



# Chapter 1

Lively school-age children in Ethiopia have a right to quality education.  
Photo: © Wang, Li.



# Skills and Jobs for Rural Transformation – Why and What



# Chapter 1

## Skills and Jobs for Rural Transformation – Why and What

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The rural societies ...of the world... are undergoing a process of change unparalleled in history, whether in scale, speed or potential consequences for humanity as a whole. Such transformation is taking place in a context that is loaded with fundamental uncertainties: climate change; the impacts of growing scarcity of land and fresh water; the triple impact of the food, energy, and financial crises; and whether the human race will have the wisdom, will and capacity to engage in national and international collective action to avert disaster. Rural transformation is about human development and is not limited to the development of things...This rapid change in this context is creating conditions of enormous risk and vulnerability for rural people. At the same time whole new opportunities are emerging, linked for example to renewable energy, provision of environmental services, or food production.

*“New Delhi Declaration on the Rural Transformation of Emerging Economies”. International Conference on the Dynamics of Rural Transformation in Emerging Economies, New Delhi, India, April 16, 2010. [www.ruraltransformation.in](http://www.ruraltransformation.in)*

The World Education Forum (WEF) held in Dakar in April 2000 presented a framework of goals and strategies which reflected as close to a global consensus as possible on exploring and elaborating Education for All (EFA) plans and programmes in the developing world. It provided the basis for setting 2015 EFA Goals which were incorporated in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals for 2015. A decade earlier the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA: 1990) had articulated the expanded concept of basic education as education that fulfils the basic learning needs of all. These basic learning needs “comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions and to continue learning”. It is very clear that rural transformation is not a goal that is exogenous to goals of education and building capacities of people or vice versa (UNESCO WCEFA and WEF and UN: 2000).

## 1.1 Rural People and Poverty

A tipping point in world population was reached in 2011. Of the 7 billion people on the planet, the city dwellers surpassed the rural people for the first time in human history in 2011 (Population Reference Bureau: 2011).

Much is made justifiably of the rapid pace of urbanisation of the world and the need to pay attention to the problems of the growing urban poor, providing for their basic services and livelihood and pulling them out of poverty. National development policies and strategies are being examined and re-directed in the light of the rapid urbanising scenario. The issues of sustainable development are being looked at from this perspective. So much so that the themes of rural development and the plight of the rural people, staples in development discourse until two decades ago, have almost disappeared from the main development agenda. Yet poverty is predominantly a rural phenomenon and will remain so for many decades in the future. Moreover, the galloping growth of the urban slum dwellers is intimately linked with what is happening in the rural areas.

While half of the world’s population is now categorised as urban (the definitional issue is discussed below), the proportions assume altogether a different significance when the geographical distribution of poverty is considered. In the less developed countries of the world, as designated by UN, accounting for 85 percent of world’s people, 55 percent of the population were rural in 2010. In the UN designated 48 least developed countries, the rural ratio was 71 percent. In Sub-Saharan Africa, India and China these proportions were high ranging from 55 to 70 percent in 2010. These proportions will change in line with the urbanisation trend, but by 2050, there will still be 45 percent of the people living in rural locations in India and the least developed countries and a full one-third in the developing regions in total (see Table 1.1). In absolute numbers, one-third of the population of the developing countries, who will live in rural areas and will depend on rural economy and livelihood in 2050, will add up to 2.6 billion.

**Table 1.1 Rural Populations out of Total Populations (2010 and 2050)**

Geographical Areas	Percentage in 2010	Percentage in 2050	Numbers in 2050 (million)
World	49.4	30.0	2,792
Less Developed Regions	54.7	33.0	2,619
Least Developed Countries	70.6	44.5	275
Sub-Saharan Africa	62.7	39.5	696
China	55.1	27.1	382
India	69.9	44.8	743

*Source: UN Population Division. World Population Prospects, 2007 Revisions. <http://esa.un.org/unup>. October 1, 2011.*

Why is the information about status and trend of population distribution between urban and rural areas critical for this study on the contribution of skills and jobs to fighting poverty?

Firstly, a lot of people, proportionately and in absolute numbers, as shown above, live in rural areas and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Policies, priorities and programmes for education, training, skills development and creation of jobs as key elements of the strategy for fighting poverty cannot ignore the special conditions and contexts of the rural people.

