

**International Experts Seminar on
Rural Education for Sustainable Development**

26-28 May 2005, Beijing and Baoding, China

Co-organized by

UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education

and

Chinese National Commission for UNESCO

Supported by

UNESCO Office in Beijing

I. Background

UNESCO Member States and the international community made a collective commitment at the World Education Forum in 2000 to achieve education for all (EFA) goals for all children, youth and adults in every society.

The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), officially launched by UNESCO Director-general Koichiro Matsuura on 1 March 2005, places education at the heart of sustainable development and includes 'rural development' as one of the 'key action themes' of the decade. FAO is the lead agency for Rural Development and for this reason was appointed the lead agency for the Education for Rural People partnership flagship programme, which was launched together with UNESCO in 2002 in Johannesburg during the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Since then more than 200 members joined as partners the FAO led partnership from all over the world.

Education for rural people, defined broadly as formal and non-formal education addressing the diversified learning needs of rural population, constitutes a major challenge to EFA and sustainable development of rural areas. Many of the EFA and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) require special attention to ERP and training as powerful tools for poverty reduction, gender equity, social inclusion and sustainable development of rural areas.

Fifty percent of the world population, and over 30 million or 60% of those in developing countries live in rural areas. Three quarters of the world's poor, defined as

those earning less than a dollar a day, live in rural areas. One in five children in the South is still out of school. Non-attendance, drop-out and repetition rates, adult illiteracy and gender inequality in education are disproportionately high in rural areas. The relevance of curriculum and quality of teaching-learning is much lower in rural areas than in urban areas.

The Education for Rural People flagship partnership objectives are: a) to build awareness on the importance of education for rural people; b) to overcome the urban/rural education gap; c) to increase access to basic education for rural people; d) to improve the quality of education in rural areas; and e) to foster national capacity to plan and implement basic education plans to address the learning needs of rural people.

Literacy has remained a global challenge, with 860 million adults being illiterate and over 100 million children having no access to school. Literacy is about more than reading and writing-it is about communication and functioning in society. The new concepts of 'literacies' and 'literacy as freedom' have been proposed in changing development contexts. The UN Literacy Decade (UNLD) for 2003-2012 will promote universal literacy in relevant and meaningful ways, with other UN partners.

As a concrete programme component of the on-going global action of UNLD, UNESCO has launched in 2005 a *Literacy Initiative for the Excluded (LIFE)*, with special focus on women, and a selected number of countries from the 33 candidate countries having an illiteracy rate higher than 50% or an illiterate population larger than 10 million. The goal of LIFE will be 'to contribute to the 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015 by increasing the number of literate adults, particularly women, with sustained learning opportunities in participating countries'.

The 5th EFA High-Level Group Meeting will be held in Beijing, in late November 2005, which will be chaired by UNESCO Director-General, and attended by Education Ministers of selected member countries, UN EFA partners and other international organizations both governmental and non-governmental,. There will be two central themes of the Meeting one of them being Education for Rural People and the other being 'Literacy.. The results of the planned INRULED research studies will be published before the Meeting, along with an exhibition on rural education. **FAO is very surprised about such exhibition being organized by INRULED alone since to my understanding, we are STILL discussing with UNESCO HQ the possibility of having a joint exhibition on ERP**

Formatted: Font: Bold

The International Research and Training Center for Rural Education (INRULED) is a category-two institution under UNESCO. It was founded as an international institution based on an agreement between the Chinese Government and UNESCO. Its major functions include the following : 1) to create a wide network for exchange of academic and technical information in the field of rural education among experts in various countries; 2) to coordinate collaborative research activities and provide facilities for laboratory research and fieldwork to international experts; 3) to organize international training workshops and seminars on special subjects and provide

fellowships to international researchers; 4) to promote international research and development of methods and techniques of rural education; 5) to promote consultation and cooperation among member states by devising policies and strategies in the areas of human resources development for rural areas; 6) to produce and disseminate publications and materials on the results of the various projects undertaken by the Centre. International collaborative research projects in light of EFA goals.

Within the framework of UNESCO EFA programmes, and related UN Decades, and in view of INRULED mandates in research and training for rural education, the international experts seminar will thereby be organized for presentation of policy-relevant research analysis and case studies on successful innovations, which are meant to contribute to:

- develop broadened vision of rural education placed at the centre of rural development agenda;
- present new policy guideline/strategies for coping with major challenges to rural education in view of development challenges; and
- identify evidence-based successful innovations and good practices in rural education for adaptation and dissemination in nation/locally-specific contexts.

