

Addressing learning needs of rural people in Asia

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Foreword to the series

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

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

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

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

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List of acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ATI	Agriculture Training Institute (Philippines)
ATTC	Agricultural Technology Transfer Centres (Thailand)
APEAN	Asia Pacific Association of Educators in Agriculture and Environment
APEID	Asia-Pacific Program of Educational Innovation for Development
APPEAL	Asia-Pacific Program of Education for All
APRBE	Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO, Bangkok)
CLC	Community Learning Centres
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Educational Management Information System
ERP	Education for Rural People
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (United Nations)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFE	Food for Education
GDP	Gross domestic product
HE	Higher education
ICT	Information and communication technology
ID	Identification document
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning (UNESCO)
IIRR	International Institute of Rural Reconstruction
INRULED	International Research and Training Centre for Education for rural people
IPGRI	International Plant Genetic Resources Institute
IT	Information Technology
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals

List of acronyms

MIS	Management Information Systems
NGO(s)	Non-governmental organization(s)
PASSAGE	Philippines Association of Agriculture Educators
RAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO)
SCB	Statistical capacity building
SDRE	Extension, Education and Communication Service
SEAMEO	South-East Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SEARCA	SEAMEO Regional Centre for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture
SME	Small and medium enterprises
TVE	Technical and vocational education
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPE	Universal primary education
USD	United States dollars
WFP	World Food Programme (United Nations)

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Executive summary

In spite of significant socio-economic development, rural areas in Asia continue to face poverty and environmental challenges. Education for rural people constitutes a key policy instrument to address them. Based on a seminar organized jointly by FAO and UNESCO, this publication reviews the educational situation of rural people (in *Part I*) and discusses policy and planning issues (*Part II*) in nine Asian countries: Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Issues and trends

The situation of the nine Asian countries regarding education for rural people varies considerably. For countries such as China and Thailand, access to schooling is already almost universal, and the priority is to focus on quality and relevance issues. For others, such as Lao PDR or Mongolia, access is still a problem, and current efforts are directed towards better coverage, including through distance education modes.

All of the countries however concur in two areas. The first is the importance of co-operation between ministries of education and agriculture. All countries have already put this into practice at the non-formal level, with some also encouraging collaboration on formal education programmes. The second area concerns community participation. Beyond just improving literacy rates, involvement at the local level is crucial to empower rural people, improve their living standards, and ensure food security and sustainable development.

Not surprisingly, there is a correlation between poverty and poor performance in basic education, in particular with ethnic minorities and other underserved groups. But economic growth does not, in itself, solve all problems and, in many Asian countries, the impressive expansion of the economy has not eradicated rural poverty, including food insecurity.

Directions for planning, management and monitoring

The focus is on improving access to, and quality of, education for rural people.

Relatively successful approaches to improving access include school nutrition programmes – which use food as a means to bring children to school and to keep them there – and community learning centres – which enable rural people to have access to lifelong learning and contribute to their empowerment.

The quality of education needs to be seen also in terms of relevance. Several directions are considered for better adapting curriculum to the rural environment. In this context ‘contextualized learning’ (i.e. having students study and resolve real-life problems) offers a powerful way for improving both relevance and community implication. Decentralization can also facilitate communities’ participation in defining their own educational needs.

Finally, monitoring progress in education for rural people requires that adequate indicators be in place. The monitoring systems established in the context of national Education for All plans need to be adjusted in order to reflect the specific conditions of rural areas and the progress made in education for rural people.

Introduction

A year and a half after the inception of the joint FAO-UNESCO flagship on *Education for rural people* (ERP), and the flagship's first workshop on Education for Rural Development (Bangkok, Thailand, 2002), efforts to foster education for rural people are well underway throughout the world. These efforts are nowhere more needed than in Asia – home to 70 per cent of the world's poor, according to Asian Development Bank (ADB) figures. South Asia alone has more than half a billion poverty-stricken people, twice as many as in the entire region of sub-Saharan Africa.

While globalization of economies has brought about much-touted growth and development, it has also marginalized and excluded a vast number of people from mainstream development, and mostly among the rural poor. In addition, it has created serious environmental degradation, making the rural environment, in particular, even less productive and poor. This loss in productivity and degradation of the social fabric has further meant increasing migration by the rural poor to urban-based economies. While some Asian countries, such as China and Viet Nam, have encouraged this trend, as a rule, governments of developing countries still rely heavily on agriculture as a main engine of overall economic growth.