Secondly, there is a high coincidence of poverty and the

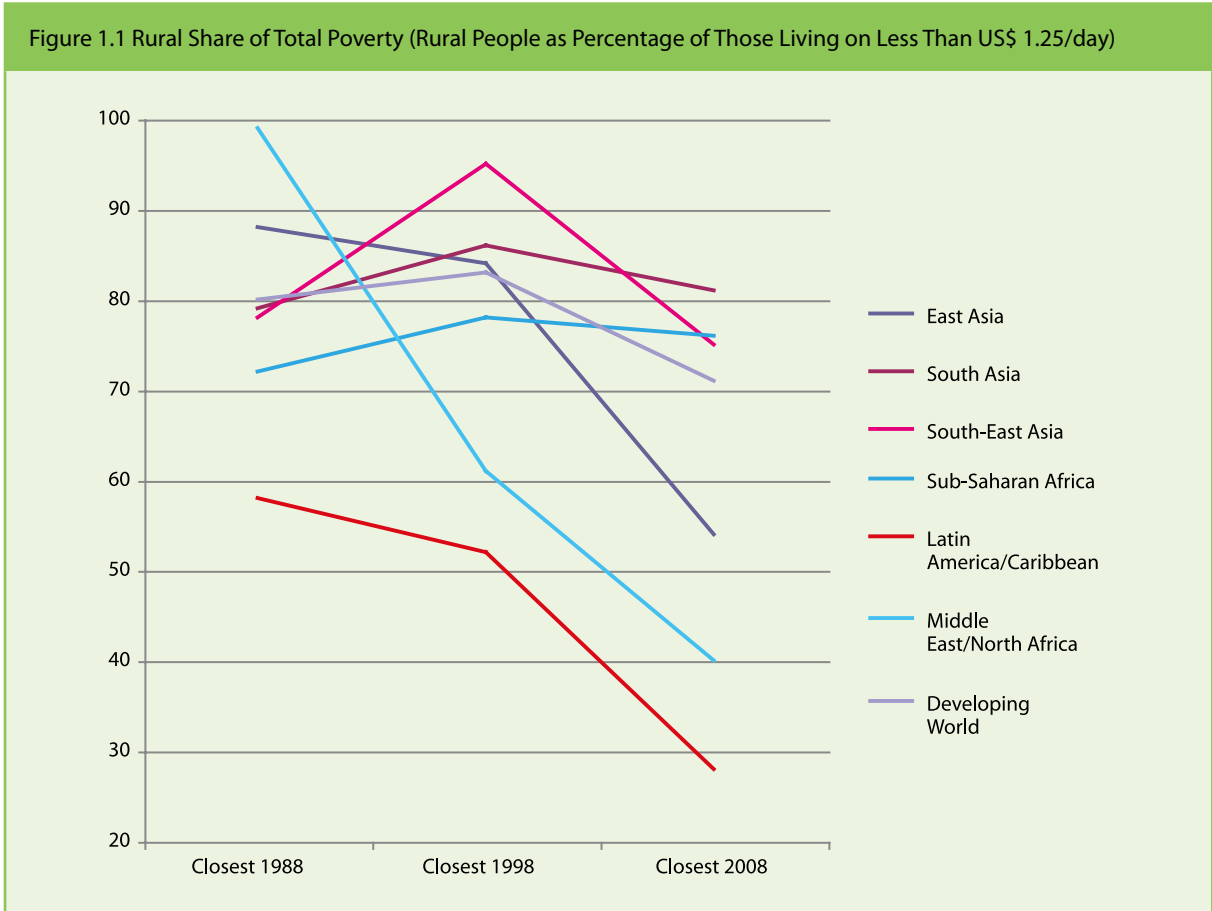
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proportion of rural population in a country. As noted above, the less developed and the least developed countries, with a high ratio of rurality, by definition, are also the poorer countries in overall per capita income and in proportions of people under the “poverty line”, however this is defined in each country. As the IFAD World Poverty Report 2011 put it, “poverty remains largely a rural problem, and a majority of the world’s poor will live in rural areas for many decades to come. ...Of the 1.4 billion people living in extreme poverty (surviving on the equivalent of less than US\$ 1.25/day) in 2005, approximately 1 billion – around 70 percent – lived in rural areas” (p.47). They constituted 35 percent of the world’s rural people. But, the remedy, as this study will attempt to show, does not lie in supporting an acceleration of urbanisation, neglecting the needs and

potentials of economic and human development of rural areas and people as shown in Figure 1.1.

Thirdly, urbanisation, which draws people out of rural areas, and builds new patterns of economic, ecological and social interaction between urban and rural areas, also creates a new dynamic of change for both urban and rural areas. The phenomenon of rural-urban migration, for example, is both a problem and an opportunity. A transformational process can be positive and mutually beneficial for urban and rural people, if a coordinated approach for economic and human resource development with a regional socio-economic and ecological development perspective can be adopted. This is considered further in the next chapter.



Source: IFAD, Rural Poverty Report, 2011, Figure 2, p.47.

## 1.2 Rural Poverty and Vulnerability of People

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) released its Rural Poverty Report 2011 in December 2010 – its second report since the first published in 2001.

The basic premise of this report is that poor rural people find it very difficult to manage the multiple risks they face arising from their personal and household circumstances, the natural and climatic hazards, and economic and development factors at national and global levels. The rural poor, the majority in most countries, therefore, cannot seize the opportunities in agriculture and the non-farm economy alike.

The report re-iterated the familiar story. Despite massive progress in reducing poverty in some parts of the world over the past couple of decades – notably in East Asia – there are still 1.4 billion people living on less than US\$ 1.25 a day, and close to 1 billion people suffering from hunger. At least 70 percent of the world's very poor people are rural, and a large proportion of the poor and hungry are children and young people. Moreover, widespread urbanisation and demographic changes will not change this situation in the near future. South Asia, with the greatest number of poor rural people, and Sub-Saharan Africa, with the highest incidence of rural poverty, are the regions worst affected by poverty and hunger, although levels of poverty vary greatly not just across regions and countries, but also within countries.

Participation in the rural non-farm economy – both wage employment and non-farm self-employment – is an important route out of poverty for growing numbers of rural people, but has remained neglected by policymakers in many countries.

The report noted:

Ten years into the new millennium, the challenges of addressing rural poverty, while also feeding a growing world population in a context of increasing environmental scarcities and climate change, loom large. Robust action is required now to address the many factors that perpetuate the marginalisation of rural economies. It needs to enable rural women, men and youth to harness new opportuni-

ties to participate in economic growth, and develop ways for them to better deal with this risk. Above all, this action needs to turn rural areas from backwaters into places where the youth of today will want to live and will be able to fulfil their aspirations (IFAD: 2010, p.22).

The report argues for a more systemic approach to growth for rural poverty reduction and “a new approach to agricultural intensification that is both market-oriented and sustainable”.

Four cross-cutting action areas are identified by IFAD:

- Improving the overall environment of rural areas with improved basic amenities and services;
- Improving capacity of poor rural people to manage many risks arising from personal circumstances, national and global factors and natural hazards;
- Strengthening individual capabilities through improved education and skills development; and
- Strengthening the collective capabilities of rural people, building social capital, improving governance, promoting participatory practices, and expanding their own membership-based organisations.

It can be concluded from the IFAD Rural Poverty Report that the issues raised a decade earlier still remain critical, while the magnitude and intensity of rural poverty have grown. The cross-cutting action areas proposed lent support to transformational changes, rather than a linear growth in rural areas in the face of novel dynamics of change.

