health and nutrition education are included in the school curriculum, involving local health-service providers, and working with mothers;
- providing training to health and school staff (capacity building).

In this context, food is conceived as an 'enabler'. Food enables families to send their children to school and keep them there on a regular basis. Programmes that address simultaneously the lack of education and malnutrition have achieved notable gains in several countries. Thanks to such programmes, primary school attendance has increased, especially for girls. School absence and drop-out rates have declined.

Strengthening childhood care and education

Early childhood care and education, the first in the six EFA goals, recognizes that one of the fundamental pillars supporting the realization of EFA lies in the effective delivery of early childhood development (ECD), especially in sub-Saharan Africa. ECD's effectiveness lies in its comprehensive and integrated approaches across sectors to ensure the survival, development, growth and learning ability of the child. Determinants of ECD range from nutrition, health, sanitation, hygiene, environment, parental and early caregiver love and attention; and adequate stimulation for cognitive and intellectual development, as well as support for psychological development.

These determinants are directly impacted upon by the cultural, social, economic and political climate of the child's immediate environment. The intellectual and cognitive function of the brain begins to develop from birth, with the first three years being the most critical period.

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes are therefore expected to take into account the period from birth to the age when formal schooling begins, and must embrace the various factors of child development in a comprehensive manner.

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Governments have not been very active or keen in the pursuit of early childcare and education in most of sub-Saharan Africa for many years. Many are struggling with the idea of coming up with a policy framework to support ECD as an integrated holistic approach. At best, ECD is translated into a few provisions for pre-primary education, disconnected from support for child development in the context of families and communities.

One of the main obstacles is that ECD demands commitment from a number of sectors, and strategies for working multi-sectorally are yet to be realized. The resultant effect has been minimal commitment to resourcing ECD at family, community or institutional level. There is little or no concrete recognition that gender issues and women's environment are at the heart of ECCE issues, and that therefore providing resources for ECCE is of mutual support to women and children. The ECCE of the most vulnerable young children in rural and urban areas is being ignored by governments, who rely on families and communities to take the full 'burden' of partnership approaches to ECD.

Civil-society efforts have been enormous in this direction, although mainly in urban centres. Even in urban settings, observation shows wide disparities ranging from highly sophisticated, expensive pre-schools (largely for rich consumers) to very deprived settings. The context often has no bearing on the cultural, social and indigenous context in which the children grow up. There are very few intellectually stimulating activities, and much more emphasis is given to the development of rote-style learning in preparation for primary school. The level of stimulation that prepares the child for learning skills, concentration, analysis, creativity, innovation, independence, etc., is completely missed.

The major challenge in ECD delivery has been the lack of political will in most countries, evidenced by the absence of national policies on ECD. There is a poor conceptualization of the importance of ECD (as well as its operations) as many erroneously believe that it must necessarily take place in a 'formal' environment. Fragmentation of services with little or no linkages between the health and nutrition services and education characterize this sector.

Other challenges include:

- lack of accessibility to ECD programmes;
- lack of consideration for indigenous culture resulting in inappropriate teaching methods and content;
- deficit of properly trained teachers;
- inappropriate teaching methodologies applied by inexperienced and untrained persons who do not appreciate the specific learning needs of the young child;
- few provisions for HIV/AIDS-affected children.

Establishing feeder schools and clusters

Providing complete primary schools for every village is an ideal, which the economy of most African countries cannot attain. On the other hand, enrolment falls very rapidly in proportion to the distance from home to school. Children may lack the physical strength to commute from one to the other. In addition, travelling long distances exposes children to all sorts of dangers, because of the dispersed population and traditional rivalries between villages. A solution to the problem is the establishment of feeder (satellite) schools that represent the first unit of the formal education system in villages where there are no complete primary schools. Such schools have to be established in villages near a full-cycle primary school that can accommodate pupils after they complete their education in the feeder schools. This enables children to continue their education until they are mature and physically strong enough to walk to the complete schools.

Provision of feeder schools near children's homes entails the provision of a greater number of small schools. Such schools have the opportunity to engage more closely with the community. Location close to the community can be used to enhance enrolment and attendance. However, such schools tend to be poorly equipped and staffed. Besides, the geographical isolation will have a negative effective on the functions of the teachers. Establishing school clusters can break the isolation and create connections. School clusters can help to improve the quality of education especially in remote and rural areas. In particular, they can help to connect teachers into focused networks; promote participation in education structures; encourage creative solutions; advance flexible and innovative approaches to school management and

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teaching practice; contribute to sharing skills and experience; and empower the stakeholders in education.

Promoting multi-grade classrooms[7]

Multi-grade teaching refers to the teaching in which one teacher instructs pupils of different ages, grades and abilities at the same time. It is referred to variously in literature as 'multi-level', 'multiple classes', 'composite class', and in the case of one-teacher schools, 'unitary schools'. It is to be distinguished from mono-grade teaching in which pupils within the same grade are assumed to be more similar in terms of age and ability.

