

PAPER 10

DEBATES IN
SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT

***Skills Development for
Rural People:
A Renewed Challenge***

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**WORKING GROUP
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IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

Secretariat:

International Labour Organisation, NORRAG, Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation

Co-ordination:

c/o Network for Policy Review Research and Advice on Education and Training (NORRAG)
IUED, P.O.B. 136, CH - 1211 Geneva 21, Switzerland
Phone: +41 22 906 59 00
Fax: +41 22 906 59 94
E-mail: michel.carton@iued.unige.ch

Website:

<http://www.norrag.org/wg>

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Introduction	p. 5
SECTION ONE: THE CHALLENGE OF RURAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT <i>Simon McGrath</i>	p. 6
SECTION TWO: AGENCY APPROACHES TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR RURAL PEOPLE	
2.1. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR RURAL PEOPLE: THE FAO/IIEP COLLABORATION ON EDUCATION FOR RURAL PEOPLE <i>Marcelino Avila, David Atchoarena and Lavinia Gasperini</i>	p. 14
2.2. TRAINING FOR LOCAL ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: AN ILO APPROACH <i>Josiane Capt</i>	p. 20
2.3. SKILLS FOR LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL ASIA: THE ETF APPROACH <i>Henrik Faudel</i>	p. 24
2.4. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS: A GERMAN PERSPECTIVE <i>Edda Grunwald</i>	p. 26
2.5. SKILLS FOR RURAL EMPLOYMENT: A FRENCH PERSPECTIVE <i>Jean Bosco Bouyer, Pierre Debouvry and Alain Maragnani</i>	p. 29
2.6. RURAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: A SWISS PERSPECTIVE <i>Fabienne Lagier</i>	p. 33
SECTION THREE: WHO UNDERSTANDS AFRICAN AGRICULTURE? TOO FEW! TOWARDS A WORLD BANK STUDY <i>William Saint</i>	p. 36

Appendix One: The programme	p. 42
Appendix Two: List of Participants	p. 44
Appendix Three: About the Working Group	p. 49

INTRODUCTION

This eleventh Working Group meeting was made possible by the continued support of SDC to its secretariat. This particular meeting would not have been possible without the kind invitation of both the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the International Institute for Educational Planning of UNESCO. The Working Group thanks Lavinia Gasperini from FAO and David Atchoarena from UNESCO-IIEP for facilitating the meeting.

The focus of the meeting reflected our visit to the FAO and its collaboration with IIEP on the issue of education for rural people. We also took advantage of this meeting to explore the experiences of several other agencies in this field and to discuss plans by the World Bank for new research in this area.

The meeting was organised by the Secretariat under the leadership of Michel Carton and was chaired by Kenneth King. This discussion paper is authored by Simon McGrath.

In addition to the inputs synthesised in this paper, a review of current approaches to rural skills development of bilateral and multilateral agencies, authored by Frédérique Weyer and Juliane Ineichen, is available on the Working Group website.

SECTION ONE: THE CHALLENGE OF RURAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Simon McGrath

1.1. The development challenge

As the subsequent papers show, there is a clear case for arguing for a stronger focus on issues of rural development. This is perhaps particularly true in the African context, which is the main focus of some of the contributions to this discussion paper. Furthermore, a case can also be made relatively easily for the importance of skills development in supporting rural development.

There is considerable evidence for the marginalisation of rural populations and the incidence of poverty within rural areas. Rural people in general are the most disadvantaged in terms of access to services, including education and training, and are the worst served by infrastructure of various kinds. Rural people are most likely in many settings to be amongst those who are not being reached in the drive towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Moreover, such problems are typically starker for rural women and girls, given their multiple burdens.

In spite of the pro-poor orientation of much of international and national development policy for more than a decade, there are ways in which the situation of rural areas has got worse. In some cases, rural areas are the most adversely affected by HIV/AIDS. Their historical brain drain to the cities has been accelerated by the international outflow of skilled people from poorer countries.

Notwithstanding the pro-poor focus, many of the problems caused by structural adjustment are still keenly felt in rural areas. The cost of inputs and the decline of state subsidies and service delivery have made many poorer.

Specific investments in areas such as rural development and agricultural education and training were reduced during the 1980s and 1990s by both national governments and donors in many cases. At the same time, rural development issues easily fall through the cracks in the "joined-up" thinking of these organisations.

1.2. The rationale for intervention

All of these challenges have led a range of agencies to focus specific interventions towards the needs of the rural poor. In a number of these

interventions, skills development has been given an important role. This is evident in several of the inputs that follow in this discussion paper – most notably those of FAO/UNESCO-IIEP, ILO and the World Bank.

The rationale for this is multi-faceted. First, as the FAO/UNESCO-IIEP presentation makes clear, improved skills and improved agricultural development can work in a mutually reinforcing manner to assist with the realisation of the MDGs.

Second, it is argued by some agencies that a pro-poor focus inevitably requires a major commitment to attacking rural poverty. This is justified by the size of the rural population, the incidence of poverty therein and the stubbornness of much of this poverty. Again, for several agencies, skills development is an integral part of any strategy to address these issues.

Third, there is a more growth-oriented case made. There is considerable historical precedence for arguing that a rise in agricultural productivity and innovation has been a major engine of overall economic growth and development. It is argued that, particularly in Africa, there are real possibilities for significant productivity increases that are easily achievable and are sustainable. Clearly, such a breakthrough will require improvements in skills and knowledge. Thus, importance is given in some accounts (relating in particular to the World Bank presentation in section three) to ways of enhancing skills, knowledge and attitudes for productivity, innovation and diversification. Such arguments are linked to recent experiences of successful development of niche markets for Southern produce (fruit, vegetables and cut flowers) in OECD countries, including opportunities provided by the expansion of markets for free trade and/or organic produce.

1.3. The challenge of focus

Readers may have already noted some of the slipperiness of the terms that I have been using. This highlights one of the greatest challenges in this area: that of definition. Crucially, issues of definition here are not mere questions of semantics. Rather, they go to the heart of important debates about the definition of problems, target groups and intended outcomes.

Regular readers of this discussion paper series will be attuned to the ways in which the language of skills development has evolved into new forms of complexity. Similar patterns are evident in the area of rural development. In the presentations that follow and in the broader debate, there is a tendency towards conflation and confusion of terms. The following ten questions give only a flavour of this:

- Are we talking about rural populations/people or rural areas?
- Are we implicitly or explicitly interested in the rural poor only or do we see rural innovators (typically wealthier farmers) as central to any strategy for rural development?
- Do we only consider agriculture or does rural development carry more weight for us?
- If our view is agricultural, then do we want to exclude the not-insignificant numbers of urban farmers, foresters and fishers?
- Do we, at least implicitly, consider our target group as a marginalised and vulnerable group of aid recipients or as economic actors and change agents requiring support to enhance their existing skills and strategies?
- Where does the complexity of rural-urban migration and the role of remittances feature in our models?
- How do we avoid the distorting dichotomy of thinking about farm and non-farm activities?
- Are we advocating a two track training system, with one focused on the urban the formal and the other on the rural and informal?
- If so, are there any dangers in such a bifurcation?
- How do we manage the tension between a broad and comprehensive vision of sustainable agricultural and rural development and the need to operationalise such a vision effectively?

What is clear is that context matters very much in debating such questions and in responding to rural/agricultural development issues. Thus, the ETF presentation poses one more important question for certain transition economies: what are the particular challenges in skills for agricultural and rural development in the context of growing impoverishment?

1.4. Strategies for skills development for agricultural and rural development

It is evident that much of the debate about skills development for agricultural and rural development mirrors the general skills development debate, as outlined in previous volumes in this discussion paper series.

1.4.1. Reforming public providers

The FAO/UNESCO-IIEP, ETF and World Bank contributions all reflect on the urgent need to reform public providers of vocational and/or higher education. The contributions mirror previous accounts about the need for reforms in public provision. The same issues are focused upon:

- Outmoded curricula;
- Lack of market-relevant short courses;
- The need to shift from supply-side orientations to a demand-led focus;
- Poor quality;
- Inadequate staff capacity;
- Poor infrastructure;
- Underfunding;
- Lack of institutional autonomy;
- Weak linkages to employers;
- Inadequate governance; and
- Unequal access.