The World Development Report 2008 published by World Bank spoke about three distinct worlds – the agriculture-based, the transforming and the urbanised – with a different agriculture for development agenda for each. In the agriculture-based countries, mostly Sub-Saharan Africa, agriculture-based productivity revolution in smallholder farming is seen as the strategy for reducing mass poverty and ensuring food insecurity. The transforming countries consist of most of South and East Asia and the Middle East and North Africa. For these countries, a comprehensive approach is proposed, “that pursues multiple pathways out of poverty – shifting to high value agriculture, decen-

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tralisering non-farm economic activity to rural areas, and providing assistance to help move people out of agriculture ...[through] innovative policy initiatives and strong political commitment” (p.1). In urbanised countries – most of Latin America and much of Europe and Central Asia – rural poverty can be reduced with smallholders becoming direct suppliers to modern food markets, good jobs created in agriculture and agro-industry, and markets for environmental services introduced. Thus “agriculture’s large environmental footprint can be reduced, farming systems made less vulnerable to climate change, and agriculture harnessed to deliver more environmental services” (World Bank: 2007, p.2).

The World Bank Report appropriately makes the point that the large majority of the poor people in the world depend on agriculture for their livelihood; and therefore, agriculture continues to be a key instrument, not only for food security, but also for reducing poverty, and promoting sustainable development. It is of paramount importance that the right strategies are devised and applied for agricultural development. The neat categorisation of the three worlds and distinct strategies for each presented in the report and used as the frame for laying out the arguments for policy direction, however, appear to be simplistic. Although rhetorically attractive in emphasising certain messages, it ignores the complexity and diversity of the country situations within each category. It, therefore, is liable to provide justification for and lend support to solutions and strategies that will not work because they ignore key aspects of the complex realities. As already noted above and will become progressively clearer in this report, a transformative view needs to be taken for all the categories mentioned and “a comprehensive approach that pursues multiple pathways out of poverty” is necessary in all countries, though the components of the comprehensive approach and their packaging for each country will vary. In fact, it can be argued that strategic elements mentioned for the “transforming” countries are highly relevant for the “agriculture-based” countries, and vice versa, to a degree.

### 1.3 Vulnerabilities and Opportunities

The interacting concerns about the tensions between production and the environment, the urban-rural economic and social distance, regional imbalances and the overarch-

ing human development gaps were highlighted in the international conference on Dynamics of Rural Transformation in Emerging Economies, which took place on 14-16 April 2010 in New Delhi, India. Particularly under scrutiny were domestic and international dynamics that affected the rural people of India, China, Brazil and South Africa, where 25 percent of the world’s population live and where most of the world’s natural resources are located.

It was emphasised that the process of change in rural areas is made ever more complex by the heavy weight of legacies from the past of poverty, inequality and injustice, the dual agrarian structures of subsistence and commercialised farming, lack of rights and social marginalisation of large groups of rural people, including women and other disadvantaged populations; lack of access to health, education and other basic services for rural people; and insufficient private and public investment resources for rural areas.

It was concluded that despite the burdensome legacy, there have been impressive achievements in the emerging economies. Progress could not be uniform among and within countries, but hundreds of millions have been lifted out of poverty and food production has increased many times over since the famines of the late 1950s and early 1960s. There is greater public awareness about protecting natural resources and ecosystems, and many more young girls and boys are going to school compared to previous generations. Governments are more accountable to citizens and civil societies are more active.

The conference participants in Delhi envisioned an agenda for rural transformation that is about development of people, rather than simply the development of assets. This agenda included three policy pillars:

- Heavy investments to make inclusive, sustainable and diversified rural development happen;
- Improved governance systems, institutions and policy processes; and
- Improved efficiency and effectiveness of public policy and programmes.

The core of the rural transformation agenda is defined by the imperatives of reducing poverty and inequalities, inherited from past policies and social structures, and the new poverties, gaps and inequalities being created by the process of rapid change itself in each country and globally.

Rural change would be easy if it was only a matter of "bricks and mortar" and of spending more money, but it is widely accepted that rural transformation cannot be achieved unless it is backed up by much better governance than witnessed so far – characterised by effective institutions, social accountability and participatory policy processes.

The third pillar is about ensuring that the gap between outlays and outcomes are narrowed – allocating resources effectively and transparently and improving approaches to targeting and social control of public investments.

The rapid changes brought about by the confluence of domestic and global forces, and the need to redirect the changes in line with the rural transformation agenda, demand new knowledge, skills, and capabilities on the part of individuals, enterprises, organisations and communities, along with new and better service provision (New Delhi Conference: 2010).

### 1.4 Why "Rural Transformation"?

In 2001, a report published by INRULED titled "Education for Rural Transformation: Towards a Policy Framework" made a plea for rethinking education in rural areas and rural people with a focus on "rural transformation".

The term rural transformation – rather than rural development, rural change or rural education – was used advisedly to convey a vision of pro-active and positive process of change and development of rural communities in the context of national and global changes in which education is seen as a key instrument for shaping and fulfilling the goal of rural transformation.

The report focused on the links between education and rural transformation, seeking to underscore the inexorable forces of change rural communities face and how education, by equipping people with appropriate knowledge, skills and fostering values of human dignity, can expand their choices and capabilities to exercise these choices.

### Rural development: the changing paradigms

Policy makers and the development community have widely used the phrase "rural development". What constitutes rural development seems to have evolved since the 1950s along with the thinking about the meaning and purposes of national development. In fact the concept of rural development has witnessed several changes over the last five decades. It has evolved along with changes in perspectives on economic development and has been closely associated with and impacted by the evolution of economic growth theories. In the 1950s, the focus of economic development was to increase gross national product (GNP).