Multi-grade teaching was initially adopted as a necessity rather than by design to address teacher shortages, especially in rural, hard-to-reach areas with small school enrolments. It was to be used as a cost-effective measure to expand access to basic education and assist countries to achieve the MDGs and EFA goals. The reasons cited for the introduction of multi-grade teaching include increasing access to education in the disadvantaged and understaffed areas, maximizing the use of available teachers and classroom space and increased cost effectiveness in the use of available resources.

The traditional mode of teaching in school and classroom settings has remained the dominant way of organizing formal learning. The standard practice is to organize by class or grade, and have one teacher responsible for teaching one grade of pupils. However, socio-economic factors in rural and sparsely populated communities have often changed this practice. That is why multi-grade teaching offers a genuine and workable alternative to traditional modes of teaching, because it caters for the needs of teachers and learners in rural sparsely populated classrooms.

For children to learn effectively in multi-grade environments, teachers need to be well organized, well resourced and well trained, as well as hold positive attitudes on multi-grade teaching. Yet, many teachers who find themselves teaching in a multi-grade environment are under-resourced, and are often the least educated and most poorly trained members of a national teaching force. Experience suggests that the multi-grade teacher cannot, and indeed should not, be expected to solve the problems of the multi-grade

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7.   Based on a paper prepared by Virgilio Juvane, *Redefining the role of multi-grade teaching.*

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classroom alone. Some of the key issues and challenges to be addressed are listed below.

The policy challenge

This includes considering multi-grade teaching as an important strategy that can improve the quality of teaching and learning, mainstreaming multi-grade courses within existing pre-service and in-service training programmes and providing incentives that will encourage teachers in multi-grade schools.

Changing attitudes

It is important to develop positive attitudes among teachers, parents and education officers towards multi-grade teaching as pedagogy that promotes quality rather than treating it as an inferior and cheap option.

The curriculum challenge

One of the major reasons why multi-grade teaching is in disfavour is the dominance of the paradigm of developmental psychology as reflected in the age-grade approach. Most countries have national curricula, and this prescribed curriculum is almost the same for both urban and rural schools. The curricula consist of a list of minimum learning competencies stated in terms of behavioural objectives. These minimum competencies are specifically designed for regular school situations and the multi-grade teacher finds it difficult to make the content meaningful to the pupils.

The multi-grade teaching programme demonstrates that pedagogy is about what and how teachers teach. Therefore, multi-grade teaching analyzes the core of learning and radically calls into question the age-grade system of formal education delivery. The implications of this approach for an appropriate teaching-learning methodology are obvious. Teachers need to be skilled to handle combined grades. The reality, however, is that teachers are trained to handle separate grades. The concept of multi-grade teaching is therefore quite challenging to most teachers. At national level, policy decisions will be required to incorporate multi-grade teaching in pre- and in-service teacher education programmes, but also to consider the use of multi-grade techniques in mono-grade settings.

The resource challenge

The multi-grade strategy involves a number of components besides teacher training. The design, reproduction and distribution of large quantities of self-study materials to support individual, peer and small-group learning is essential.

Effective implementation of multi-grade teaching requires the establishment of mechanisms for regular supervision, monitoring and support at regional/district and teacher/classroom level. It requires support structures to be in place, and a definition of minimum standards and benchmarks against which pupils' learning achievement and teacher deployment systems will be assessed.

One positive feature of multi-grade teaching is the involvement of parents and the community in the provision of facilities. However, a cautionary note is that facilities can only reflect the wealth or poverty of such communities. Therefore, if inequities are to be addressed, the government has to come up with an equity policy.

Reforming teacher recruitment and deployment[8]

The problem of teachers is often considered as a problem of teacher numbers. While there is no doubt that many countries face challenges of teacher supply, there are equally serious challenges of teacher deployment. In many countries, there are qualified teachers in urban areas who are unemployed, while there are unfilled posts in rural areas. This pattern of simultaneous surplus and shortage is strong evidence that simply providing more teachers will not solve the problem of teachers for rural schools. There is a need for policies that will ensure that the teachers reach the schools where they are needed.

Many countries report that teachers express a strong preference for urban postings. There are a number of rational reasons why teachers may prefer urban postings. One of the concerns about working in rural areas is that the quality of life may not be as good. Teachers have expressed concerns about

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8. Based on the paper presented at the seminar by Aidan Mulkeen, *Teachers for rural schools: a challenge for Africa.*

the quality of accommodation, the classroom facilities, the school resources and access to leisure activities.

Health concerns are a second major issue. Teachers may perceive that living in rural areas involves a greater risk of disease and less access to health care.