Rural location does much to increase several of these problems. Moreover, the location of many public providers under Ministries of Agriculture is widely held to exacerbate the problem by making agricultural education and training a backwater that is largely cut off from the transformation processes being experienced in systems led by Ministries of Education or Labour.

1.4.2. The role of private providers

In the 1990s, ideological certainty about the superiority of the market led to an emphasis both on the failure of public provision, as detailed above, and the need to support private provision. More recently, this position has tended to mature into one where the language is more about the fact of the existence of private provision and the need to develop systemic solutions that strengthen both public and private offerings.

Private provision does not receive a major focus in the discussion that follows. This may reflect the orthodoxy that certain forms of private

provision struggle in rural settings due to the weakness of effective demand. However, what does emerge as a theme is the need to see private providers as an integral part of any skills development strategy for rural and agricultural development.

1.4.3. Non formal approaches

When skills for rural development was highest on the international development policy agenda (some 30 years ago), there was a strong belief in the importance of non-formal mechanisms in meeting this challenge. Some sense of the potential role of non-formal education and training does emerge from the agency presentations in this volume but it is clear that NFE(T) has not yet regained its old importance, not withstanding the emergence of the lifelong learning concept during the 1990s.

1.4.4. Beyond VET

The deliberations of this Working Group are an illustration of how the predominant terminology in this field has shifted from (technical and) vocational education and training to skills development.

We have previously discussed some of the advantages and disadvantages of this shift. What is clear in the thinking about skills for agricultural and rural development is that a broad notion of skills development is being used.

The discussions of this paper note the importance of both technical and generic skills. Thus, it is argued by the World Bank that agricultural graduates need to develop skills that would prepare them for private sector employment, such as team working and problem solving skills. The SDC presentation is more radical, stressing the importance of developing the political and organisational skills of farmers' organisations.

Across several of the contributions there is also a sense of the need to support the innovation and knowledge systems of farming/rural communities. Thus, the emphasis becomes, in part, how to build on existing skills and knowledge of communities and individuals in order that they can access new ways of working. Such an approach is more akin to certain traditions in literacy and adult education than it is to the traditional approaches of vocational education and training.

There is also much in the presentations that mirrors the recent return of a capacity agenda to the development debate. Through the efforts of the UNDP and through recent reports such as the Commission for Africa and

Investing in Development, the need to build capacity has become a major element of current skills thinking. Such capacity development is seen as being necessary at all levels: for individual farmers and their organisations, for skills providers and other service organisations, for national departments and agencies, and for international organisations. In some of the contributions, this capacity agenda is linked to other notions such as social capital, decentralisation and participatory development.

In keeping with previous Working Group papers where small enterprise development and the informal economy have been considered, there is also a sense in some of the presentations, most clearly that of the ILO, that skills development needs to be seen in conjunction with a set of other inputs, such as micro-credit.

In a sense, this is complementary with the way that discussions about agricultural development have traditionally looked at the education-research-extension triangle. Such discussions make clear the need to see skills development as only one part of a larger picture.

This is reinforced in turn by the point that skills for agricultural and rural development need to be supported by a positive macroeconomic environment and institutional framework. However, the presentations are significantly silent on the constraining nature of the international trade regime and the particular issue of agricultural protectionism within the OECD countries.

1.4.5. The relationship to other development strategies

The FAO/UNESCO-IIEP contribution makes most explicit mention of the need to relate such strategies to wider development approaches. It shows how skills for agricultural and rural development can support the MDGs.

It also argues for the need to insert skills issues more explicitly into PRSPs. This has not been particularly successful to date, although the ETF presentation does point to some regional progress in this regard. Nonetheless, there are concerns about the suitability of the PRSP approach as a way of driving reforms of skills development.

Unsurprisingly, the FAO/UNESCO-IIEP paper also emphasises the importance of relating skills for agricultural and rural development to the Education for All Initiative, which is under UNESCO's leadership. The paper notes that the Dakar Framework for EFA goes well beyond the MDGs in stressing appropriate skills for adults and youth. Thus, skills for agricultural and rural development can be argued to be an integral part of the EFA approach.

1.5. The need for lesson learning

The case for a greater focus on skills for agricultural and rural development is a strong one. However, it is evident that such an approach needs to take account of a range of potentially relevant lessons.

First, it is necessary for agencies pushing such an agenda to consider the lessons of history. What can be learnt from the experiences of the push towards rural education and training in the late 1960s and early 1970s, or from the integrated rural development strategies of the same period?

Second, what can be learnt from recent theoretical debates and practical experiences in OECD countries? Academic work has developed new stresses on the complexity of the concept of rurality and the centrality of the relationships between identity, community and learning. Equally, the European Union in particular would appear to be a fertile source of practical experience on how rural and agricultural development strategies have performed.

Third, I have already noted the obvious parallels with existing debates about vocational education and training reforms and about small enterprise and informal economy development. It is important that new rural initiatives learn some of the lessons of the long experience in these areas.

Fourth, there are a set of potential lessons from the wider debate on development. This includes considerations of how to scale up; to build partnerships; to promote sustainability; and to minimise dependence.

Whilst there are lessons to be learnt in each of these areas, it is also important that these be seen as a starting point for explorations of how they might play out in the particular area of skills for agricultural and rural development and in specific national contexts. Blind acceptance of historical precedent may be even more dangerous than the developmental tendency to ignore history.

1.6. Implications for agencies

Each agency will need to decide on whether and how the skills for agricultural and rural development argument speaks to their concerns. For some, it is not apparent that a rural focus adds anything to their existing concerns with reaching the poorest. Indeed, to the extent that many of this constituency are urban-located, there are agency concerns that a predominant rural focus might be dangerous.

Even for agencies that do see a need to focus in this direction, there are real challenges. The lack of agency capacity in skills development

discussed in our last paper is even greater when it comes to the rural dimension of skills. Not only do few education and training experts have a rural background but agricultural educationalists are also in short supply in many agencies.

Moreover, whilst it is correct to point to the weaknesses of inter-departmental coherence within agencies regarding rural issues, it is a far more greater challenge to see what can realistically be done to build such coherence. Indeed, the well-charted growth of decentralisation within agencies appears to make such coherence more difficult to ensure.

Agencies may need to acquire new knowledge in this field if they are to intervene effectively. The World Bank proposal is an important step in this direction, although there are legitimate questions about the advisability of a sole focus on the post-secondary level. It is important for other agencies too to consider knowledge gaps in this area. The background paper for the Rome meeting¹ points to innovations emerging from newer development cooperation actors, such as Korea, China, Mexico and Brazil. Finally, agencies need to give more consideration to the possibilities of supporting regional activities, such as those under NEPAD that are mentioned in the World Bank paper.

¹ Weyer, F. and Ineichen, J. 2005 "Background Document", available on the WGICSD website.

SECTION TWO: AGENCY APPROACHES TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR RURAL PEOPLE

2.1. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR RURAL PEOPLE: THE FAO/IIEP COLLABORATION ON EDUCATION FOR RURAL PEOPLE

Marcelino Avila, David Atchoarena and Lavinia Gasperini

2.1.1. The contribution of skills development for rural people to the MDGs

One of the strongest reasons for a focus on skills development for rural people is that 70 percent of the world poor are rural. Skills development is essential to consolidate agriculture, and by strengthening the agriculture sector, progress will be made towards achieving the MDGs. The following points show the potentially positive relationship between education and skills, agriculture and rural development, and the MDGs:

2.1.1.1. MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Much of poverty and hunger is concentrated in rural areas. There is also strong evidence for the direct impact of literacy rates on hunger and poverty. Agricultural production stimulates employment and improves incomes. At the same time, food security positively affects labour productivity, livelihoods and education. Thus, there is the possibility of a virtuous cycle between food security, sustainable agriculture and education and training.

2.1.1.2. MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education

There is a clear effect of illiteracy on poverty, food security and nutrition and vice versa. Hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity erode cognitive abilities and reduce school attendance. Conversely, illiteracy and lack of education reduce earning capacity, and contribute directly to hunger and poverty.

2.1.1.3. MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Women's role in agriculture, access to resources and skills is of great importance. Moreover, the education of girls has positive effects on

family' health, productivity and well being. The gender gap is usually more pronounced in rural areas.