In the early to mid-1960s, with industrialisation still viewed as the main vehicle growth of GNP growth, agriculture was seen as an engine of growth for developing countries that could increase food production and provide employment for the growing rural labour force. The focus seems to have been driven primarily by the interests of industrialisation to extract surpluses from the agriculture sector to reinforce industrialisation. The emphasis, therefore, was on agricultural intensification through higher inputs including high-yielding seed varieties, irrigation, fertilisers, and pesticides (Paudyal: 2007, pp.1-16).

In the 1970s, the re-distribution of income for meeting the basic needs of all (food, health, shelter, clothing, education, safe drinking water, sanitation, and so on), particularly the poor, became the prime focus of attention of policy-makers. In this paradigm of development, employment generation was given the top priority and was considered a vehicle for the equitable distribution of income in achieving the social goal of providing basic services to the poor. National governments were held responsible for the delivery of basic services to the poor making governments critical in ensuring these services. Integrated Rural Development (IRD) became the main thrust of rural development particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

IRD or its variants, integrated area development or integrated agricultural development, became an umbrella for rural development activities with somewhat differing focuses and implementation mechanisms in countries, such as Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand and



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Vietnam. The approach was designed to improve the economic and social life of the rural poor. Four major factors influenced the focus and thrust of this approach: increased concerns about the persistent and deepening of rural poverty; changing views of the concept of development itself; emergence of a more diversified rural economy in which rural non-farm enterprises play an increasingly important role; and increased recognition of the importance of reducing the non-income dimensions of poverty to achieve sustainable improvements in the socio-economic well-being of the poor (Ravallion, Chen, and Sangraula: 2007, pp.667-701).

At the risk of some simplification of complex issues, it can be concluded that the IRD approach, on the whole, did not achieve the expected results. The combination of poor coordination, weak delivery of services, incompetence and corruption in the public sector and the depth and extent of rural poverty itself raised the issues of "governance failure" in coping with the seemingly intractable problems. Increasing external debt and the new neo-liberal approach of structural adjustment, prescriptions of "slim government", and the persistent sectoral character of bureaucracy gave a further push to the marginalisation of rural development (Paudyal: 2007).

Subscribing to the validity of the goals of rural development and in the effort to overcome the constraints to pursuing these, in the 1990s, emphasis shifted to private sector-led growth with a reduced role of government in business and development. The government was seen as having an increased role in creating an enabling environment for the smooth functioning of the market and private sector through appropriate regulations and good governance. Likewise, the role of non-government organisations (NGOs) and civil society was emphasised in poverty alleviation and rural development.

The globally endorsed Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000 have reinforced the concerns about non-income poverty. The paradigm of broadly defined "development" has lent new saliency to the concept of rural development. It has become essential to consider the questions – what and why as well as how of comprehensive and inclusive rural development (Ellis and Biggs: 2001). It has also become pertinent to revisit the concept of

integrated rural development and re-examine the experiences in this respect.

### From "development" to "transformation"

It has to be emphasised that a transformative view of rural change is not a contradiction of the general notion of rural development. Rural transformation is all about seeking to bring about improvement in the living condition of the farmer, the artisan, the tenant and the landless in the countryside. It is about enabling specific groups of people, rural women and other disadvantaged segments of the population, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of development. It does subsume the core ideas of rural development concerned with improving the well-being of rural people by enhancing their productive capacities, expanding their choices in life and reversing public policies that discriminate against the rural poor, as underscored in an FAO and UNESCO (IIEP) joint study (2003, p.21).

The notion of transformation is consistent with rural development literature that emphasises agrarian change, integrated national development without marginalising rural people and rural economy. It recognises the political economy of national and rural development interaction. In the extensive rural development literature, the writing on rural transformation draws from the theory of social change – theory and practice informing each other in the context of global mega trends that also affect the remotest rural community.

Millions have been lifted out of dire poverty in the recent decades through rapid economic growth, especially in East Asia, in the image of the West. At the same time, there are many counter-trends, with millions of the marginalised more in danger than ever as local livelihoods, patterns of diversity and eco-systems disappear under forces of change that are seemingly out of control and beyond comprehension of the affected people. The globalising and homogenising world produces winners and losers, with the marginalised and the voiceless, who ironically are not small minorities, paying the heaviest price. This is a situation that merits to be described by the over-used term crisis – a crisis in thinking and action about development.

As Doug Reeler of Community Development Resource Association in South Africa put it, "Left alone, crises do get unconsciously resolved over time, tragically or happily or somewhere in-between. But they can also be more consciously and proactively resolved through well-led or facilitated transformative change processes" (Reeler: 2007, p.12). Reeler asserts that the real work of transformative change is facilitating new learning as well as unlearning – building appropriate and relevant skills and capacities of disadvantaged people (ibid.: 2007, p.12).

Robert Chambers and others have made the case for probing and thinking beyond a unidirectional logic of market-based globalisation as the motor of rural development and looking for ways to promote multi-dimensional transformation (Chambers: 2003, pp.108-126; also see Brookfield: 2008).

Researchers have noted that "heterogeneous transformative patterns" explain the reality of rural areas better and is the basis for an appropriately nuanced theoretical language (Koppel and Hawkins: 1994, p.20). Drawing on studies in Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, Koppel and colleagues saw two problems – a conflation of rural with the agriculture sector and the determinism of a unidirectional process of rural transition – that contributed to a narrow perspective of rural development (Gibson *et al.*: 2010; Koppel and Hawkins: 1994, pp.20-22). They are not satisfied with the argument that the growth of non-farm work by the release of a surplus workers into a diversified non-farm sector as sufficient evidence of "development". Nor do they accept the interpretation that presents "the growth of non-farm work as a desperate attempt to stave off rural out-migration, evidence of high agrarian population growth, stagnant agricultural productivity, increased inequalities in access to land and growth of the rural landless" (Koppel and Hawkins: 1994, p.20).