Teachers may also see rural areas as offering fewer opportunities for professional advancement. Urban areas offer easier access to further education. In addition, teachers in rural areas are less likely to have opportunities to engage in other developmental activities, or in national consultation or representative organizations. Teachers in rural areas may even find it more difficult to secure their entitlements from regional education administrations, sometimes to the extent of having to put up with obstacles or corruption by officials. The problem is further exacerbated where the majority of student teachers come from a different background. When teachers tend to come from a higher socio-economic background than average for the country as a whole, and to be disproportionately from urban areas, they become reluctant to accept a rural position.

Deployment is further complicated where there are multiple ethnic or linguistic groups within a country. Teachers may be reluctant to take up employment in an area where the first language is different from their own. Where a teacher is not fluent in the language spoken locally, he/she may be isolated, professionally and socially.

Countries deal with the challenge of deployment in different ways. In practice, two main systems exist, either deployment by a central authority, or deployment by a 'market system'.

Centralized deployment has been a long-standing model in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and is widely believed to enable the rational deployment of teachers. Central planning has the advantage of distance from local pressures, and can be more easily made fair and transparent. However, highly centralized systems are dependent on the quality of information they receive from schools, and tend to suffer from congested decision-making processes and inattention to the individual needs of education staff.

The major weakness of the centralized systems is that in practice they are often undermined by an inability to implement rational deployment.

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Teachers may circumvent the Ministry of Education's posting policy by claiming fictitious health problems, exploiting poor record-keeping, and/or just failing to take their assigned posting. Teachers who fail to take up a rural posting present a difficulty for policy-makers. If they are later allowed to take up a desirable post, they undermine the posting system. If they are not, then the system loses the resource of a trained teacher.

The inability to implement planned deployment has serious consequences. The widespread failure to accept rural posts undermines the rational posting system and contributes to a lack of conviction among administrators that significant progress can be made in addressing patterns of unbalanced deployment. Many countries have considered decentralizing the teacher hiring process to a local level. In terms of teacher deployment, decentralization brings both benefits and risks. The more local the system, the more likely it is to be able to keep in touch with the needs of the schools, and to respond to these needs quickly and flexibly. However, a local structure may also open up a greater possibility of undue influence being exerted by powerful individuals on deployment decisions, especially in countries with weak administrative capacity at district and local levels. In many instances in Africa, administrators operating at the local level are exposed to the pressure of influential personalities in local communities, and it is not unusual to see their decisions being biased. Improved systems of 'checks and balances' are needed to ensure countrywide equity, justice and efficiency in teacher deployment.

In the market system, teachers are not sent to schools, but apply for posts in specific schools. This system removes the burden of deploying teachers from the central authorities. In effect, teachers deploy themselves by searching for jobs. It gives each school more autonomy in selecting their teachers. Schools are more likely to select teachers who will accept the position, and often recruit local people. However, 'market effects' occur, and the most desirable (best qualified) teachers, tend to get the most desirable jobs. The practical effect of the market system is that most schools are able to fill their teaching posts, but that more of the teachers in isolated schools have lower qualifications.

There have also been attempts to address the issue by forcing teachers to relocate to rural areas. While this strategy has little financial cost, it

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may damage teacher morale and lead to a high turnover of staff. In some countries, forced relocation to rural areas is sometimes used as a punishment for teachers who misbehave. While this has a certain sense of natural justice, it runs the risk of locating the teachers who have caused trouble in the schools that are furthest from supervision.

An alternative strategy may be to seek to recruit student teachers from within each region, in the hope that personal history and family connections will entice them to return to teach in their home area after they attain their teacher certification. The presumption is that those individuals will have family roots in these rural areas, and be more willing to return and remain in these rural settings.

One of the attractions of this approach is that if teachers become established within their own community, they may gain extra benefits from the proximity of relatives, which may help to ensure long-term stability. Working close to one's extended family may provide some level of financial support and subsidy. However, some countries report that teachers do not want to work in their own village, because there may be too many demands on them from family. Some people from rural areas would prefer to be in their home district, but not actually in their home village.

It should be noted that the assumption that teachers recruited from a rural area would want to return to their own communities has been challenged by a number of researchers. Educated members of a disadvantaged minority group may view their education as a means of social mobility, and may have no desire to remain in the community once qualified.

The targeted recruitment strategy is most frequently used to recruit teachers from specific geographical regions or ethnic/linguistic groups. However, it may also be possible to focus teacher recruitment on teachers from particular socio-economic backgrounds. Teachers from poorer backgrounds may be more likely to value the relative security of the teaching profession and take up their postings.

However, this strategy often involves a trade-off between entry qualifications for rural roots. If it is necessary to adjust the teacher recruitment system to favour teachers from a particular area, and if the system was a

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merit-based system, then the adjustment entails recruiting teachers of lower quality than before.