2.1.1.4. MDG 4: Reduce child mortality

There is a clear negative effect of hunger, malnutrition and lack of micronutrients on child health and mortality.

2.1.1.5. MDG 5: Improve maternal health

Improved education, the introduction of labour-saving technologies and better nutrition can all significantly improve maternal health.

2.1.1.6. MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Improvements in both education and nutrition can reduce the incidence of such diseases and resistance to them. The protection of forests can also contribute as they provide a vital source of medicinal plants.

2.1.1.7. MDG 7: Promote environmental sustainability

This can be promoted through ecologically sustainable management of agriculture and natural resources. Moreover, it is clear that hunger and poverty compel over-exploitation of natural resources thus compromising environmental sustainability.

2.1.1.8. MDG 8: Develop a global partnership for development

A cross-sectoral focus such as that of education for rural development necessarily promotes the multi-agency mobilisation of resources for achievement of the MDGs.

2.1.2. Potential of agricultural systems

2.1.2.1. Benefits of agricultural growth

For the rural economy, developments in the agricultural system bring food, jobs, incomes and services for rural people. For the national

economy, such improvements bring food for urban people, public revenue, skilled labour for other sectors, foreign exchange, jobs, income and investment.

2.1.2.2. Major farming systems deserve greater attention

There needs to be greater attention paid to the major farming systems: Maize Mixed, Cereal-Root Crop, Root Crop, Forest-based and Pastoral.

2.1.2.3. Major challenge of smallholders

Smallholders represent the vast majority of farmers in developing countries. Their inherent strengths include their ability to make effective decisions, manage labour efficiently, optimise land productivity and adopt new technology. However, their competitiveness is constrained in globalised markets with stringent standards and unfair trade. Moreover, they face constraints of services, investment, technology, etc.

2.1.3. Sustainable agriculture and rural development

The FAO/UNESCO partnership is rooted in the notion of sustainable development and the crucial role that agriculture and rural development play in such framework. This had its origins in the Earth Summit (Rio) and was given further impetus by the Sustainable Development Summit (Johannesburg).

The approach is centred on people's livelihoods: what they have, they know, they want and they can do.

The approach is beneficial because it seeks to relate this livelihoods focus to a range of factors and contexts. In particular, it considers the cultural, social, economic and environmental dimensions. It focuses on agriculture, rural enterprises and the linkages between them. It considers policy, institutions, technology and investment.

Success stories for this approach at national level indicate a range of important issues. First, there is a clear pay-off for having a long term vision, clear strategy and priority on development of agriculture and the rural sector. Second, there are good returns on investment in human capital and key institutions for sustainable rural development. Third, similar benefits can be had from investment in rural infrastructure (roads, health, education, communication, etc.). Fourth, the approach provides

an effective strategy for coordinating and working with international community.

2.1.4. Participatory monitoring and evaluation systems

This approach stresses the importance of participatory monitoring and evaluation systems (PM&E). These are designed to learn what works, to draw lessons and to share innovations. Moreover, they engender real participation of local communities and households.

PM&E is an essential tool for using resources efficiently, leveraging collaboration and mobilising resources from all stakeholders.

PM&E encourages strengthening institutional and community capacities. It leads to the development of indicators that are meaningful to local people and using the information generated to assess policies, institutions and programmes.

However, there is a tendency in some projects to use the language of PM&E because the donors like it rather than really because there is a concern with local empowerment and democracy.

2.1.5. Transformation of rural labour markets

Globalisation is having a powerful impact of on rural labour markets. There has been a strong rise in non-farm employment and income in many rural areas. This has been accompanied by a diversification of employment patterns.

2.1.6. Agricultural education and training: the main limitations

Conventional agricultural education and training (AET) has tended to have an excessive focus on public sector jobs and on-farm employment. There has been a lack of consideration for new skill areas, such as environment and natural resource management, biotechnology, agribusiness, etc. Delivery has been fragmented, with a lack of clear learning pathways. There has been a growing lack of relationships between providers and the labour market as the latter diversifies. There has been an excessive focus on tertiary level qualifications but a weak articulation between research and training. Enrolment capacity remains low.

2.1.7. The rationale for rural skills development

Rural skills development is a necessary priority for a number of reasons. In Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, the food security challenge leads to an urgent need to increase productivity. Skills will be important here. Globally, the environmental challenge leads to the need for better skills for protecting the environment. An economic challenge highlights the importance of skills that can contribute to economic growth and the international competitiveness of the agricultural sector. There is also a social challenge of skills development for poverty reduction, employment generation and social capital creation.

2.1.8. A way forward: three policy options

2.1.8.1. Reforming the TVET sector in relation to rural and agricultural development

This approach would require a greater insertion of agriculture-related and rural development skills within TVET and higher education policies. This approach assumes that TVET provision can be transformative in contributing to rural economic regeneration but also in offering a way to out-migration. It proposes TVET for rural development as a livelihood approach, embracing all skills for rural life rather than concentrating on agriculture education.

The approach also promotes articulating TVET programmes with rural development projects and developing a specific AET strategy.

2.1.8.2. Including rural skills interventions in poverty reduction strategies

Many PRSPs make special reference to TVET as a critical component of capacity building. When thinking in this way, it is important to remember that target groups include the poor but also civil society organisations and decentralised levels of government. Targeted sectors go beyond education to institutional, social and economic dimensions. However, only some PRSPs mention reform of TVET sector.

2.1.8.3. Broadening the EFA agenda to include programmes for rural youth and adults

National EFA Action Plan focus on school education, in particular UPE. As a result, the needs of out-of-school youth are overlooked. This is worst in

the case of rural youth. However, goals 3 and 4 of the Dakar Framework relate to skills development for rural youth and adults:

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

Goal 4 : Increasing adult literacy

There is a need to promote skills development for rural people. This should focus on the development of capacity for learning, innovation and productivity. It should be based on a view that skills are more than just narrow technical competencies. Rather, a view of skills is needs that also includes interpersonal, communication, teamwork and creative skills.

2.1.9. The Education for Rural People Flagship

The ERP is a partnership launched at the Johannesburg Summit that bridges the agriculture and education sectors and the concerns of the World Food Summit and the Education for All initiative. It is conceived of in the spirit of MDG 8.

2.1.9.1. ERP objectives

The ERP seeks to strengthen the capacity of Ministries of Education and Agriculture to

- Formulate adequate policies to address education needs of rural poor
- Improve quality and relevance of curriculum
- Ensure full participation of NGOs and private sector
- Mobilise donor support

2.1.9.2. Main results

The ERP partnership has led to new alliances among more than 200 partners including governments, agencies and civil society organisations. It has been integrated into national rural development and EFA policies in several countries including Kosovo, China, Venezuela and Mozambique. Capacity has been built nationally, regionally and internationally. Research results have been incorporated in national policies and training materials produced in the ERP tool kit.

2.2. TRAINING FOR LOCAL ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: AN ILO APPROACH

Josiane Capt

2.2.1. Introduction

This approach builds on previous ILO models such as TRUGA (Training for Rural Gainful Activities), SDSR (Skills Development for Self-Reliance) and CBT (Community-Based Training) to provide a tool that can promote local economic development that emphasises the central role of knowledge and skills in employment growth and which promotes new economic and employment opportunities for the poor. The approach seeks to provide individuals with the necessary skills and support to find a job or, more likely, to establish and sustain an income generating activity at the local level.

2.2.2. Four guiding principles

First, the approach aims at mobilising and empowering partners at national and local levels. Second, it provides demand driven training. Third, it develops an integrated and coordinated network of support services. Fourth, it promotes key ILO values of decent work, social protection and equal opportunity.

2.2.3. Key elements of the approach

The approach puts a strong emphasis on the creation of local partnerships to identify development opportunities and constraints, and help drive forward and manage programme implementation.

It links training to identified market niches, either for wage employment or self-employment opportunities. This includes two most important elements:

First, economic opportunity assessment (existing and visible demand; latent opportunities that are present but cannot necessarily be seen immediately; and creation of new or additional opportunities). This involves careful analysis of backward and forward linkages. It calls for strong capacity building as well as the involvement of local business persons and other key technical persons. The establishment of a data base of potential business ideas is also useful.

Second, needs assessment to address not only training needs resulting from the economic opportunity assessment, but also social needs, technical capability and commitment to undergo training and undertake post-training economic activities, as well as an exploration of the social acceptability of proposed business ideas.

