



The FAO and UNESCO are making a joint call for Education for rural people

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), together with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are calling for agencies of the United Nations, member states, and civil society to join in a new partnership in favour of Education for rural people.

Poverty afflicts 1.2 billion people in the world. Some 70% of these poor - that is, 840 million individuals - live in rural areas of developing countries. In addition to these people, who include the immense majority of the world's 880 million illiterate people, 130 million children worldwide do not attend school. Considering that approximately 70% of these children live in rural areas, education for these people deserves special attention, which should not be simply moulded on the urban model, but rather should take into consideration the specific characteristics of each situation.

On 12 and 13 December 2002, an international workshop on "Education for rural people: targeting the poor" will be held at the FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy, with the presence of approximately 50 representatives of bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies. The objective of this meeting is to establish effective collaboration to promote Education for rural people within the framework of the "Education for All" action plans, now existing at the national level. The United Nations agencies that have already confirmed their participation include the World Bank, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), FAO and UNESCO.

From 5 to 7 November 2002, the workshop on "Education for rural development in Asia: experiences and policy lessons" held in Bangkok, Thailand, brought together representatives of the agriculture and education ministries of China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, as well as several NGOs. This regional meeting took on a sense of added urgency in that three-fourths of the world's illiterates (that is, 660 million people) live in Asia, where one child out of four does not attend primary school.

On 3 September 2002, the FAO-UNESCO partnership in support of Education for rural people was officially launched by FAO's Director-General at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. The flagship's objectives are to:

Build awareness of the importance of Education for rural people as a crucial step to achieving the Millennium goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and achieving universal primary education.

Overcome the urban-rural education gap.

Increase access to basic Education for rural people.

Improve the quality of basic education in rural areas.

Foster the national capacity to plan and implement basic education plans to address the learning needs of rural people.

A joint publication by the FAO and UNESCO, entitled "Education for rural development: Towards new policies responses", presents new perspectives on Education for rural development. This work considers basic education in primary schools to be a priority, but also emphasizes professional training and higher education, based on experiences in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

For more information, please consult the following papers:

Launching a new flagship on Education for rural people
http://www.fao.org/sd/2002/KN0801a_en.htm

Director-General's speech at the launching of the new FAO-UNESCO flagship programme
http://www.fao.org/sd/2002/KN0904_en.htm

Workshop on "Education for rural development in Asia: Experiences and Policy Lessons", Bangkok, Thailand, 5-7 November 2002 Soon to be on SD Dimension <http://www.fao.org/sd>

Aid Agencies Workshop on "Education for rural people: Targeting the poor", Rome, Italy, 12-13 December 2002 Soon to be on SD Dimension: <http://www.fao.org/sd>

New publication on "Education for rural development: Towards new policy responses":
http://www.fao.org/sd/2002/KN1101a_en.htm

The Dakar Framework for Action - Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments by focusing on Education for rural people Soon to be on SD Dimension:
<http://www.fao.org/sd>

A final report of the workshops will be available from nicoletta.rossi@fao.org and the joint FAO-UNESCO publication on Education for rural development from information@iep.unesco.org.