Since the economic reforms of 1978, rural development in China has been characterised by three broad strategies: implementing a household responsibility system, developing township and village enterprises (TVEs), and building a new countryside. These strategies have resulted in dramatic changes in the life of rural people – their lifestyles, employment and production structures, community

organisation, culture, and transport accessibility (Goodman: 2008; Long *et al.*: 2010; Zhang, Rozelle, and Huang: 2001). The scope, depth and dimensions of these changes cannot but be described as transformative. The remarkable outcome of this transformation is the lifting out of poverty of people, rural and urban, on a scale and in a time frame unprecedented in history. At the same time, it has created large regional imbalances in economic development, a widening of the prosperity gap between urban and rural areas, and social tensions (Cai and Smit: 1994; Long *et al.*: 2010). By one estimate, "the income gap between rural and urban residents has increased from 2.57 to 1.0 in 1978 to 3.31:1 in 2008, and this trend has strengthened since the turn of the new millennium" (Long *et al.*: p.2011 and p.1095).

Because of the magnitude of changes in traditional rural industries, the employment and consumption structures, and the social structure in rural areas, the process of change is described as rural transition development (RTD). "These changes signify a transformation from previously isolated urban and rural economic structures toward more coordinated urban-rural development. Such transformation radically changes the urban-rural relationship and the relationship between agriculture and industry" (Long *et al.*: 2010, p.1096).

Long and colleagues at the Chinese Academy of Sciences attempted to apply a methodology to diagnose RTD in a given region that involved measuring the rural development level (RDL), the rural transformation level (RTL), and the urban-rural coordination level (URCL) (Long *et al.*: 2010, p.1096). They concluded that:

[Despite spectacular economic growth]...the urban-rural coordination development status in China has not improved. Rather, it has continuously deteriorated as a result of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation processes since the beginning of the 21st century, especially in eastern coastal China. More powerful measures to fuel RTD, such as strengthening financial and technological support from industry and urban areas to agriculture and rural areas, are needed to reverse the trend of agricultural deprivation (ibid., p.1104).

Today's rural economy and systems of social organisations

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in rural areas in the developing world are much more diverse, complex, sophisticated and global than those of the last century and are recognised to involve multilevel, multiactor and multifaceted processes (Kennedy, Thomas, and Glueck: 2001; Muilu and Rusanen: 2003; Rizov: 2004).

In short, the linear and dichotomous view of the rural identity in terms of agriculture to industry, non-market to market, rural to urban, family work to wage labour, and human to mechanical labour has to be abandoned in favour of a heterogeneous and multidimensional transformation view of the rural scene in mutually beneficial interaction with the broader national reality. The concept of rural transformation embraces a positive and proactive position in theory and practice that recognises the possibilities and

opportunities in diversity and complexity of rural communities, sustainable livelihood and ecology, vulnerability with resilience, interdependence of development, and reshaping of socio-cultural organisations, leading to well-being and dignity of all including the rural people. Learning and building skills and capacities of people are recurrent themes in this scenario (see Box 1.1).

### 1.5 Heightened Relevance of Education for Rural Transformation (ERT)

The INRULED report mentioned above argued that goals set globally – e.g. MDG and EFA by 2015 – and by individual nations for education and development in the 21st century cannot be realised without giving special attention to the situation of rural populations in developing countries.

#### Box 1.1 Rural Development and Rural Transformation: Contrast in Perspectives

The template of contrasts will not fit neatly any real situation, but is useful as an analytical and conceptual tool that would help to think differently about rural and urban conditions and to consider a wider range of policy objectives and strategy options. It is assumed that "rural development" indicates a relatively conventional, less dynamic and more limited change in rural communities and locations, whereas "rural transformation" implies dynamic change on a broader front that emphasises the continuing interaction between urban and rural areas. These terms may not actually be used by most people in the restrictive way they are defined, but whatever terminology is preferred, it is useful to think about a continuum of change to describe circumstances and a spectrum of options and possibilities that exists. The parameters of change related to the two views of rural change are indicated below.

Parameters of change	Rural Development	Rural Transformation
Nature of change	Relatively linear, incremental, relatively limited scope	Non-linear, dynamic, multi-dimensional
Employment structure	Emphasis on farm to non-farm	Change in nature and structure of jobs in farm, non-farm and services activities
Labour and work	Emphasis on human to mechanical; market-determined	A mixed picture depending on context; mechanisation balanced by productivity, job creation and improvement of working conditions
Education and training	Basic general education and training with ruralised curricula	Varied education and training opportunities at all levels to widen options for rural youth in rural and urban areas
Skills development	Focused on rural occupations and specific productive skills in rural activities	Wider skill development options facilitating occupational and geographical mobility and broader life skills, personal/ social skills for changing labour markets and self-employment
Demography	Declining rural population, major one-way flow of out-migration, higher dependency ratio with greying of population	Complex mobility, both occupational and geographical, temporary and longer term; not totally one-way outward flow; mixed demographic profile with emerging scenario of inter-connected rural communities, small towns, market and service hubs and larger cities
Organisations, institutions, governance	Local government with some devolution of tasks and authority focused on agriculture, local development and local services	Multiple governance structures – community, local, regional for different purposes with decentralisation to allow authority and accountability; variety of social organisations and networks for citizen participation
Development planning orientation	Separate for rural and urban; rural focused on local economy, infrastructure and services	Multiple structures for planning with strong emphasis on territorial and regional integrated planning of economy, infrastructure and services for both rural and urban populations and areas which are not fixed and permanent categories

It pointed out that breakdowns of numbers for rural areas on education indicators were often not reported – a sign of neglect of the problem – while urban-rural disparity in educational investments and in the quality of teaching and learning was widespread and persistent.

It was emphasised that in the efforts to achieve the global and national goals, the paramount need, largely neglected so far, was to adapt strategies and direct resources to the specific conditions of diverse and changing rural communities. It was essential to turn the continuing and inevitable transition of rural areas, the environment and people's life, into an active and positive force for transformation of rural communities.