Less conventional solutions have been attempted in some countries. These include posting newly qualified teachers in pairs to help draw strength from the ready-made friendship, especially in hostile communities, even if they had not known each other beforehand. Another strategy is linking rural deployment with a teacher education outreach programme, with the aim of helping female teachers to feel safe, and have a greater sense of control over their deployment.

Some countries have attempted to make working in rural areas more attractive using incentives. These include financial incentives, housing and career progression.

Financial incentives

Some countries have used a system of financial bonuses for teachers who locate in rural areas. Financial bonuses are given in the form of hardship allowance and travel allowance. Although the bonus payments appear attractive, they are weakened by two factors. First, the payment depends on both location and on teacher qualification. For the teachers with low qualifications (the bulk of primary teachers) there is no bonus at all. Second, teachers who teach two shifts receive higher bonuses. Two-shift schools are found more frequently in areas of high population density, and so teachers in towns are more likely to have the option of additional earning from this source.

The cases presented highlight two general lessons concerning the use of financial incentives. First, the incentives need to be substantial to outweigh the social and economic costs of living in an isolated area. Second, incentive systems require a fair system of classification of schools. General classifications may provide bonuses to teachers working in small towns, while doing relatively little to increase the teacher supply in the most isolated schools.

Finally, incentive schemes can be outweighed by counter-incentives from urban schools. Not only are urban schools more likely to offer two-shift teaching, which carries a salary bonus, schools in richer communities are able to raise money from parents through voluntary contributions or

parent/teacher associations. These extra resources can be used to provide additional benefits or even additional salaries for teachers.

Housing

A second major incentive for teachers to locate in rural areas is the provision of teacher housing. Where teachers cannot live near the school, they are likely to spend a lot of time travelling, often to the detriment of their schoolwork. Housing is particularly important for female teachers.

Although good quality housing near the school can be a significant incentive for teachers, and particularly for female teachers, it can be expensive to provide, especially if the government is also responsible for ongoing maintenance of the property. There may also be difficulties in repossessing a house for use by a new teacher, particularly where this would leave a family in hardship because of teacher illness or death.

Career progression

Some countries have used models where deployment to rural areas is related to career progression. Typically, these require that newly trained teachers work for a number of years in rural area, or that teachers seeking promotion work for a period in a rural area. Successful implementation of such systems depends on careful management. Even if successful, this would result in a concentration of the least experienced teachers in the rural areas. There is some evidence that young, newly qualified teachers have more difficulties in rural areas and achieve poor results. Despite these difficulties, systems where a defined period in a rural area is required may be an effective strategy for getting qualified teachers in rural schools. Teachers may be more likely to accept a rural post if they see it as temporary, and as a path to a more desirable job.

Promoting vocational education for rural development and sustainable livelihoods

The discussion with regard to vocational education for rural development focused on five areas:

- key issues of vocational education;
- the process for prioritizing vocational skill needs;

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- relevant approaches for planning vocational training in agricultural and rural development;
- priority target groups for skill development; and
- strategic topics for vocational skill development.

Key issues

The economy of many countries in sub-Saharan Africa is based on agricultural production and livestock keeping as sources of food commodities. The rural sector is the only host for a country population doubling every 20 years. In this context, traditional production systems are unable to overcome poverty and ensure food security. Experience from developed nations and from emerging economies in Asia has shown that food security can best be achieved if rural communities are able to link production to market in order to generate cash income. This requires adequate support, including skills development.

On the other hand, education policies and institutions in Africa do not focus on skills development. The content of the education curricula, the teaching, the role-models portrayed to students, the examples and other teaching aids used, as well as test and exam questions, are all carefully designed to prepare students for university and finally for white-collar jobs. It is sometimes thought that education alienates young people from agriculture.

In addition, rural people in Africa often send their children to school with the objective that their children exit the rural community. Farming is then seen as a last resort occupation.

Countries are under pressure to achieve UPE and MDGs, regardless of the practical relevance for rural communities. Many countries in sub-Saharan Africa continue to follow an education system that throws out a fast-growing number of primary or basic school graduates with no particular citizenship or labour-market skills. The education/training offered has not addressed poverty reduction nor necessarily led to viable livelihoods. In such situations, the return from investment in education/training can be unclear.

Skill development empowers people. It should enable them to know their rights, valorize indigenous knowledge, cope with disasters and be more active inside their community. It is therefore agreed that it should be imparted

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in schools. However, caution should be taken so that it is not an additional burden for an already overloaded school curriculum. Besides, there exists no blueprint for vocational skill development.

Process of prioritizing vocational skill needs

The process for prioritizing the vocational skill needs involves defining 'demand' and 'supply'. In order to define 'demand' "it is essential to analyze national policy objectives and development plans/priorities and the domestic and external market opportunities for food, agriculture and other 'rural' products/services/jobs. It is also necessary to assess the agro-ecological/ socio-economic context, production systems and potential, and the concerns/ needs of rural people, and thereby to determine the demand for specific vocational skills, the key target groups, and the expected outcomes".