The model seeks to design flexible content and delivery systems. Elements can include

- initial technical training
- life skills
- gender sensitisation
- business skills
- refresher courses and skills upgrading

It provides formal and non formal training delivery in practical, short cycle courses. These are intended to be easily accessible, being adapted to low levels of literacy and delivered in accessible venues. It uses participatory methods, building on participants' existing knowledge base. Quality training is emphasised in a model that is tailored to local needs.

As well as training, the approach provides access to a range of other services. These may include micro-finance, business advisory services, bulk purchasing, marketing, export services, technology transfer, social protection, and health and safety advice.

The approach also seeks to integrate initiatives aimed at the economic sphere to efforts to develop adequate social protection mechanisms and the conditions for decent work in the workplace.



2.2.4. Achievements

Between 70 and 90% of persons trained went on to be engaged in gainful activities (mainly through self-employment). In the Muslim contexts in which the programme has been piloted, it has been important in showing how women are capable of earning an income. For instance, in Bangladesh, rural women achieved a breakthrough in non-traditional trades. The programme has resulted in new products and services being available locally.

Awareness of rights, privileges and opportunities has increased. This has been linked to increased self-esteem. Local organisations have been created and/or strengthened.

2.2.5. Outstanding challenges

In spite of these achievements, it is evident that in some settings new approaches are not easily accepted. It is important to be aware of cultural constraints. Outreach can be difficult and there are often serious challenges in involving all stakeholders, and complications in working with government agencies at different levels. In the most needy locations, there is almost inevitably a lack of infrastructure and low educational background amongst target groups.

It is often difficult to access the necessary expertise for programme delivery. The challenges of mainstreaming the concerns of the rural poor into training policies and formal training systems is equally problematic. Finally, more needs to be done to address sustainability issues.

2.2.6. Lessons learned

Experience in the programme to date points to the need for strong, committed implementing partners, as well as a clear definition of government's roles and responsibilities. It also highlights the need for capacity-building for institutions and key persons in the community to act as mentors. Macro policies, appropriate structures and linkages should be in place while leaving room for local initiatives.

Matching training to economic demand is most important. Technical skills are not sufficient. Social and communication skills, including self-organisation, bargaining, and, of course, entrepreneurial skills are also required. It is important to be able to offer flexible training delivery in the proximity of rural households.

Finally, training is important but not sufficient in itself. In particular, the ease of access to micro-finance is often crucial.

2.3. SKILLS FOR LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL ASIA: THE ETF APPROACH

Henrik Faudel

2.3.1. Introduction

As noted in previous WGICSD Discussion Papers, the specific mandate of the European Training Foundation is training reform in transition economies. In all such efforts, ETF is focused on supporting reforms that are relevant to the specific national contexts in which they are intended to operate. Inevitably, in some such contexts the rural dimension is of particular importance.

2.3.2. Experiences in Central Asia

In the Central Asian region, there is a specific challenge of growing impoverishment since the collapse of the Soviet Union. One effect of this is a greater reliance on agriculture as other sources of income have declined.

Transition countries such as the Central Asian republics have extensive formal VET systems. The challenge is to reform them so that they can respond to changed economic context. In a country such as Tajikistan, the existing formal VET system to a large extent still operates within the logic of a planned economy. As a result VET schools still receive centrally decided planning figures for how many VET graduates they have to produce in different occupations. The profiles chosen often correspond to the former needs of industry and cooperative farms whether these still exist or not. On the contrary only few schools have been in a position to react to a completely different type of labour market where many individuals have to create their own jobs, where new jobs created are rarely in industry and the nature of farming has changed. An important element of the effort is to focus on local responsiveness, including to rural development needs. This has led the ETF and its partners to focus on why many public VET institutions struggle to become locally responsive. Some of the reasons often cited are a reluctance on the part of the central authorities to allow schools any initiative, a tradition that makes schools expect to receive guidelines and orders from above, and the disappearance of centrally organised partnerships.

ETF's response to this challenge is largely to promote the usefulness of developing partnerships at the local level at the same time as working

with the central authorities to dismantle some of the obstacles that prevent schools from becoming more active. It has also increased its attention to seeking to ensure that VET reform is made an integral part of PRSPs.

2.4. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS: A GERMAN PERSPECTIVE

Edda Grunwald

2.4.1. Skills development in rural areas: why might it be important?

Skills development may be seen, first, as part of a group of concepts linked to the challenge of developing rural areas in the sphere of employment and self-employment. This includes a focus both on the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. It may lead to attention to rural areas or to rural target groups. All of this is done in order to contribute to poverty reduction.

Skills development may also be seen as the outcome-oriented provision of skills and knowledge through individuals learning things that are related to their specific livelihood needs.

2.4.2. Skills development in rural areas: what for?

Depending on the context, skills development in rural areas may have multiple objectives. For instance:

- to broaden and strengthen the subsistence basis through diversification away from dependence on agricultural production only (e.g., German experiences in technical cooperation for rural Africa);
- to become part of the market economy through the strengthening of production chains and economic clusters (e.g., German experiences in technical cooperation for rural Latin America and Asia); or
- to remain part of the market economy through retraining and broadening narrow specialisation (e.g., German experiences in technical cooperation for rural areas of transition countries).

2.4.3. Skills development in rural areas: some of the challenges

Skills development in rural areas faces particular challenges. First, it needs to overcome the traditional division between agricultural training and vocational education and training for the urban economy. It must also address the conventional urban bias in training. Both national structures and international agencies tend to be structured in ways that make the

overcoming of such issues difficult. As with other debates about TVET reform, there are particular needs for rural training to be less supply-driven.

2.4.4. Skills development in rural areas: some limitations

Skills development's impact in rural areas is inevitably constrained by the other factors that negatively effect rural development. These include:

- rural susceptibility to natural disasters and disease pandemics;
- the higher transaction costs in rural areas;
- limited rural access to information and basic services due to fragile infrastructure;
- the double burden of women, which is particularly powerful in rural contexts; and
- the limited nature of the rural cash economy

2.4.5. Skills development in rural areas: consequences for provision

Skills development in rural areas is characterised by a range of approaches coming from different traditions. Some programmes come out of a non-formal training tradition. Others see skills development as a small element of a bigger focus on extension.

For Germany, as with many other donor countries, formal, centre-based, long-term agricultural education and training plays a less important role than was historically the case. This is due to problems of access and outreach as well as of financial sustainability. However, higher education is relevant for national technical staff and advisors as is research.

2.4.6. Skills development in rural areas: an issue of poverty reduction strategies?

Pro Poor Growth (PPG) strategies are varied, with important consequences for skills development. In the German view, there is a strong sense that poverty reduction is driven by economic growth. Policies that can stimulate growth whilst minimising income inequalities are to be encouraged, but there is a sense that some increase in inequality might be justifiable as long as all are enjoying increased incomes.

However, the German approach also shows elements of other view of PPG. Some programmes have a clear focus on social stabilisation or productive processes targetted at the poorest. There are also elements of rights- and livelihoods-based approaches.

This mixture of approaches is partly driven by the way that German development cooperation is organised and the specific responsibilities therein for poverty reduction strategies. Within BMZ, there are separate sections working on outlining poverty reduction strategies that impact on skills development; on economic reform and development of market systems; and on health, education and vocational training. Moreover, German development cooperation is also strongly shaped by regional sections. Furthermore, the high degree of decentralisation of programme responsibility to country and regional offices also complicates this picture.

2.4.7. Skills development for rural areas: an emerging German model

Currently, a new Local Skills Development Project is being implemented in Uganda, which uses a LearnNet approach and is linked to an education SWAP - interestingly in the context of a bilateral development programme of economic reform and market development.

In Burkina Faso, a project is being designed that uses a value chain approach to focus on skills development in rural areas.

2.5. SKILLS FOR RURAL EMPLOYMENT: A FRENCH PERSPECTIVE

Jean Bosco Bouyer, Pierre Debouvry and Alain Maragnani

2.5.1. The importance of agricultural and rural training for sub-Saharan Africa

It is important not to forget that in almost all Sub-Saharan countries, the number of farms has never declined, but has actually increased. Each year in every country, between 15 000 and 50 000 farms get new owners whilst others come into existence without any external support. It is these new farmers who will be central in the fight against poverty.