The aim of the 2001 report was to initiate a dialogue and help develop a framework for policy to make education the vehicle for rural transformation. The challenge of education in serving rural transformation must become one of the main themes of the education for all effort, it was said. Not taking up this challenge was to imperil the total education for all effort, it was affirmed. It was argued by the report that the solutions to the problems of poverty and deprivation in rural areas and their spill-over into urban areas did not lie in trying to prevent urbanisation and to keep rural people confined to rural areas – which would be impossible in any event. Nor was it a realistic option to promote the mythical autarky or self-sufficiency of rural communities.

Almost a decade later, in November 2010, an international symposium on education for rural transformation, with the theme of national, international and comparative perspectives and lessons in ERT, was hosted by University of Stockholm. The concluding statement of the symposium pointed out:

In the decade since the UNESCO/INRULED study, the urgency has heightened further for paying attention to rural transformation and making education the vehicle for this transformation. New sources of vulnerability for the poor, especially the poor people in the rural areas, have arisen... graphically illustrated by the recent economic crisis originating in the financial markets of the West but affecting poor people everywhere; new threats to food security of people; and man-made and natural disasters including

effects of climate change endangering life and livelihood of millions. These hazards affect disproportionately the rural people, because more of the poor are them.

The symposium noted that the UN General Assembly's review in September, 2010 of progress towards 2015 MDG had concluded that many of the MDG goals including those for education, that envisioned a new future for humanity in the 21st century, could not be fully achieved. A reason for this was the fact that a large proportion of the rural people in the developing world remained deprived educationally, missing the opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge to develop their capabilities and expand their choices in life.

The symposium drew attention to the structural problems of the global and national economies inherent in the dominant development model of unlimited consumption. This is manifested in diminishing share in GNP of agriculture and rural production in China and India and other developing countries, while more than half of the economically active people remained dependent for their livelihood and well-being on agriculture.

An even larger structural challenge, the symposium noted, lay in the economic development goals and aspirations of China and India and the rest of the developing world. These are premised on the consumption habits and patterns of North America and Europe, dependent on ravaging the non-renewable resources of the planet. This is unsustainable and would lead to the collapse of the system of natural and biological balance of resources of the planet. The symposium asserted that rural transformation, even if it is not fully recognised yet, has to be the epicentre of a tectonic shift in thinking and action. But this shift in vision and action would not happen by natural force like the physical tectonic shift. People and nations have to will it and work for it.

The participants in Stockholm agreed that the dynamics of rural transformation in the "globalised" world of the 21st century created new educational imperatives which went beyond the traditional concerns regarding rural communities and needed special attention and looking at it with a new pair of lenses. The general conclusion from Stockholm was that in the discourse on policy and strategy and, more

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importantly, in action, we did not move very much from where we were in 2001. Meanwhile, the challenges became more acute and urgent.

The conclusions from Stockholm echoed the advocacy a decade earlier for a new policy perspective for education in rural areas to make education the vehicle for rural transformation. The focus on rural transformation called for recognising new dimensions in the criteria for judging quality and relevance of educational activities. The rapidly changing rural scene and the dynamics of rural-urban interaction required flexibility and creativity in educational programmes, not often found in the conventional formal system.

The concerns and priorities of rural people and the transforming rural communities needed to figure specifically and prominently in the educational responses to the contextual trends and influences that have a bearing on national education systems. For example, the human rights perspective, human development imperatives of education, effects of the new information technology, and the crucial importance of pursuing sustainable development objectives needed to be assessed from the point of view of advancing rural transformation.

The same arguments were made a decade apart that rural people and rural areas were not homogeneous in any country, not to speak of a whole region or the world. Educational activities had to respond to diverse needs of building skills and capacities for seizing economic opportunities, improving livelihood and enhancing the quality of life in diverse rural circumstances. The major educational system issues of access, equity, quality, relevance and efficiency, had to be re-examined from the point of view of the changing rural scenarios. The vitally important concept of the learning society could become real only when every village and hamlet became a learning community with lifelong opportunity for learning for all in the community.

### 1.6 Understanding “Rural”

Before delving into the specificities of rural transformation and development, it is necessary to reflect on the meanings of the term “rural” in the contemporary context. Varied and somewhat arbitrary definitions are used by different

countries to categorise populations and geographical areas as urban or rural. A common criterion is a concentration of persons in a cluster of households with a cut-off point, such as 5,000 in India. It may be 2,500 persons as in Mexico or 10,000 or more as in Nigeria. Other countries, Brazil and China for example, use various characteristics such as metropolitan facilities leading to a declared legal status rather than a population number. The common features that characterise “rural communities” include the following:

- People and economic activities are much more dispersed than in urban areas;
- Livelihood is largely dependent on growing and extracting primary products; and
- Access to basic social services is rudimentary or limited because of the absence of a concentration of service recipients and policies that favour urban areas (INRULED: 2001).

For the average person, rural is a subjective concept that conjures up images of small towns, farmlands and forests. For others, rural is an objective, quantitative measure that is clearly defined. As mentioned, generally the definition of rurality includes two elements, namely, the measurement of spatial areas, and the measurement of that area’s population and its characteristics. Most definitions start with population density as a foundation, and add other factors, such as commuting patterns or the total population to fit specific needs.

The joint UNESCO-FAO study proposes defining “rural area” on the basis of the following characteristics (Atchoarena, and Gasperini: 2003).

- A space where human settlement and infrastructure occupy only a small share of the landscape;
- Natural environment dominated by pastures, forests, mountains and deserts;
- Settlements of low density (about 5-10,000 persons);
- Places where most people work on farms;
- The availability of land at a relatively low cost; and
- A place where activities are affected by a high transaction cost, associated with long distance from cities and poor infrastructures.

Because of national differences in the characteristics that distinguish urban from rural areas, the distinction between the urban and the rural is not yet amenable to a single definition that would be applicable to all countries. Countries have established their own definitions in line with their own need (see Box 1.2).