Defining 'supply' in turn requires assessing viable/potential institutional and financial resources to satisfy skill 'demand' and to co-ordinate ministries, training institutions and other partners (business and NGOs) to build synergies in planning and implementing appropriate strategies for skill development. The design and delivery of skill development programmes (formal and/or informal) has to be tailored to the specific needs of the target group. It is also essential to monitor and evaluate the relevance/effectiveness of skill development on food security, poverty reduction, income generation and sustainable development of rural communities.

Relevant approaches to planning for vocational training in agriculture and rural development (ARD)

While planning for vocational training should include community participation and recognize the diversity of rural livelihoods and connections with urban economies, it should consider the use of various approaches. These consist of emphasis on skills development, on learning outcomes, and planning for vocational skills for ARD. Adequate attention should also be given to differentiate the meaning of 'vocation' for rural people (often with multiple income sources) from that for urban people. The livelihood approaches (i.e. people-centred holistic analyses, household decision-making) should be considered as appropriate for defining skill needs. Two other approaches identified for vocational training in ARD are the 'rights' approach and 'partnership' approaches. The 'rights' approach can strengthen

self-esteem of learners and increase accountability of education/training institutions to the rural community. The partnership approach ensures that skills development matches work income opportunities.

Priority target groups for skill development

Many different groups can benefit from vocational education. The major ones include small producers (crops, livestock and fishing) for subsistence, food security and income generation, commercialization; rural poor; large, rich farmers in rural areas who need high-level professional knowledge and business skills; girls and boys (non-gendered training); primary students as future farmers (also as a conduit to transfer technology to parents, i.e. present farmers); and post-primary students.

Strategic topics for vocational skill development

The strategic topics for vocational skill development were classified into 'people-related' and 'production-related' topics.

The 'people-related' topics include human rights issues (e.g. gender, self-esteem, value of local knowledge, citizen participation, etc.); livelihoods, learning and problem-solving approaches; community empowerment strategies; farmer field schools; human nutrition and diets; agri-business management (costs, finance); agricultural marketing and trade; and income and employment generation especially for youth.

The production-related topics, on the other hand, consist of high-value agriculture and food products; vegetable gardening; livestock management and production in arid and semi-arid regions of Africa; best practices for modernization of agriculture/farming systems; natural resource management and post-harvest technologies.

The mode of training provision must be flexible enough to be able to cater for the needs of, and be attractive to, people with different characteristics such as differing levels of literacy, languages, education and skills, people with disabilities, different age groups, ethnic groups and gender.

Targeted policies: policies and strategies focusing on groups traditionally underserved or discriminated

It was indicated that there are groups that are particularly disadvantaged in terms of access and retention. The following were identified as target groups:

Girls

Both boys and girls in rural areas are affected. However, due to the unequal socio-economic gender construct in most African societies, the scale of disadvantages is tipped against girls and women. The factors behind the gender inequalities include negative cultural values, attitudes and practices that foster teenage pregnancy, early marriage, sexual harassment, excessive domestic chores and the disregard of the importance of girls' education. There is also the lack of gender responsiveness among the teachers, in the curriculum, teaching methodology, teaching and learning materials, school management systems and the overall school environment.

The gender-based constraints to education tend to be more pronounced in rural areas because the environment is normally more accommodating of gender inequality. Rural areas adhere more strictly to traditional cultural values, attitudes and practices. As such, practices that are detrimental to girls' education, such as early marriage, abduction, genital mutilation, sexual violence, excessive domestic chores, male superiority and domination of women are tolerated and encouraged by the community both inside and outside the school. Thus, the importance of addressing gender issues in education in rural areas cannot be overemphasized.

Disabled people

Children with disabilities are a large group whose needs tend to go unnoticed and unattended. There are very few institutions that cater for sight-impaired children, those with hearing defects, or those who have learning difficulties. In rural schools, it seems that learners with disabilities do not go to school because of the difficulties in doing so, are hidden by families, or are mainstreamed by default, without any recognition of the attention they may need. Even when they have the possibility to go to school, widespread

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biases and exclusionary practices affect the educational possibilities of boys and girls who have disabilities.

Children at work

Children's participation in household chores such as fetching wood, looking after siblings, taking part in traditional ceremonies and the generally poor conditions under which teaching and learning take place limit their participation in schooling. They also engage in agriculture (i.e. farming, fishing, animal husbandry) which hinders their school attendance.

Household decisions to send children to school are interconnected with economic, social and cultural contexts. While these pressures are real, they nonetheless infringe on the children's right to education. Children's rights to and through education are compromised by family demands for children's labour.