2.5.2. The weight of demography and urbanisation

Sub-Saharan countries are experiencing “intense” demographic growth of 2.3 to 3% after having reached a 3 to 4% increase in earlier decades. The shift to high demographic growth has been accompanied by a trend towards urbanisation. With current urbanisation rates of 5 to 7%, the urban population doubles every 10 to 15 years without necessarily generating a population decline in rural areas, where it continues to grow at a slower rate.

Owing to its very young population, with 37% under the age of 14 in North Africa and 46% in Sub-Saharan Africa, the continent is faced with serious difficulties in achieving literacy among the new generations and guaranteeing employment or self-employment of working-age populations. The high rates of illiteracy and chronic unemployment lead to poverty and a growing under-utilisation of human capital.

2.5.3. An agricultural and rural sector finding it harder and harder to execute its national mission

Agriculture is struggling to meet its multiple goals.

2.5.3.1. Feeding urban and rural populations

The generalised increase in “per capita” cereal imports since 1960 is proof of the sector’s inability to feed the cities’ populations. Consequently, food safety has become compromised.

2.5.3.2. Generating foreign currency through exports

With the emergence of the urban market, offering producers new alternatives in terms of financial resources, and with heightened and often unequal competition between producing countries due to globalisation, traditional export products tend to reach a ceiling and even lose ground.

2.5.3.3. Protecting and improving natural resources

Demographic growth brings about higher rural population densities, which have significantly increased since 1930 (a fourfold increase) and this trend should continue over the next 20 years (a sixfold increase from 1930 to 2020). The more densely populated rural areas become, the less time is allowed for land to lie fallow and the faster natural resources are removed without real changes made to farming systems and management methods. These movements have caused intensive deforestation; excessive exploitation of soil and pastures; a decrease in biodiversity, serious erosion risks; and general deterioration of the environment.

2.5.3.4. Ensuring stakeholders a decent standard of living that is also improving

Research consistently shows that poverty and extreme poverty strike the rural sector in particular. The cost of farming commodities, illiteracy and the scarcity of social infrastructures make this population group extremely vulnerable.

2.5.3.5. Maintaining and increasing employment and self-employment:

The rural sector, a large source of employment (from 45% in Morocco to 85% in Burkina Faso), has experienced an increasing exodus of the youth, who no longer accept the same working conditions as their parents. Upstream and downstream production activities that promote the development of rurality, are still too underdeveloped.

It would not be wrong to conclude that the farming and rural sector no longer meets its traditional objectives and that this situation carries a considerable risk in terms of intensifying the rural exodus towards cities – where employment is scarce too – and immigration to Northern countries.

2.5.4. A sector with major issues

Historically, migrations within and between countries eased the problem of decreasing soil fertility that occurred when traditional practices were being maintained as populations grew. However, this option is increasingly unavailable. Thus, there is a growing issue of improving productivity in a sustainable manner.

In 40 years, the ratio of urban to rural dwellers has increased from 1:20 to 1:2. In order to maintain levels of food self-sufficiency, the marketable surplus of rural farms should have multiplied in parallel. This is not the case, as illustrated by the spectacular escalation in cereal imports. With prospects of a sharp rise in urbanisation, this imbalance may intensify if the current state of labour productivity prevails. Producing more per work unit per person also seems to be another priority issue.

In order to respond to these two issues, rural societies must become "professional": this means moving away from a peasant society to a body of organised farmers to defend and manage their interests in all areas:

- joining the national and international market economy;
- managing agri-food imports;
- participating in drawing up planning regulations;
- participating in the implementation of agricultural credit policy;
- becoming part of regional development agencies; and
- participating in the definition and management of rural and farming education systems.

2.5.5. The necessity of preparing the new generation for tomorrow's farming and rural professions

The new generations will have to drive a difficult transformation whereby farms in the rural areas are adapted to meet the requirements of an emerging market context and many of the bases of traditional production systems are called into question. The great challenge of the farming sector for the years to come is the preparation of its youth to lead this process of farm transformation.

Faced with the extent of the training needs of rural sector stakeholders, the agricultural education system is clearly inadequate. The current system trains more engineers than technicians and few producers, and no longer meets the requirements of a profoundly-changed farming profession.

2.5.6. The necessity of international mobilisation based on national strategies of mass farming education

The implementation of a mass training strategy involves

1. refocusing on producers through “post-primary” training systems that can swiftly train a critical mass required to transform the profession;
2. rebalancing flows of graduates based on the new sectoral needs;
3. redefining educational content that takes farming into account in its overall environment and schemes for change;
4. regionalising the system to make its integration easier in the framework of decentralisation measures; and
5. securing sustainable funding for these reforms

This type of “re-establishment” has to be part of a national strategy, determined by all the stakeholder groups, itself a product of an agricultural framework law.

The vital necessity of re-establishing agricultural and rural training by the yardstick of the new century’s challenges is a matter of urgency. It requires joint and coordinated consideration and support from bi- and multi-lateral cooperation agencies.

2.6. RURAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: A SWISS PERSPECTIVE

Fabienne Lagier

2.6.1. Introduction

Rural development in general and skills development/capacity building in particular have been important priorities for the two past decades for the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC). In its partner countries in West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Senegal), SDC focuses on five priorities:

1. rural development;
2. decentralisation and governance;
3. the informal sector;
4. education and training; and
5. health.

2.6.2. The Importance of rural development

Rural development is going to remain a priority for SDC because the vast majority of the populations of these countries still live in rural areas, and these are where the largest share of wealth is created. Despite this fact, rural areas are characterised by underinvestment and lack of development policies, especially regarding small farmers.

2.6.3. Supporting farmers' organisations

In this context, particular attention has been paid by SDC to supporting the strengthening of farmers' organisations. Such support is generally necessary on a long term basis (for at least 10 years). It is crucial to help farmers to both:

- 1) improve their livelihoods (by, for example, making informed choices about what and how they produce/market, accessing social services, acting collectively on the basis of their common interest, etc.), and
- 2) represent their political interests locally, nationally and internationally.

2.6.4. Supporting rural education and training

SDC will continue to support different actors (states, NGOs, farmers' organisations) in the provision of various types of education and training programmes in rural areas:

- With **farmers' organisation**: strengthening of their organisational and institutional capacities to improve both production and political representation. Training (provided by farmers' organisations themselves) includes basic education (literacy, numeracy, etc.) and skills development ("post-literacy" or other forms of technical training related to production, management of natural resources, etc.).
- **Training of rural households for better livelihoods**: this type of programme is broader than training for agriculture. It aims at helping farmers to develop and express their vision and aspirations for their whole lives. It then seeks to build a broader view of their context and to support them in defining appropriate strategies for improved livelihoods. The training includes various components: economic (make informed choices in a changing environment, develop more accurate understandings of the global economy as it relates to the farm, etc.), ecological, technical, and cultural (attitudes towards knowledge and innovation, etc.). Some elements and lessons learned of this approach could also be used in the training of younger farmers at the post-primary level.
- **Literacy programmes**: these go beyond learning how to read and write to include the acquisition of knowledge, critical thinking and skills relevant for the learners' life and preoccupations. Through specific "post-literacy" components, they intend to equip learners with skills needed for improved livelihoods (e.g. agricultural production, natural resources management, cereal bank management, handicrafts, etc.). They are often connected to microcredit opportunities. Improvements could be made to insure better collaboration between "educators" and other specialists (in agriculture, handicrafts, etc.).
- **Non formal education for children and young people (9-15 years old)**: In several countries many out-of-school children are too old to attend formal schools and too young to be integrated into literacy programmes. They deserve specific attention. Various SDC partner organisations have identified this need and started to provide programmes that combine "basic education" and "pre-vocational skills".
- **Post-primary education for young people**: In the majority of the countries in West Africa where SDC is working, there is almost no

example of education and training provision that prepares young people to become good farmers. Indeed, farmers often are the largest socio-professional category that starts work without proper training. Various partner organisation of SDC are now in the process of developing education and training provision responding to the demand of communities and parents in rural areas, who wish that the school could offer their children an alternative to migration to the cities.