It was, thus, within this context that FAO and IIEP-UNESCO organized their second Education for Rural People flagship partnership workshop, 'Addressing learning needs of rural people through national plans for agriculture, rural development, and Education for All', to promote policies aiming to ensure equity in education for rural people in the region. The flagship sought to examine country frameworks for Education for Rural People that had been created and pursued since its 2002 workshop, and expand upon them by looking at which strategies had been adopted for improving access, relevancy, quality and equity to enhance ERP.

This report looks at current issues and trends in ERP for nine Asian countries. In the *Introduction*, it identifies objectives and design of the workshop; in *Part I*, it examines both accomplishments that have occurred and challenges that remain, as documented by workshop participants themselves; and in *Part II*, it studies ways to strengthen ERP programmes through planning, management, and monitoring strategies, as was introduced during the workshop's thematic panel presentations. In this last part, it also reports on group work that allowed participants to discuss strategies for

collaboration in their respective fields, and produce recommendations for future progress.

Workshop in perspective

The World Food Summit Plan of Action (Rome, 1996), the Dakar Framework for Action for achieving Education for All (Dakar, 2000), the Millennium Development Goals (2000), and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002) together provide the political framework and a set of actions to meet international governmental accords to reduce by 2015 the number of poor, undernourished and illiterate people to *halve* their present level and to ensure universal primary education. In demographic terms, many educational and poverty-related problems are largely rural problems. Thus, investment in basic education of rural people is a key aspect of achieving poverty reduction, food security and sustainable development. It was for this reason that the Directors-General of FAO and UNESCO agreed to launch their flagship global partnership initiative, focusing on *Education for rural people*, in September 2002.

The Asia Regional Workshop ‘Addressing learning needs of rural people through national plans for agriculture, rural development and Education for All’, held in May 2004 in Bangkok (Thailand), brought together 41 participants from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Viet Nam, Philippines and Thailand. Two participants from each of the nine participating countries represented each country’s agriculture and education ministries, and some twenty other participants were representing international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and academia, including programme sponsors from the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO-RAP), UNESCO-APPEAL Bangkok Office, UNESCO’s International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), Paris, and the Italian Directorate for Development Cooperation (DGCS), who cofunded the event.

Objectives and design

The workshop had three objectives:

- To review country situations in addressing learning needs of rural people through national agriculture, rural development and Education for All (EFA) plans.

- To facilitate knowledge sharing among planners and partners of rural development and EFA action plans through review and discussion of good practices and lessons learnt to improve planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- To explore ways of promoting partnerships (including intersectoral co-operation) at all levels to address concerns of rural people within the framework of poverty reduction, food security and rural development strategies as well as EFA strategies.

These objectives were addressed in three ways: country reports, thematic panel discussions, and focused working groups:

Country reports – plenary discussion

Countries reporting at the workshop included participating officials from agriculture; rural development and/or education ministries were asked ahead of time to prepare a review of their plans and strategies, and report on the extent to which basic education for rural people was addressed in them. They were to note examples of innovation and effective implementation, as well as mechanisms for monitoring and assessment.

Panel presentations – plenary discussion

Presentations were based on the following themes:

- *Promoting access to learning.* Included presentations on school feeding programmes and community participation in education.
- *Promoting quality and relevance.* Included presentations on curriculum change for the rural setting and the role of basic education in achieving food security and sustainable development.
- *Promoting equity.* Included presentations on reducing gender disparities and promoting the learning needs of ethnic minorities.
- *Linkages between schools and agricultural services.* A presentation on school Integrated Pest Management-based projects in Viet Nam and Thailand.
- *ICT: What potential for reaching rural learners?* A presentation on the use of communications technology targeted at rural youth in Thailand.

Group work

Workshop participants were divided into agriculture and education groups, according to their respective fields. Discussion in each group focused

on reviewing national agriculture/rural development plans, or EFA action plans based on the context provided in the country reports. Each group then presented, in plenary, a brief report of its findings, and recommendations for action to improve planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of its programmes for rural people.

Opening sessions

The workshop opened with a short welcome by David Atchoarena, Senior Programme Specialist (IIEP-UNESCO), who then introduced Malcolm Hazelman, Senior Extension and Communications Officer (FAO-RAP), Sheldon Shaeffer, Director (UNESCO Bangkok), and Ricardo Manara, Representative of the Italian Development Cooperation and Italian Embassy.