Refugees/displaced people

Sub-Saharan Africa contains millions of refugees/displaced people because of war and devastating armed conflicts that the continent has suffered in the last two decades alone. Crisis situations call for urgent interventions to save lives, care for, feed and accommodate populations. Education, however, should not be considered as secondary to these necessities. The difficult situation should not be used as an excuse to abolish education. Education is, in fact, indispensable for helping children to overcome the associated social and psychological problems and to protect them from hate, vengeance and threats to their health. It can help create for them areas and references of normality and socialization, of interaction and understanding, of opening and hope for the future.

Minority ethnic groups

Such groups may be marginalized and lack access to socio-economic services. Cultural, religious and linguistic factors may prevent their access to the school system. Schools may also be unresponsive to the specific needs of such groups.

Nomad/pastoralist communities

Pastoralists are people who derive more than 50 per cent of their livelihoods from livestock. They have a varying degree of mobility. Their participation in education is low, which is attributed mostly to their mobility. However, a low perception of formal education's value, doubts concerning the relevance of education to the needs or way of life of the community, and the fear that education alienates children from the community have an impact on the demand side.

The mobility of the nomadic pastoralists makes any effective use of conventional schools difficult. Besides, the children of nomadic pastoralists are required to provide labour in herding animals. Moreover, the traditional primary education curriculum is inappropriate and irrelevant to the needs of most pastoralists. Because of these factors, nomadic pastoralist communities have very low enrolment.

The above were the target groups identified. How can access be increased and equity brought about? The following suggestions were indicated:

- use EMIS to monitor progress in ERP;
- tailor school-building policy to multi-grade teaching (MGT);
- provide school feeding on homegrown food crops;
- introduce affirmative actions for attracting and retaining girls to complete primary schools;
- provide distance learning including radio education and ICT as appropriate;
- allocate financial and material support for educating rural HIV/AIDS orphans in livelihood support programmes.

2. Quality and relevance in primary education, literacy and post-literacy, basic skill training and vocational training

For rural people, the relevance and quality of education are closely related to cultural, social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable agriculture and rural development. The effects of schooling on food security, sustainable rural development and poverty reduction for present and future generations depend not only on the number of years of exposure to the school system, but also on the quality and relevance of the education received. In

fact, there is no doubt that quality improvement is central to the Education for All agenda in sub-Saharan Africa: Without it, the goal of universal completion of primary education will not be reached**.**

Among the factors identified as vital to educational quality are the relevance of curriculum to livelihood, learning materials, training and incentive for teachers, and community ownership and partnerships. The issues raised under each of these are presented below.

Curriculum relevance

Relevance of the curricula used in primary schooling and other basic education programmes in rural areas determines their appeal to learners and their effectiveness at meeting basic learning needs. Defining what is 'basic' and what are true 'needs' is not always straightforward. Most learners, whether children, young people or adults, want and expect to learn to read and write and manipulate numbers, but their expectations regarding other content and skills can vary.

Experience suggests at least five guidelines for designing basic education content for learners in rural areas. *First*, the curriculum should combine the core national content with local content, taking into account context, customs, livelihoods and rural development activities. *Second*, it should take due account of teachers' qualifications and training (although ideally these should be in accord with curriculum). *Third*, it should make use of locally available skills, knowledge and other resources (including teachers) as much as possible. *Fourth*, multilingual approaches, which utilize local languages and mother tongues as languages of instruction, should be taken into consideration as much as possible, since education in an unfamiliar language can be a major barrier to learning – particularly for ethnic minorities and remote populations. *Fifth*, it should respond to the wishes expressed by the rural communities (i.e. be demand-driven), determined through consultation and negotiation with the community, or the adult learners.

The inclusion of skills enabling rural people to diversify their livelihoods – such as basic literacy and numeracy, agricultural skills, skills for off-farm activities as well as for micro-business management – contributes to reducing vulnerability and poverty. In many rural communities, other subjects such as human rights, non-violent resolution of conflicts, HIV/AIDS prevention

and treatment and other health topics were valued and introduced. Whatever the configuration of content may be, basic education should equip rural learners to continue learning, apply critical thinking and cope with the changes they will encounter in life even if needing to migrate. However, the primary school curriculum is usually determined at the national level and designed for urban pupils. Often it is packed with subjects, each useful in itself but constituting together a heavy load for even the cleverest pupil. Non-formal programmes often achieve better learning results by focusing on a few core subjects. The margin for adoption of the curriculum to fit local learning needs is often limited, but school heads and other supervisors can be encouraged to seek and allow more flexibility in achieving a balance in the basic education curriculum that respects national criteria, and responds to local rural conditions. Supplementary contents are based on the local culture and economy, often making use of local artisans, storytellers, and other human resources in the community, and require integrated learning.