#### Box 1.2 Naming Rural and Urban Areas: The Indian Case

In the Census of India 2001, the definition of urban area adopted is as follows:

- All statutory places with a municipality, corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee, etc.
  - A place satisfying the following three criteria simultaneously:
    - (I) a minimum population of 5,000;
    - (II) at least 75 percent of male working population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits; and
    - (III) a density of population of at least 400 per sq. km. (1,000 per sq. mile).
- All population not classified as urban constitutes the rural population.

*Source: Indian Population Census, 2011.*

In the censuses of a large number of Sub-Saharan African countries, rural is defined by “deprivation” characteristics, rural being a landmass without access to continuous electricity, water, and certain public services. From an economic perspective, particularly, the marketers in the private sector, rural is defined as pastoral and as a mass of people who derive their income from the lands they till or use to raise their cattle and livestock. For still others, rural is not a geography; it is a mindset.

Urban-rural classification of population in internationally published statistics follows the national census definition, which differs from one country or area to another. These statistics follow the criteria that usually include any of the following: (i) size of population in a locality; (ii) population density; (iii) distance between built-up areas; (iv) predominant type of economic activity; (v) legal or administrative boundaries; and (vi) urban characteristics such as specific services and facilities.

Where size is not used as a criterion, a defined locality is the most appropriate unit for classification for national purposes as well as for international comparability. If it is not possible to use the locality, the smallest administrative unit of the country is used. It has to be noted that in the face of rapid growth of urbanisation and demographic and other changes in both rural and urban areas, the categori-

sation of communities and people as urban or rural has to be viewed in a dynamic context.

## 1.7 Defining the Agenda for Education and Skills for Rural Transformation

In 2000, the Dakar Framework for Action for Education for All (EFA) set two goals related to skill development, adult learning and lifelong education.

Goal 3 was: Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.

Dakar Goal 4 was: Achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

The commentary on this goal in the Dakar Framework document mentioned that “All young people and adults must be given the opportunity to gain the knowledge and develop the values, attitudes and skills that will enable them to develop their capacities to work, to participate fully in their society, to take control of their own lives and to continue learning”.

The commentary mentioned “young people and adults” but the emphasis was on youth and adolescents, who did not continue or participate in formal education. It spoke about young people, especially adolescent girls, who “face risks and threats that limit learning opportunities and challenge education systems” (UNESCO, “Expanded Commentary”, Dakar Framework for Action: 2000).

Goal 4 and the related commentary indicated targets for literacy and the kind of actions that might be pursued by countries to achieve these goals, but there was no attempt to specify or quantify the goals and targets related to goal 3 on skill development.

A close reading of the two EFA Goals and their elaboration suggests an attempt to differentiate the purposes to be served by the two goals – in terms of content, objectives and learners. This attempt seems to have created an untenable dichotomy. The life skills and lifelong learning goal

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is not quantified; it refers to learning content and objectives.

The adult literacy goal, on the other hand, emphasises the mechanics of literacy skills, equipping learners with literacy as an instrument. Having acquired this instrument, the learners may continue to participate in education. The somewhat narrow and restrictive view of literacy skills, and its separation as a goal from that for life skills and lifelong learning appear to have caused a lost opportunity to place literacy and adult education firmly within a common framework of lifelong learning that is purposeful for each learner (ibid.).

The above observation is not just a speculation based on semantics of the Dakar documents. The Education for All initiative proclaimed in Jomtien in 1990, and the subsequent Dakar Framework in 2000, have influenced policy-making and programme strategies in developing countries. The weakness in coherence in definitions and concepts of adult learning, skill development and lifelong learning and their relationships remain widely prevalent with adverse consequences in many countries. The tension about a segmented view of literacy and skill development and their place as components of lifelong learning is more evident in countries where access to basic education with acceptable quality remains a serious problem than in countries where major progress has been made in expanding basic education opportunities. These latter countries have had a longer experience in developing a wide array of literacy, non-formal and continuing education activities and skill development programmes which are the building blocks of lifelong learning (Ahmed: 2009).

Other writers have observed that the lack of clear quantitative targets for goal 3 and the ambiguity concerning the language of the commitment to the goal stymied monitoring of skill development through the Global Monitoring Report (GMR: 2010, p.10) mechanism of EFA (King and Palmer: 2010).

GMR 2010 examines the issue of reaching and teaching skills to the most marginalised and is critical of “a vague aspiration...[that]...has been the subject of quiet neglect” (p.76). It comments on the central importance that learning and skills play in the global knowledge-based economy,

both with regard to economic growth and poverty reduction. It asserts that the global economic crisis has pushed youth and adult skills and learning, goal 3, to the centre of the EFA agenda. It promises an extensive treatment of skills, especially goal 3 of EFA, in GMR 2012.

### *The triad of equity, quality and efficiency*

The INRULED report, looking more broadly at EFA and skill development, noted, that the overarching EFA issues identified in Jomtien and Dakar could be described as the triad of (i) access and equity; (ii) quality and relevance and (iii) efficiency and accountability. The dynamics of rural transformation in the “globalised” world of the 21st century created new educational imperatives which required that the EFA triad of equity, quality and efficiency is examined in new ways with special attention to:

- Increasing opportunities for post-primary and secondary education, with countries recognising it as a part of basic education;
- New and expanded opportunities for vocational and occupational skill development relevant to changing rural needs;
- Re-orienting and giving a higher priority in tertiary education to serving the dynamic needs of rural development;
- Revisiting national educational development priorities with a focus on overcoming the urban-rural educational disparities;
- Re-examining the purposes and content of education in the light of the 21st century realities and challenges for integrated national development, that takes into account the needs of rural populations; and
- Urban-rural digital divide and making better use of ICT for combating education, knowledge and information disparities.