Malcolm Hazelman welcomed workshop participants, not only as an organizer of the event, but also on behalf of the Director-General of FAO, Jacques Diouf, and the Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for FAO-RAP, Changchui He. He underscored the importance of the flagship initiative on ERP, noting that children's access to education in rural areas is still much lower than in urban areas, adult illiteracy is much higher and the quality of education is poorer. He also cautioned that progress has been slow towards the World Food Summit's 2015 target to reduce by half the number of undernourished worldwide. He, thus, emphasized the importance of the workshop's structure in bringing together representatives from both the agriculture and education sectors. He told the participants that their involvement was essential for ensuring relevance, support and ownership of plans and programmes that meet the needs of their countries' rural people.

Sheldon Shaeffer noted that the Asia-Pacific region is home to the largest number of rural people, recognized that a number of countries represented at the workshop were almost entirely rural, and asserted that rural people – who make up the majority of the population worldwide – thus merit special attention in development plans. He reminded the workshop participants of their governments' commitments through MDGs and Dakar Framework EFA goals to work on overcoming obstacles to rural development. He recognized that rural people are not homogenous, and that there is no single agenda for education for rural people that is universal to all countries and communities. However, he identified some commonalities and a number

of common actions required to meet the learning needs of rural people, to reduce their poverty, and to improve their quality of life:

- Promoting the recognition of ‘rurality’ and an explicit focus on, and analysis of the specific context or needs of rural people, including skills development challenges.
- Building awareness and developing the capacity of ministry of education staff around the concerns of education for rural development.
- Promoting the need for a holistic approach to rural development that goes beyond the narrow boundaries of traditional agricultural education and training, and places greater emphasis on effective ways of reaching the unreached.
- Promoting the utilization of appropriate technologies.
- Encouraging the participation of the rural population in the process of policy formulation, and the design, implementation, monitoring and accountability of programmes related to ERP.
- Developing indicators to assess the urban-rural divide in education and to evaluate the impact of ERP-related projects and programmes.
- Facilitating knowledge sharing and dissemination of lessons learnt from multi-sectoral partnerships that highlight avoidance of duplication, budgetary savings, sharing resources, greater sustainability, complementarity, rather than competition, among ministries, agencies and departments.
- Improving quality by supporting participatory curriculum development and teacher training to respond to rural development requirements.

Ricardo Manara wrapped up the Opening Session by reiterating the importance of the MDGs as a framework for action, and by emphasizing the vital role of collaboration within and among the education and agriculture sectors, and with the international donor community. He reminded the participants of the need for long-term collaborative efforts if the 2015 poverty reduction target was to be met, and if sustainable development in rural areas was to be achieved.

In addition to FAO’s Malcolm Hazelman, the persons responsible for the organization and facilitation of the workshop included A.H.A. Hakeem, Co-ordinator of UNESCO APPEAL, Bangkok, who provided an overview of the workshop’s objectives, and David Atchoarena, whose presentation, ‘Education of rural people: issues and challenges for basic education’, is incorporated in *Part I*.

Part I

Review of main issues and trends

A review of the ERP flagship's three operational components prefaced the presentation of country reports: (a) to provide for the provision of education in rural areas; (b) to promote policy dialogue at both the national and international levels to mobilize countries in the EFA challenge; and (c) to support operational activities that assist governments with policy creation and programme implementation.

Participants were further reminded of the workshop's over-arching aim: to focus operationally on EFA goals, looking at particular measures that participant countries had taken in policy, planning and implementation for ERP.

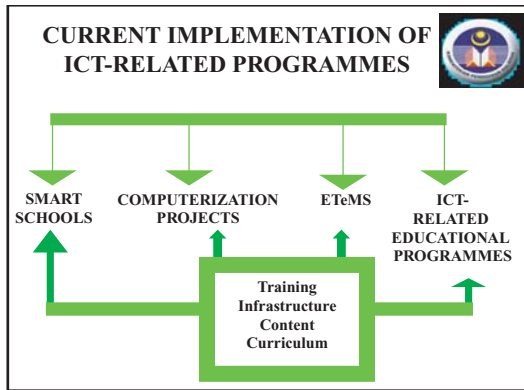
The presence of members from the agriculture sector was especially welcomed, as the speaker noted that successful EFA for rural areas necessarily required a 'synergy' among government ministries in devising policy, training and programmes.