- **Community schools (non formal education for children):** Such programmes usually compensate for the absence of State education but can also be a real chance of bringing innovations into the public system. Many of them have shown important progress in making schools more relevant for the learners' social context. The knowledge and skills that are taught and learned tend to be closely linked to (and useful for) the children's environment. However, despite their specificity, it is very important that community schools are recognised as equivalent to public schools in order to allow children who would wish to do so, to join, for example, public secondary schools.

2.6.5. Some as yet unanswered questions

Based on SDC's experience, we know that the skills needed for improved livelihoods in rural areas are not merely technical nor solely linked to agriculture. Can sectoral policies respond to the multidimensionality of needs in terms of skills? How can different "sectors" and stakeholders work closer together, especially at the decentralised level?

As already stated, technical skills are not enough. Farmers (and other socio-professional categories in rural areas) need to develop a broad understanding of their socio-economic and political situation, to define their own vision and objectives for their future as well as to make informed choices. Who can support them in this long-term process? Will this support come from public agencies, from NGOs, from farmers' organisations?

The political dimension of rural development policies is very often silenced. What kind of rural development are we talking about? Are we talking about the promotion of agro-business for export or the improvement of sustainable livelihoods for small land owners? What can development agencies do in this context? Should they facilitate a dialogue between conflicting visions of rural development? Should they promote the acquisition of knowledge and skills that can allow people living in rural areas to position themselves more powerfully in this debate?

SECTION THREE: WHO UNDERSTANDS AFRICAN AGRICULTURE? TOO FEW! TOWARDS A WORLD BANK STUDY

William Saint

3.1. Human resource constraints in African agriculture

Human capital shortages constitute a major constraint on Africa's agricultural development. An awareness of this has led to recent attempts to respond to the educational needs of rural people and farmers' organisations. However, this strategy needs to be part of a broader range of initiatives if it is to have the intended impact.

The World Bank is planning to engage with this challenge through a new research initiative. It proposes focusing on the strengthening of Africa's institutional capacities for technical and professional education for the agricultural sector, especially at the post-secondary level.

The Bank believes that tertiary education has an important role to play in supporting countries' national innovation systems in agriculture. The health of such systems is an important element of competitive advantage in a globalising economy.

A national innovation system is a web comprised of:

1. knowledge-producing organisations in the education and training system;
2. a proper macro-economic and regulatory framework;
3. innovative private enterprises and NGOs;
4. adequate communications infrastructure; and
5. other factors such as access to global knowledge resources and market conditions that support innovation.

Tertiary education institutions are important for such systems, both as developers of high level skills but also as information hubs.

3.2. Investments in agricultural education and training

Post-secondary agricultural education and training (AET) in Africa developed considerably between 1960 and 1990. The output of graduate agricultural researchers quadrupled. However, domestic investment in

AET collapsed in the 1990s in the wake of structural adjustment. This impacted negatively on tertiary teaching, on research and on extension services.

At the same time, the reforms associated with structural adjustment led to the liberalisation of agricultural markets, further reshaping the demand for agriculturalists. The period since 1990 has also seen the rapid growth of private AET provision, now offered by more than 100 institutions in Africa.

During the 1990s, development assistance to Africa declined in parallel to reductions in government funding of AET. Over this period, donor support for the three components of the agricultural knowledge triangle (education-research-extension) became highly imbalanced, with education receiving very little donor support. For instance, between 1997 and 1997, support to AET was only 2% of Bank investment in agriculture and rural development.

3.3. Specific constraints

Originally, higher level AET programmes were intended to produce technical staff for public sector jobs in research and extension. Curricula still largely reflect this original intention. However, the labour market for agricultural graduates has significantly diversified. Employers stress that graduates lack the necessary practical skills as well as the attributes needed in private sector employment. Institutions typically have no formal links with such employers. Recent studies in West Africa also conclude that many graduates also lack the basic skills that their degrees should have developed.

Chronic underinvestment in the skills of women farmer is a handicap for African agriculture. Women play a dominant role in African agriculture and produce the majority of agricultural output in most cases. However, AET has continued to focus almost entirely on males both as deliverers and recipients of knowledge and skills. Only 5% of tertiary agriculture students in Ghana 1995-200 were female. This gender imbalance is bad for investment, growth and incomes.

The poor state of human capital in agriculture and AET in Africa has been further undermined by HIV/AIDS. At the farm level, the loss of one or both parents to AIDS can mean that younger family members are trying to survive without the necessary agricultural knowledge, skills and experience on top of their other problems. However, as the need for AET to support such farmers becomes more acute, so the response capacity of the AET system is itself undermined by AIDS morbidity and mortality.

AET systems have also been weakened by brain drain. Low salaries and meagre promotion opportunities in the public service have prompted an

exodus of senior academics to the private sector and overseas jobs. UNCTAD estimates that approximately 30% of all African university-trained professionals live outside the continent.

3.4. Issues in agricultural education and training

The purpose of AET is to enable rural producers to realise higher returns on their labour and investments. This can be done directly through farmer training. It can also be achieved indirectly by educating extension staff, by developing researchers or by building the technical capacities of producer organisations and input suppliers. These different audiences are reached through different levels and types of AET, ranging from informal farmer training, through intermediate level agricultural colleges that prepare farm managers and extension specialists, to post-graduate faculties of agriculture where researchers are trained.

As was noted above, these institutions are poorly attuned with labour market realities and hardly in touch with key labour market actors. In many parts of Africa, AET has limited relevance to the needs of farmers or to prevailing farming situations. Although the practice of agriculture is a multidisciplinary activity often guided by indigenous knowledge, agricultural education is frequently structured around primary disciplines derived from formal science. As a result, AET often fails to embrace agricultural economics, agro-processing, environmental management and agro-business, even though much value-added occurs not on farm but between the farm and the market. AET also typically is split among several ministries that lack mechanisms for coordination.

AET institutions also suffer problems of inputs that lead to inadequate quality of education and training. Students are mostly male and urban. University systems have seen massive expansion alongside declining resources, with inevitably negative consequences for quality. Curricula are often too narrow and out-dated and materials and equipment are inadequate. Too few in-service courses are offered for upgrading practitioners.

Teaching staff are often poorly trained. Many are former civil servants from ministries of agriculture with little preparation for teaching. The lack of opportunities for study abroad frequently leads to an inbreeding of teaching staff. They have few opportunities to upgrade their knowledge or to build linkages to professional groups and stakeholders. They also tend to be poorly paid and unmotivated, creating conditions conducive to brain drain.

Financing is a chronic problem. The growth of enrolments ahead of budgets has led to an increased budgetary concentration on salaries as staffing increases to cope with student numbers. This crowds out

expenditure on vital non-salary items (e.g. teaching materials, textbooks, equipment). Funding contributions from non-public sources are rare. The smallest countries face a particular challenge of supporting the full array of necessary AET activities.

Management of AET is often too centralised, bureaucratic and unresponsive to change. Institutions lack sufficient autonomy to respond to local needs and have weak systems of accountability.

3.5. AET, the World Bank and regional initiatives

The need to invest more in building capacities for AET has been acknowledged in a series of current World Bank strategy documents. The Bank acknowledges that many studies have shown high economic returns to improving farmers' information and skills to enable more efficient use of technologies. Rapidly changing market conditions require a major shift in the content of agricultural education from a production to a market orientation. Thus, the Bank's agricultural strategy recommends that it should recommit to AET.

This is echoed by the Bank's Africa strategy. This stresses the importance of agriculture to African development and recommends the strengthening of AET, with a particular focus on women farmers.

Similar sentiments can be found in a range of regional documents, linked to the NEPAD process. NEPAD has designed a *Framework for African Agricultural Productivity* (FAAP). A main component of the FAAP is *Building Africa's Scientific and Institutional Capacity* (BASIC) in agriculture and natural resources at the post-secondary level.

To support FAAP, and as its main vehicle for carrying forward the strategies noted above, the Bank has put forward an African Agriculture Productivity Programme (AAPP). Project preparations are presently under way for a West Africa Agricultural Productivity Programme (WAAPP), and a similar operation for Southern Africa is scheduled to follow. Both initiatives anticipate significant investment in post-secondary agricultural education.

Although the above regional initiatives recognise the general importance of agricultural education and training, they offer little specificity on what should be done and how it might be put into effect.