### *Building the Learning Community*

The learning needs of rural communities, it was emphasised, had grown more diverse, more complex and more demand-driven, which required a lifelong learning approach and building every community as a learning community. At a minimum, services of acceptable quality were demanded in (i) early childhood care and education; (ii)

quality primary education for all; (iii) second chance basic education for large numbers of adolescents and youth who miss or drop out from primary education; (iv) literacy and continuing education for youth and adults; (v) production, vocational and entrepreneurial skill development; and (vi) skills, knowledge and information for improving the quality of life.

### *ERT – Developing the Agenda for Action*

The report tried to ring an alarm bell. It proposed the outline for action agenda. It pointed at themes and propositions which needed urgent attention. These included:

- Closing the resource gap in education, especially in rural areas;
- Reflecting rural concerns in EFA implementation strategies;
- Redesigning educational statistics and educational management information systems to better reflect the rural realities;
- Facilitating transfer, adaptation, dissemination and use of appropriate technologies from rich to poor countries and to rural people;
- Bringing the benefits of information and communication technology to rural people;
- Moving from rhetoric to action to build the learning community in rural areas; and
- International and regional actions to articulate, build the constituencies of support, learn from each other, and plan and guide follow-up activities to promote the ERT agenda.

UNESCO-INRULED decided to examine closely the issues of skill development within its broad mission of exploring concepts, policy and practices in education for rural transformation. The confluence of global forces and national situations, especially in the poorer countries and regions of the world prompted UNESCO-INRULED to take this decision. These forces and factors include persistent and growing gaps between supply and demand for jobs and employment for young people, growing vulnerabilities and risks for poor people, threats to food security, and the urgency of building a sustainable green future – prompted UNESCO-INRULED to take this decision.

As noted, the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (GMR) for 2012 devoted to skills development to be published in 2012. UNESCO is engaged in preparing a World TVET Report, as the background which will be the main document at the Third World Congress on TVET, scheduled for Shanghai in May 2012. The present study intends to complement and supplement these and other recent and new initiatives and contribute to the on-going discourse by approaching the question of skill development and its translation into jobs and well-being of people from the point of view of rural people, more specifically, the perspective of education, training and capacity building for rural transformation.

This introductory chapter has referred extensively to the 2001 report on Education for Rural Transformation, because the aim of this study is to take off from and zoom in on the skill development issue in relation to a broad vision of rural and urban integrated development inherent in the concept of rural transformation. The intention is not to re-hash old arguments and positions. Out of the ERT priorities that need “urgent attention” mentioned above, the directly and specifically pertinent item is to create “new and expanded opportunities for vocational and occupational skill development relevant to changing rural needs”. Out of the suggested operational agenda for ERT the pertinent items that may be underscored are: closing the resource gap in education, especially in rural areas; reflecting rural concerns in EFA implementation strategies; facilitating transfer, adaptation, dissemination and use of appropriate technologies from rich to poor countries and to rural people; and moving from rhetoric to action to build the learning community in rural areas.

It should be emphasised, however, that focus on skills and picking out some items of the operational agenda do not mean that these can be implemented in isolation and the other items mentioned above can be ignored. The basic premise behind the idea of rural transformation is the interconnectedness of both causes and consequences and thus the need for a holistic view, even when a specific problem area is the focus. This point has been made above, and it is hoped, the implications will become clearer in the following chapters.



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### 1.8 The Structure of the Report

This report is divided into five chapters preceded by an overview. The overview, emphasising challenges and policy implications, summarises conclusions and key messages from the report. It recapitulates policy messages and recommendations about the required national, regional and international actions and the UNESCO-INRULED role.

This introductory chapter, following the overview, lays out the rationale and concept of rural transformation based on the 2001 report, but takes into account new and emerging issues or issues which have become more prominent – such as, food security, the green economy and increased urgency of jobs and employment in combating poverty, especially in rural areas. The justification for a heightened concern about skills and jobs and its place in rural transformation is presented. This chapter sets the stage for the rest of the contents of the book.

Chapter 2 is titled Education, Training and Skills to Combat Rural Poverty. This chapter spells out the broader issues of skills development and capacity building of people through, formal, non-formal and informal means. The issues of relevance and characteristics of education, training and capability needs in the context of changing paradigms of rural development are discussed. Rural occupational categories and skill needs are examined. Current premises, provisions, and practices regarding skills development are considered. Attention is given to rural out-migration, the situation of youth and engendering skills and jobs as cross-cutting issues.

Chapter 3 is about skills and jobs for food security. Trends and scenario for agricultural development and food security are presented. Food and food-related skills, jobs,

economics and the implications for rural transformation are considered. Conditions and policy directions for skill formation and job creation to promote food security and agricultural development of the “right” kind are summarised.

Chapter 4 deals with skills and jobs for the green future. Trends and scenario for the green economy and emerging issues are considered. Different facets of skills and jobs for the green economy and rural transformation are discussed. Conditions and policy priorities for skill formation and job creation to promote the green future are presented as the concluding part of the chapter.

Chapter 5 deals with “Skills and Jobs: Roles, Responsibilities and Policy Implications.” Organisational and institutional aspects of skill development and job creation including policy development, monitoring and assessment, and management capacity for skills development itself are considered. Roles, responsibility and accountability of the national government, state/provincial/local authorities, formal education at different levels, vocational/technical training system, private sector, media, communities, and NGOs are noted. Adapting to the rural transformation imperatives is discussed.

The annexes in three parts supplement the main chapters. They include a selection of case studies from China and other countries to illustrate “good practices” in skills development for rural transformation. There is a discussion of issues about measuring and monitoring skills development contributed by the OECD Skills Project Team. Finally, a series of statistical tables based on available international sources is presented to illustrate and elaborate the key points being made in this report and as a ready source of reference for relevant international statistics.



A young girl wandering outside a shabby hut in rural Ethiopia.  
Photo. © Wang, Li.



Chinese students in rural area.  
Photo. © Li, Jinsong.



Primary school students in a poorly-equipped classroom in rural China.  
Photo. © Li, Jinsong.



Rural students actively participating in the class in Ethiopia.  
Photo. © Wang, Li.