1.1 ERP in EFA plans

Given the large variation among workshop countries as regards stages of economic development, population, geography, history, etc., country reports unsurprisingly cover a broad range of EFA-ERP plans. For some countries, such as China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, with a legacy of educational planning and programming, reports largely emphasized efforts to 'modernize' their approaches through technology and innovation. For these countries, providing access to universal education had largely been achieved; however, relevance and quality of the education provided for rural people was still a concern. In China, for example, targets to universalize nine-year compulsory schooling and eradicate illiteracy were set in 1993. China's country report notes that by the end of the 1990s, these two 'basics' were realized. Enrolment ratios of primary school-age children increased from 97.9 per cent in 1991 to 99.1 per cent in 2000, and from 69.7 per cent to over 85 per cent at the lower secondary level. Illiteracy rates had also significantly declined by this time. Nonetheless, China recognized that statistics for its rural population were less positive (see *Box 1*). Yet, these weaker figures for rural areas, according to the report, do not reflect lack of

provision for education for rural people, so much as a ‘brain drain’ trend of educated youth leaving rural areas to seek jobs in urban areas. Although the Chinese government encourages the transfer of rural labour away from agriculture, it also recognizes that the country’s agriculture sector will come under more pressure and that, therefore, its ERP programmes must focus on rural education that is relevant to strengthening sustainable development and productive capacity (*China country report*, p. 4).¹

Figure 1.1 ICT in Malaysia



For Malaysia, the push towards productivity has meant placing information and communications technology (ICT) at the forefront of education programming on a number of levels: as a curriculum subject, as a teaching/learning tool, as a management tool, and as an instrument for research and development. Towards its goal of creating a ‘knowledge-based’ economy, Malaysia is reinventing its schools as ‘smart schools’ that focus on ‘preparing children for the Information Age through adapting ICT in teaching-learning practices and school management’. Curriculum prioritizes Bahasa Melayu, English, mathematics and science; computer laboratories are classroom backbones; and training in English for Teaching Mathematics and Science (ETeMS) is a pedagogy fundamental. Malaysia currently has 87 smart schools and approximately 70,735 teachers who have undergone computer training. Emphasis, however, continues to be on extending these schools to rural areas and instituting mechanisms to evaluate the programmes.

1. Each country represented at the seminar prepared a country report on ERP.

Box 1. China's ERP challenge

Recent changes in the structure of the rural labour force in China have called for a better educational level of the rural population. Currently, farmers have an average of only 7.3 years of schooling. Of all the illiterates and semi-illiterates, 92 per cent live in rural areas. Of all rural labourers, 30.6 per cent have received only primary or lower level education, 48 per cent have gone through junior secondary schooling, 12 per cent have gone through senior secondary schooling ... only 0.5 per cent have been to college and university. Those who have received vocational education account for less than 5 per cent.

The following issues are prominent among the challenges faced by EFA-ERP in China:

- Coverage of compulsory schooling needs to be improved continuously.
- Efforts should be redoubled to strengthen the education of disadvantaged groups.
- Adult education cannot meet the basic learning needs of youth and adults.
- Gaps in the level of educational development between western and eastern regions are very large.
- Inadequate financial input is still a factor constraining educational development, and mechanisms for ensuring the financing of basic education need to be improved.

The biggest challenge is to meet the great demand from the public for better education, and to provide high-quality education, not only in terms of increased funding, but also in terms of better teaching, better management, and the philosophy of education. Facing these challenges means being able to satisfy these needs. While we are increasing access to education, we are paying more attention to the quality of education because we realize that quality is the precondition for economic development and the lifeline for education.

Source: *China country report*, 2004.

While all country reports identified issues of quality and relevancy, only some included the need for ICT in ERP plans, while others reflected much more fundamental concerns than ICTs in addressing ERP. For example, reports from Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, and Viet Nam focused largely on issues of access in overcoming distances and costs, providing qualified teachers, creating school infrastructure, addressing gender equality, and ensuring textbook and teaching resource availability as urgent challenges.