3.6. Analytical proposal

To address this need, the Bank is undertaking a regional needs assessment of AET during 2005/2006. This task will comprise seven sequential activities, as follows:

1. Initial consultations with stakeholders;
2. A further review of donor experience;
3. Thematic studies on AET;
4. Country Studies;
5. Synthesis of the findings;
6. Final consultations with stakeholders; and
7. Dissemination.

3.7. Emerging messages

What should be done? At this point, the following messages seem worth considering for inclusion in the eventual report. They will certainly be reinforced or modified as the results of the various studies become available.

Governments and donors should strive for better balance when investing in the agricultural knowledge triangle of education, research and extension, where agricultural education is often under-resourced.

Short cycle study programmes with a practical orientation are needed to produce the greater diversity of skills sought by the labour market.

Post-secondary agricultural education needs to complement its existing disciplinary programmes with inter-disciplinary offerings that address the rising needs for specialists in agri-business, post-harvest processing, marketing, policy analysis, trade promotion, and environmental management.

Specific incentives are necessary to increase the number of women who study and work in the field of agriculture and rural development.

Development partners should join with the governments of smaller countries in multi-country collaboration to produce agricultural graduates in important specialised disciplines for which there is a limited national employment demand.

The governance mechanisms of post-secondary agricultural education institutions need to be re-structured to incorporate representative public and private sector employers so as to increase institutional responsiveness to changing labour market demands.

Because it is foremost a teaching and learning activity, all institutions providing agricultural education at the post-secondary level should be managed by the Ministry of Education. This will strengthen their ties with the wider education system and its resources for pedagogical development.

Because a growing number of their students come from urban backgrounds, agricultural education programmes ought to incorporate adequate practical training opportunities, including fieldwork, rural community internships, and training attachments to public and private organisations that serve rural people. For the same reason, rural development practitioners and researchers should be drawn upon as teaching resources.

In-service education programmes are needed for rural development workers and distance learning methods should be considered as a means of providing them.

APPENDIX ONE: THE PROGRAMME

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 10th

Venue: Malaysia Room B227
FAO, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, Rome

Chair: Michel Carton

9:00 – 9:10 Welcome (FAO Assistant Director General, Sustainable Development Department)

9:10 – 9:30 Presentation (Michel Carton)
Presentation of the meeting and presentation of the background document.

9:30 – 10:30 Introduction to Skills Development for Rural People and the Skills dimension of the Education for Rural People (ERP) Flagship /Partnership
(Marcelino Avila (FAO / SDAR), David Atchoarena (IIEP), Lavinia Gasperini (FAO /SDRE)
What are the specificities of Skills Development for Rural People? Evolution of supply and demand in Skills Development for Rural People. Presentation of different discourses and approaches on Rural Development and on Skills Development for Rural People. The ERP flagship.

10:30 – 10:45 Discussion on the first presentations

10:45 – 11:15 Coffee Break

AGENCIES ORGANISATION FOR AND ACTIVITIES IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR RURAL POPULATION

11:15 – 12:30 First Panel: Multilateral agencies

This panel and the panel that will take place in the afternoon will be devoted:

a) to the challenges in terms of organisational structure when dealing with Skills Development (SD) for Rural People in co-operation agencies: What kind of collaboration is there between SD and rural development sectors in agencies? Is SD an element within a sector or a sector?

b) to the lessons learned in SD for rural people

During the first panel, these issues will be illustrated with experiences drawn from concrete projects of ILO and ETF. Other participants will have the opportunity to contribute with their own experiences.

12:30 – 12:45 Questions and comments

12:45 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 15:30 Second panel: Bilateral agencies

This panel will deal with the same issues as the first panel. This time they will be illustrated with experiences from BMZ/GTZ, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and SDC. Again, other participants will have the opportunity to contribute with their own experiences.

15:30 – 16:00 Coffee Break

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR RURAL POPULATION: THE CASE OF AFRICA

16:00 – 18:00 World Bank Study on Agricultural Education and Training in Sub-Saharan Africa (William Saint).

Presentation of the preliminary results by the authors and discussion. The discussion will start with reactions from Tom Vandebosch (International Centre for Research in Agro-Forestry) and Christian Fauliau (Agricultural and Rural Training Specialist).

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 11th

Venue: Malaysia Room B227, FAO
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, Rome

Chair: Kenneth King

9:00 - 9:30 Synthesis of the previous day discussions (David Atchoarena)

Review of the main elements of the previous day discussions, linking them with FAO/IIEP/ADEA "Regional Capacity-Building Seminar on Education of Rural People in Africa" (Addis Abeba, September 2005).

9:30 – 10:15 Lessons learned from the previous sessions, in two working groups

10:15 – 10:45 Coffee Break

10:45 – 12:00 Discussion

12:00 – 12:30 Conclusion

12:30 - 13:00 Closure

Next WG activities

APPENDIX TWO: PARTICIPANTS

ASMINKIN Yakov, Mr.
"Tahlil" Center for Social Research
15A, Chilanzar-10
Tashkent 700123, Uzbekistan
Tel.: +998 (712) 75 02 33, +998 (71)182 20 95
asminkin@albatros.uz, ya_asminkin@yahoo.com

ATCHOARENA David, Mr.
UNESCO / IIEP
7-9, rue Eugène Delacroix
75116 Paris, France
Tel. : +33 (1) 45 03 77 00
Fax : +33 (1) 40 72 83 66
d.atchoarena@iiep.unesco.org

AVILA Marcelino, Mr.
FAO (formerly)
16 St Peters Stree, King's Park
Belize City, Belize
Tel.: +501 223 2364
ceomaf@yahoo.com

BABAJanov Rustam, Mr.
Trust Fund PRS
Rudaki avenue, 27,
734025 Dushanbe, Tajikistan
Tel.: +992 372 275370
Fax: +992 372 27537
barumi@tfprs.tajikistan.com

BEISHEMBAEVA Anar, Ms.
Forum for Educational Initiatives,
P.O. Box 1100
Bishkek 720038, Kyrgyzstan.
Tel: +996 (312) 663247, 665306
Fax: +996 (312) 663247, 665306
anar@mail.kg

BELOSLUDTSEVA Valentina, Ms.
Association "Education for all in Kazakhstan"
Zhambyl street, 25, room 210
050100, Almaty, Kazakhstan
Tel.: +7 3272 930032
Fax: +7 3272 930032
E-mail: valentina2205@yahoo.com

BOUKARY Hamidou, Mr.

ADEA

7-9, rue Eugène Delacroix
75116 Paris, France
Tel.: + 33/ (0) 145.03.77.57
Fax: + 33/ (0) 145.03.39.65
h.boukary@iiep.unesco.org

BOUYER Jean Bosco, Mr.
French Ministry of Foreign Affairs
20, rue Monsieur
75007 Paris, France
Tel.: +33 (1) 53 69 30 00
jeanbosco.bouyer@diplomatie.gouv.fr

CAPT Josiane, Ms.
ILO
4 route des Morillons
CH-1211 Genève 22, Switzerland
Tel.: +41 22 799 6111
Fax : +41 22 798 868
capt@ilo.org

CARTON Michel, Mr
NORRAG – IUED
24, rue Rothschild - CP. 136
CH - 1211 Genève 21, Switzerland
Tel. [+41] 22 906 59 01
Michel.Carton@iued.unige.ch

CHOLPONKULOV Taalaybek, Mr.
Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
Mederov Str., 42
720031 Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
Tel.: +996-312-544 130
Fax: +996-312-544 130
E-mail: dtve@elcat.kg, of_proj@elcat.kg

DE NIE Chris, Mr
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands
PO Box 20061
2500 EB The Hague, The Netherlands
Tel.: [+31] (70) 3486486
chris-de.nie@minbuza.nl

FAUDEL Henrik, Mr
European Training Foundation
Villa Gualino
Viale Settimio Severo 65
I - 10133 Torino - Italy
Tel.: [+39] (011) 630 2340

henrik.faudel@etf.eu.int

FAULIAU Christian, Mr.
9 Chemin de Pontac
33880 Saint Caprais de Bordeaux, France
Tel. : +33 (0)5 56 20 49 09, +33 (0)6 24 31 15 77
Christianfauliau@yahoo.fr

FLUITMAN Fred, Mr
ILO-TC
Viale Maestri del Lavoro, 10
I - 10127 Torino - Italy
Tel.: [+39] (011) 69 36450
f.fluitman@itcilo.it