Based on paper presentation and discussion, research scholars will be selected and contracted for greater in-depth studies on related aspects/issues of rural education for sustainable rural development.

II. Dates of the Seminar: 26-28 May, 2005

III. Venue of the Seminar: The first day of the seminar will be in Beijing and the rest two days of the Seminar will be at INRULED in Baoding, Hebei province, China.

IV. Objectives of the Seminar

The seminar aims to achieve three-fold objectives:

1. to present quality research papers and exchange preliminary research findings on major aspects of EFA in rural areas for sustainable development;
2. to develop conceptual framework and guidelines for valid-reliable systematic data collection, policy-relevant analysis and case studies on evidence-based innovative practices in rural education; and
3. to further strengthen networking of scholars and centers of excellence in accomplishing research studies on rural education for sustainable development.

V. Preparation and Presentation of Papers

Papers for the Seminar should be within the length of 5,000 – 8,000 words, in Microsoft Word format, and submitted to INRULED through e-mail attachment by 12 May 2005 at the latest. A preliminary schedule of the Seminar will be sent to each participant after his/her confirmation of participation. An abstract of 300/400 words of the intended paper should be sent to INRULED by 15 April 2005.

For quality research papers and presentation of relevant findings, the studies should be designed and conducted within a sound methodological framework, using both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Systematic valid/reliable data and information should be collected to allow solid policy analysis and recommendation for actions. Field trips to relevant rural communities could also be made, if necessary, for interviews or questionnaire surveys.

For reference, papers/reports could address varied policy-relevant and action-based issues in rural education for sustainable development, including, but not confined to, the following:

- Regional/national profile (statistical overview) of literacy, based on valid and reliable statistical data, policy analysis of the persistency of the illiteracy problem, and research-based strategies to address the challenges of illiteracy in meeting 'literacy for all' goals.
- A research-based policy framework and multi-sectoral strategies of quality EFA in rural areas in light of research-based factors determining learning achievement here FAO could present the policy work done with IIEP:

"Education for rural development: Towards new policy responses", as well as the Regional ERP workshops in ASIA and Latin America and many other publications

- (see, for example, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005: the Quality Imperative* if this is irrelevant to ERP there is nothing specific on it);
- New policy response to large-scale migration from rural to urban areas and new approaches to education/vocational-technical training of migrated population from rural areas; again a lot of work done by FAO and IIEP could be presented here
- Wider and better use of information-communication technologies (ICTs) in/for rural education to fully tap new learning opportunities and bridge rural-urban digital divide for rural development; see the communication group work
- New approaches to training and professional development of teachers and

education policy-makers/managers for capacity building in education for rural development;

- Locally relevant curriculum and teaching-learning materials for development of life skills and other vocational-technological skills of rural youth and adults. ON this FAO could present the ERP tool kit (see http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/ERPtktoolkit_en.htm and <http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2005/101962/index.html>)

□. Funding

For a limited number of invitees from developing countries, UNESCO-INRULED will be providing two-way economic class air-ticket and four-day accommodation and board, plus 'pocket money' for incidental living expenses during the seminar;

Due to financial constraints, research scholars from developed countries who are interested in the Seminar theme and like to present papers or just participate in the dialogue, funding are encouraged to seek funding from other sources.

VIII. Visa

For visa notification to Chinese embassies/consulates, invited participants should send to INRULED by e-mail filled Registration Form (as attached) at inruled@inruled.org or by fax at 86+312+2171894, or to the National Commission for UNESCO by e-mail at natcomcn@moe.edu.cn or by fax at 86+10+66017912.

IX. Climate

Average temperature at the seminar time will be around 18 - 22 degrees Centigrade in Beijing and Baoding.

X. Transportation

Upon notification of flight schedule each participant will be picked up at Beijing International Airport and sent to the venue hotel. Transportation will also be provided for trip between Beijing and Baoding and for departure from Beijing.

XI. Contact Persons

Mr Qi Xin-jian, INRULED

Address: No.2 Nongda West Street Baoding, Hebei Province, 071000 P.R. China

Tel.: +86-10-66097571

Fax: +86-10-66017912

Email: qxj@moe.edu.cn

qixinjian@inruled.org

Mr Cao Yi-peng

Address: No.37 Damucang Hutong Xidan Beijing, 100816 P.R. China

Tel.: +86-10-66096883

Fax: +86-10-66017912

Email: cyp@moe.edu.cn