1.2 Co-operation between ministries of education and agriculture

One recommendation evolving out of the flagship ERP 2002 workshop was that “Ministers of Education and Agriculture assist each other in achieving EFA goals”.² Workshop country reports confirmed overwhelmingly that such collaboration was indeed taking place. All countries reported co-operation happening at the non-formal education level as an outcome of addressing the needs of those who had dropped out of formal education, or who had never attended school. As has been well documented, rural people – due to poor access, opportunity costs of education, cultural dictates, etc. – have the greatest stake in non-formal education. Often, joint ministerial collaboration happens in providing educational services through vocational training or community learning centres (CLC). In some instances, such as in Viet Nam, skills training actually takes place on school premises through the CLC structure. In others, such as Mongolia where populations are widely dispersed and remote, this collaboration has taken the form of distance learning programmes. Its 2001 National Programme on Informal Education and Distance Training has brought education to the hard-to-reach by focusing on literacy, basic and primary education, capacity building and life-skills training through collaboration with the National Agricultural Extension Centre.

Table 1.1 Collaboration in Mongolia: numbers served from distance training programmes

Training programme	2001	2002	2003	Total
Literacy	4,460	4,121	8,459	17,040
Improving educational level	4,955	8,915	7,117	21,187
Basic and primary education	4,266	4,300	4,273	11,839
Capacity building and life skills	27,145	22,560	30,400	80,050
Total	40,726	39,896	49,499	130,071

Source: *Mongolia country report*, 2004.

2. *Education for rural development in Asia, experiences and policy lessons*, FAO/UNESCO Seminar, Bangkok, Thailand, 5-7 November 2002, 2002: 20.

Some countries, however, also reported ministerial collaboration at the formal education level. Indonesia's Education Act (No. 20, 2003, Art. 32), for example, states: "Education with special services is provided for learners in remote and less-developed areas." Special services, the Indonesia report adds, encompasses: (a) integrated planning; (b) understanding local cultures; and (c) the access to basic education with exposure to agriculture. Yet, in practice, the competency-based curriculum that emerged has shown mixed results: "Localized content and learning management have been introduced. However, schools continued to have routine activities: teaching to the test and managing more academic life." (*Indonesia country report*, p. 9.) Indonesia's country report further highlights the complexity of ERP planning, noting that education must not only be appropriate for the rural environment, but must also overcome barriers that are rooted in deeply entrenched approaches to local life (see *Box 2*).

Other countries reported greater success. The Lao PDR notes that its MOE and MOA meet annually to review its national curriculum. Currently, approximately 20 per cent of the curriculum is based on local needs, and the technical curriculum is supplied by the MOA. Likewise, Thailand, Viet Nam, and Cambodia all report successful ministerial collaboration, most notably through their Integrated Pest Management (IPM) school programmes. These programmes not only involve student and teacher in a formal learning environment, but also expand out to include parent farmers and the community as a whole.

1.3 Community participation in ERP

Indeed, all country reports recognized the need to encourage community participation in ERP programmes, not just for purposes of strengthening national education statistics such as literacy rates, but more significantly, for empowering rural communities to provide for food security, improved living standards, and sustainable development. Real ERP, as was reaffirmed repeatedly during the workshop, requires learning communities, where learning is into life and life improvement.

The participation of the [rural] people in [the] process of making decisions on agriculture development in the future, participation in planning, designing, construction, and management of projects requests that the people need to have a given knowledge and [that] they need to be trained [*Viet Nam country report*, p. 1].

As Cambodia considers in its new EFA plan, this participation must start early, from the premise of creating for its people a ‘better start to life’.

The EFA Plan complements ESP and ESSP by addressing the right to education of adults and out of school youth, the right to a better start to life and learning for all infants and young children through non-formal education, adult literacy, life-skills training, and integrated early childhood care and development [*Cambodia country report*, p. 2].

Box 2. Indonesia: *Adat* and the challenge of strengthening education for rural people

Strong traditional values and norms that constitute a system called *adat* underlie more generalized cultural influences on education in Indonesia. *Adat* is not similar to either a custom or a convention, but is much more profound. It regulates the needs and actions of individuals and communities to organize their lives. Birth, marriage, and death are three important life cycles that are strongly arranged in *adat* ceremonies, as are ceremonies during pregnancy, childhood and adolescence: All symbolize the future hope for a child to be a useful person. *Adat* also explains the organization of cultivation and harvest, the rice field watering system, house construction, prayers for rain, and many other things.