The integrated learning concept is based on the notion that effective learning is not limited to the classroom, but that, through the use of community resources, curricula can be made to 'come alive'. As students move out of the classroom to study concrete community problems, the process of involving villagers contributes to the education process, as well as to the process of community development. Learning through integrated techniques in the rural environment occurs in a variety of settings, involving both students and community members, and necessitates strong linkages between educational organizations and agricultural services.

There is a need to shape national strategies that intelligently combine and integrate rural development and basic education. Such cases are still rare, and this shortcoming is often due to a division of responsibility, with one ministry having responsibility for basic education, and several other ministries (rural development, agriculture, forestry, water, health, etc.) addressing their own projects.

Learning materials

The lack of appropriate and adequate learning materials is a critical issue for the quality of education, particularly in rural areas. Among the major resources are textbooks, supplementary reading material and teachers'

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guides. Textbooks are one of the most central teaching aids and are an extremely important source of learning, but they need to be accessible and understandable, and the values embedded in them need to respect everyone equally.

Community ownership and partnerships

Improvement of quality of education requires community ownership of, and partnership in, the programmes offered. Communities are key partners in the process of school level change and improvements. Community participation is considered as an end in itself (as a democratic right), as well as a means to the achievement of sustainable development and poverty alleviation. As a means to an end, community participation in education is seen as a way to increase resources, improve accountability of schools to the community they serve, ensure a more cost-effective use of resources and, importantly, be responsive to local needs. As a result, it intends to improve equity, access, retention, quality and performance of schooling.

Community participation is also important because it: (a) introduces local grassroots knowledge and understanding of local needs; (b) generates ideas; (c) broadens debate; (d) leads to more satisfaction with outcomes (if people have been involved in the process they are more likely to be satisfied with the result); (e) contributes to capacity building and reducing dependency when people participate in the formulation of decisions; and (f) can be used to transfer skills for income-generation purposes.

There are potentially a range of areas in which communities can be involved in education, from mobilization of resources and constructing classrooms, to supporting the development of curriculum and design of policy. In addition, different degrees of participation might be apparent, from pseudo-participation of community members in terms of their use of a service and contribution of resources, to their genuine participation in decision-making. The degree of participation can vary between communities as well as between different members within communities.

The above four were the major issues raised with regard to quality and relevance in primary education, literacy and post literacy, basic skill training and vocational training. Suggestions for improving quality and relevance were forwarded. These include: (a) using indicators for monitoring quality;

(b) research and technical assistance in the characterization of learning needs of rural communities as a tool for decision-making; (c) strengthening and compiling data banks; and (d) the accumulation, retrieval, repackaging and disseminating of knowledge and information for improved relevance of learning of the rural communities.

Chapter 5

The way forward: policy recommendations to promote ERP in Africa

As a conclusion, the seminar discussed the lessons learned and reflected upon the way forward. Below is the text of the communiqué issued by the ministers who attended the seminar.

1.   Communiqué of the Ministerial Seminar on Education for Rural People in Africa

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 9 September 2005

We ministers of education, agriculture, rural development and fisheries of eleven countries[9] in sub-Saharan Africa, convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 7 to 9 September 2005, to review the policy options and priorities of ERP and to draw lessons from experience for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) goals, including universal primary education, food security and poverty reduction through the sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas in sub-Saharan Africa.

Considering that:

1.   ERP is a strategic priority for SSA in the fight to reduce extreme poverty, hunger and malnutrition, and illiteracy. At present, rural people represent 71 per cent of the total population and will remain important over the next three decades as it is projected that they will represent 58 per cent in 2030. For every 100 urban children who have access to primary education, only 68 do so in rural areas. For every 100 children in urban areas who complete primary school, only 46 do so in rural areas. The gender gap is usually more pronounced in rural areas since

9.   Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

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the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education as well that of literate women to men is much lower in rural than in urban areas. These inequities in education directly threaten the sustainable development of the sub-Saharan region.

2. Although significant progress and impact have been made in ERP, much is yet to be done to address the gross inequities that marginalize rural people, and in particular access to education by girls and women, working children, people in inaccessible and remote areas, nomadic and pastoral communities, ethnic minorities, the disabled, refugees and displaced people.

3. Food security and poverty reduction strategies are directly dependent on our capacity to foster rural children's access to quality primary education, and provide relevant literacy and basic skills, training communities of farmers, fishermen, and livestock producers, as well as the population living in forests and deserts. The educational needs of rural people – children, youth and adults – should be addressed holistically since today's children are the farmers and the citizens of tomorrow. Post-primary education and skills development, vocational training and higher education reform need to be addressed within this framework.

4. Although the direct impact of education on human and economic development is widely acknowledged, much has to be done to enhance the quality and relevance of ERP. The seminar acknowledged that relevant learning materials must be accessible and available to rural people; training and appropriate incentives for rural teachers need to be enhanced; the curricula need to become more relevant by addressing cross-cutting issues important for rural livelihoods, such as HIV/AIDS and other health issues, local knowledge, basic agriculture skills and human nutrition; community ownership of school plans needs to be strengthened. Infrastructure for basic social and economic services for rural people needs to be improved.