GASPERINI Lavinia, Ms.
FAO
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00100 Rome, Italy
Tel.: [+39] 06 57051
Fax: [+39] 06 570 53152
Lavinia.Gasperini@fao.org

GROOTINGS Peter, Mr
European Training Foundation
Villa Gualino
Viale Settimio Severo 65
I - 10133 Torino - Italy
Tel.: [+39] (011) 630 2210
peter.grootings@etf.eu.int

GRUNWALD Edda, Ms
GTZ-HQ
Dag-Hammarskjöld Weg 1-5
D - 65726 Eschborn - Germany
Tel. [+49] (6196) 79-1222
edda.grunwald@gtz.de

KING Kenneth, Mr
NORRAG
Flat A5, 5/F, Block AB, Rodrigues Court,
350 Victoria Road
Hong Kong, China
Tel.: [+852] 2818 4788 (home); [+852] 2241 5797 (office); [+852] 9853 8012 (mobile)
kenneth.King@ed.ac.uk

LARSEN Arne, Mr
NORAD
P.B. 8034 Dep
0030 Oslo - Norway

Tel.: [+ 47] 22240553
arne.larsen@norad.no

LENGLET Franz, Mr
ILO-TC
Viale Maestri del Lavoro, 10
I - 10127 Torino - Italy
Tel.: [+39] (011) 69 36 651 / 111
F.Lenglet@itcilo.it

LEVESQUE David, Mr
DFID
1, Palace Street
London SW1E 5HE - England
Tel. [+44] (20) 70 23 06 87
d-levesque@dfid.gov.uk

MARUYAMA Takao, Mr.
JICA
2 -1-1, Yoyogi, Shibuya-ku
151-8558 Tokyo, Japan
Tel: +81-3-5352-5311/5314
Fax: +81-3-5352-5032
Maruyama.Takao@jica.go.jp

McGRATH Simon, Mr
NORRAG – University of Nottingham
Centre of Comparative Education Research, School of Education
The Dearing Building, Jubilee Campus
Wollaton Road
Nottingham, NG8 1BB England
tel: [+ 44] (0)115 951 4508
fax: [+ 44] (0)115 951 4397
Simon.Mcgrath@nottingham.ac.uk

MITSCHKE Marion, Ms.
UNESCO / UNEVOC (formerly)
Delegation of the European Commission to Bangladesh
House 7, Road 84
Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh
Phone +880 (2) 882 4730
Fax +880 (2) 882 3118, 988 8622
Email delegation-bangladesh@cec.eu.int; marion_mitschke@hotmail.com

NAVOTNIY Aleksandr, Mr.
Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
Avloniy Str., 20A
700100 Tashkent
Tel.: [+998] 711 394655; [+998] 97 3303101
Fax: [+998]712 796036

E-mail: asminkin@albatros.uz; polina@uzsci.net

PALMER Robert, Mr
NORRAG – Centre of African Studies
Edinburgh University
21, George Square
Edinburgh – EH8 9LD - Scotland
Tel. [+44] (131) 650 38 79
Rob.Palmer@ed.ac.uk

RASMUSSEN Poul Erik, Mr
Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Asiatisk Plads 2
DK 1448 Copenhagen, Denmark
Tel.: [+45] 33921923
Fax.: [+45] 3254 0533
pouras@um.dk

SAINT William, Mr.
The World Bank
1818 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20433 - U.S.A.
Tel.: [+1] (202) 473-7578
Fax: [+1] (202) 473-8107
Wsaint@worldbank.org

SOLODJANKINA Nadezhda, Ms.
European Training Foundation
Villa Gualino
Viale Settimio Severo 65
I - 10133 Torino - Italy
Tel.: [+39] 011 6302280
Fax: [+39] 011 6302200
Nadezhda.Solojankina@etf.eu.int

VANDENBOSCH Tom, Mr.
ICRAF
United Nations Avenue, Gigiri
PO Box 30677-00100 GPO
Nairobi, Kenya
Telephone: [+254] 20 722 4000
Fax: [+254] 20 722 4001
t.vandenbosch@cgiar.org

WEYER Frédérique, Ms
NORRAG – IUED
24, rue Rothschild - CP. 136
CH - 1211 Genève 21 – Switzerland
Tel. [+41] (22) 906 59 87
Frederique.Weyer@iued.unige.ch

APPENDIX THREE: ABOUT THE WORKING GROUP

1. LAUNCHING THE WORKING GROUP

The Working Group was launched in April 1996 with the following goals:

- » to increase the impact of development assistance
- » to reduce duplication and fragmentation of effort
- » to provide a forum for the discussion and dissemination of new ideas and good practice.

The following themes were identified around which information sharing would be focused:

- » conceptual frameworks of skills development (SD) and technical and vocational education and training (TVET)
- » donor and national policies
- » experiences in programme support to SD
- » project design and implementation
- » specific examples of donor co-operation
- » approaches to evaluation

2. COOPERATION: OLD MYTH OR NEW CHALLENGE?

Cooperation among agencies involved in development assistance is a long standing and commonly agreed objective. However, its attainment has been compromised by a range of factors, not least the rapidly changing global context within which development and assistance are taking place. The notion of cooperation has, thus, to be revisited and a number of questions addressed:

- * what is the future of cooperation at a time when competition appears the dominant form of relations?
- * what does cooperation mean in a context of many "norths" and multiple "souths"?
- * what becomes of cooperation when agencies are decentralising operations and the emphasis is shifting towards the development of southern capacities?
- * what effect do attempts to impose intra-sectoral coherence across aid policies have for policies in sectors such as skills development?
- * what is the implication of the cross-sectoral nature of skills development for cooperation between agencies?
- * what lessons can be learnt from other fora dedicated to agency cooperation?

3. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: A BRIDGE BETWEEN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND PRODUCTION?

The Group has chosen to use the notion of vocational and technical skills development rather than technical and vocational education and training.

This reflects a concern to take notice of the move away from a focus on the large, homogenising institutions of the state in favour of more varied modalities of skills development which prevail in many countries.

The concept places the emphasis on the exploration of skills development across a range of institutional locations, in education, training and production systems. The process of coming to terms with this is an on-going one, both in the « north » and in the « south. » As far as

agencies are concerned, it has led to a variety of responses. Some have chosen to merge their vocational training concerns with their small enterprise programmes whilst others have come to view skills development in both sectoral and instrumental ways.

4. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION: BETWEEN STATES OR SOCIETIES?

The focus on skills development is part of a wider realisation that development cooperation is not simply an affair of states. A variety of other actors are increasingly involved, both « north » and « south ». Agency policies are increasingly coming to reflect the need to include new constituencies in policy dialogues. However, dialogue, coordination and cooperation within countries is by no means easy. The behaviour of agencies can serve to worsen rather than better the situation. Central to the concerns of the Group is the examination of strategies that donors can promote and utilise in order to strengthen the voices of stakeholders and the mechanisms by which they can be heard.

5. THE WORKING GROUP: TOWARDS PROFESSIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

This Group is intended to enhance the capacity of its members to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of international assistance to skills development. In order for this to be achieved a stable presence of core staff from participating agencies. The personal commitment of these individuals will be as important as their representative roles.

In order to take account of decentralisation within agencies and the imperative for broader dialogues with wider constituencies, the Working Group will focus on the dissemination of information to relevant constituencies and individuals.

6. INTER-NETWORK COOPERATION

By viewing skills development broadly and acknowledging its intersections with other fields, the Group is highlighting an awareness with the need to develop relationships with other groupings. In particular, linkages will be explored with the Donors Committee for SME Development, the Association for the Development of African Education and the International Working Group on Education. The Group intends to explore mechanisms for information sharing across these different networks.

7. MECHANISMS FOR COOPERATION

The groups referred to above each have different modalities of organisation. They exist on a continuum between an informal club and a fully structured organisation. This Working Group is concerned to establish a mechanism for light but effective steering of its activities.

An important consideration when looking at the possible modality of the Group's operations is the potential financial base of its operations. At present a sum of money has been set aside by the SDC for coordination with hosts of each meeting taking responsibility for the costs of delivery of that meeting. It would also be desirable for the Group to be able to develop new funding mechanisms in order that coordinated activities might take place as has been the case with the other networks mentioned above.