Traditionally, education was a domestic concern – parents taught their children. Very few people learned to become skilled enough to earn money. Thus, educational practices have largely been based on local *adat*. A saying of *tidak tahu adat*, or ‘ignorant of *adat*’ was used to describe a person who was considered as impolite, uneducated or disrespectful to senior or older people.

The high female illiteracy rate in rural areas is closely linked to *adat*. This is because the female is considered as the best person to stay at home and learn domestic skills. Girls who have more dynamic activities outside home might be considered as *tidak tahu adat*. For females, staying with the family under any condition is more valued than reaching a better life ‘in diaspora’. Location, space, existence and time are physically important. To be at home is better than to disappear from the family’s or rural people’s eyes. Apart from place and space, maintaining interaction in the familial relationship is more valued than ‘being seen’, which is seen as a male strength. In general, communalities take first place in the Indonesian mental set, and a perception that the individual female, the self, is subordinated to the male or their family is valued by the community.

Source: *Indonesia country report*, 2004.

Malaysia, which already has a ten-year 2001-2010 Pre-school Development Plan under way to institutionalize pre-school education for children aged 5+, has shown quite positive figures for its rural areas (see *Table 1.2*). Its plan, which seeks to “narrow the gap in terms of readiness for learning and in performance between children in urban and rural areas,” expands pre-school facilities to remote/isolated areas, as well as sub-urban areas, through the collaborative efforts of both government and private facilities. It makes the National Pre-school Curriculum compulsory in all pre-schools (except expatriate schools) and focuses on strengthening monitoring of both government and private-sector schools.

Reports from Indonesia, the Lao PDR, Mongolia, Thailand and Viet Nam all stipulate provisions for Early Childhood Education programmes, as well.

Table 1.2 Ministry of Education pre-schools, Malaysia

	Number of schools			Number of classes			Enrolment
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	
Total	578	2 154	2 732	709	2 471	3 180	64 765

Source: Malaysia MOE, January 2004.

1.4 Rural poverty remains an issue in spite of economic growth

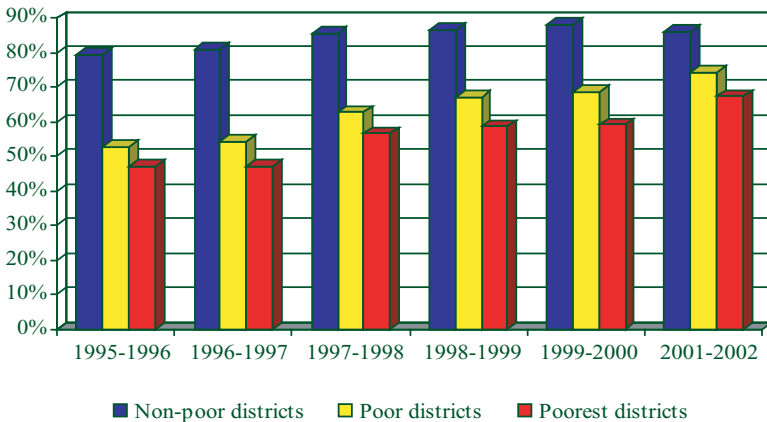
Despite Asia’s reputation for swiftly marching towards urbanization and hi-tech, the fact remains that Asia is largely agrarian, with poor, rural populations continuing to dominate in most countries. The UNDP Human Poverty Index (HPI)³ for Southeast Asia and Pacific averages 25 per cent; about half of workshop countries fell above this percentage. Even those country reports from the more ‘developed’ countries acknowledged much higher HPI rates in their rural areas. Indonesia’s disaggregated data, for example, records an HPI range of 8.3 per cent to 47.7 per cent, with rural areas accounting for the top-end figures. Indonesia further notes that after a 1998 economic crisis, poverty level in cities dropped back to pre-crisis levels, while in rural areas it remained above pre-crisis levels. Cambodia, with an HPI of 42.5 per cent, described the poverty issue succinctly:

3. A composite index measuring deprivations in the three basic dimensions captured in the human development index – longevity, knowledge and standard of living – and also capturing social exclusion.

Poor performance on primary school completion, health and sanitation service access, and child nutrition are major contributing factors to the [high] HPI in Cambodia. Clearly, improved access to basic education services in poor rural areas is a top priority in reducing human poverty rates [*Cambodia country report*, p. 1].