5. The challenge of financing ERP is giving rise to a diverse range of innovations and incentives involving public support, civil-society participation and external donors' involvement.

6. The ERP challenge can be addressed through effective partnerships among those engaged in policy-making in education and those in agriculture and rural development. Close collaboration is required

among the ministries of education and agriculture, fisheries and rural development, civil society, the media, and the private sector, as ERP is crucial to achieve the EFA goals (Jomtien, 1990 and Dakar, 2000) as well as the food security goals set in Rome (1996 and 2002).

7. To establish effective policies, management strategies and to optimize impact, national EFA plans need to consolidate monitoring and evaluation systems, particularly at the sub-national levels, with respect to defining concrete objectives, objectively measurable indicators, and data collection and analysis systems for ERP.

2. Recommendations

As a result, we ministers recommend the following specific actions to be undertaken by the respective interested stakeholders. These recommended actions are based on the key assumption that clear priorities for ERP will be established within the framework of EFA and rural development priorities and that they will target rural areas and communities where the people's needs are greatest.

1. *For governments*

- Align EFA and rural development policies to promote ERP as a top national priority and ensure that this priority is reflected through increased allocations of public budgets and investment for ERP.
- Promote inter-ministerial and intersectoral co-ordination among the ministries of education, agriculture, fisheries, rural development, health, works and energy, and with the ministries of finance and economic planning, to ensure that education access and quality, at primary and higher levels, contribute effectively to developing rural and national economies.
- Improve the enabling environment for the establishment and management of effective partnerships among government, the private sector, NGOs, rural people and communities, and the international community participating in ERP.
- Improve statistics and education management information systems (EMIS) on ERP.

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2. *For ministries of education, agriculture, rural development and fisheries*

- Work together with each other, and also with civil society and the business sectors, to develop and deliver national and decentralized policies, initiatives and strategies for ERP with clear targets that respond to national and local development priorities (in addition to the MDGs and PRSPs), build effective community leadership and their participation in decentralization processes; the impact of ERP should be measured in terms of building community leadership, economic and social empowerment and better rural livelihoods.
- Work towards ensuring equitable access to quality ERP, which is today a major challenge for achieving EFA. This challenge can be addressed through specific actions that increase access to education (such as the expansion of the school network to remote regions and communities); the use of alternative delivery systems (such as ICTs, rural radio and non-formal education); girls' education; promoting school feeding programmes, and other affirmative actions to reach groups traditionally marginalized and underserved, such as nomadic, mountain and remote populations, working children, refugees and displaced people, and ethnic minorities.
- Foster quality of ERP by providing better and more learning materials, addressing rural teachers' training and incentives, ensuring rural communities' ownership of school plans and enhancing curriculum relevance to the rural development challenges (e.g. HIV/AIDS and health issues, leadership roles, agriculture modernization, other livelihood options, market-driven approaches, employment and income generation). In summary, education must enable rural people to address effectively their cultural, social and economic development aspirations.

3. *For civil-society organizations and the business sector*

- Strengthen and assist rural communities and people to participate effectively in the formulation, delivery and evaluation of ERP policies and programmes with the main objective of deriving maximum benefit from ERP for their communities.

- Work with and support the ministries of education, agriculture and rural development to enhance access of rural communities to education, the quality and relevance of education programmes for rural people, and the design and delivery of educational policies for rural communities.

4. *For the co-operation agencies*

- Consolidate the work undertaken in sub-Saharan Africa within the framework of the ERP flagship partnership, by FAO and UNESCO – including the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) – and the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Africa (BREDA) and ADEA and to expand it with other interested partners, as an important contribution to rural poverty reduction, MDGs, EFA and sustainable agriculture and rural development.
- Ensure that the results and recommendations of this ministerial seminar are presented by the most appropriate body to the forthcoming meeting of the Education for All High Level Group, which will take place in China on 28-30 November 2005.
- Invite the EFA movement to include ERP as a permanent key topic at international and national levels, including the Fast Track Initiative.
- Invite the African Union and NEPAD to address ERP as a regional policy priority in support of national initiatives.
- Encourage UNESCO and FAO to strengthen applied research on ERP monitoring and evaluation indicators to provide national partners and the international community with empirically sound ERP diagnosis and assessment, and to inform policy-making.
- Request FAO, UNESCO and ADEA to approach the international community in order to identify innovative paths to fund ERP in Africa.

5. *For the donor community*

- Provide additional resources for targeting ERP within the framework of Education for All for poverty reduction, food security and rural development strategies.
- Work with and complement national programmes by increasing financing which is crucial to address ERP and to support directly local community initiatives to participate effectively in ERP.

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