Indeed, this link between basic education and its effect on poverty was identified in all country reports. In the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, for example, 14 per cent of primary-aged children in non-poor districts do not attend school, compared to 27 per cent in poor districts and 33 per cent in the poorest districts. Furthermore, drop-out rates for poor districts (12.4 per cent) are double those for non-poor districts (6.2 per cent). Not surprisingly, most poor districts are located in the west of the country, where mountains make access difficult. The good news, however, is that thanks to targeted planning, this gap is on the decrease (see *Figure 1.2*).

Figure 1.2 Lao People’s Democratic Republic: net enrolment and poverty



Source: *Lao PDR country report*, 2004.

All workshop country reports acknowledged the key role of basic education to development. A number of reports predominantly focused on approaches to poverty reduction through non-formal education strategies. All countries, for example, described government programmes targeted at directly raising the incomes of the rural poor, most usually implemented through agriculture extension and training. Some countries also addressed

the contribution of higher education to Education for Rural People and poverty reduction. The Philippines Department of Agriculture's Agriculture Training Institute (ATI) provided one of the best models for this approach – combining both non-formal and formal education – during the workshop.

...ATI continuously provides non-formal education to farmers and fishers, rural women, youth, agricultural extensionists, and local government units (LGUs) to increase their knowledge and develop their skills to improve rural life and accelerate agricultural modernization. Also, the ATI coordinates a ... scholarship program for the formal education of deserving technical, administrative, academic, scientific staff and extension workers of the DA, the State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and the LGUs. To reach further the young members of the farm families, the Philippine Government is working on a scholarship program for the capable and deserving youth, especially the children of smallholders and fishers [*Philippines country report*, p. 1].

China's Green Certificate Programme and Thailand's Agricultural Technology Transfer Centres (ATTCs) were two other well-established successful examples of the contribution of higher education to ERP, discussed during the workshop.

In Mongolia's case, a country where herding – not farming – is the tradition, no less than five national educational programmes have been implemented for rural income development since the late 1990s:

There are several national programmes, such as the Intensified Livestock Production Support Program, Seed Sub-program, Fallow 2001, White Revolution Program, Support the Protection of Livestock from Drought and Dzud Disasters National Program, and the Nationwide Movement for Developing Cooperatives Program, all which are directly designed to improve overall rural population income through improving education and introducing new technologies. For example, the Green Revolution National Programme (1997-2004) is designed to increase real income of the population within a short time through full mobilization of internal reserves and potential, implementation of the principle of 'rich citizen-rich nation', promotion of nature and environmental preservation concepts and self-sustaining abilities of the people [*Mongolia country report*, p. 2].

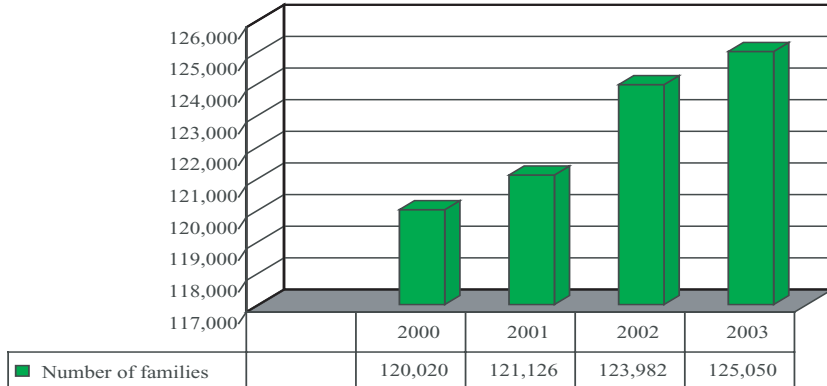
For Mongolia, a country where 50 per cent of the population is rural, success of far-reaching programmes such as the Green Revolution National

Programme can truly mean a revolutionary impact on poverty through education.

1.5 Rural-urban disparities are still significant

As with Mongolia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic is predominantly rural (91 per cent). Distinctions there between its ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ areas are largely based on the presence of a market, roads, electricity, and tap water. While such distinctions provide definitions for government planning, at the same time, they underscore the economic disparity that all country reports noted between their urban and rural communities. Inequities in investments, provisions of social services and quality teachers, and development of basic infrastructure, such as roads, electricity and water supply, were commonly mentioned.

Figure 1.3 Mongolia: bringing Green Revolution education to families (number of families benefiting from the programme)



Source: Mongolia country report, 2004.

So far, more [than] 500 communes have no road for car to the centres, 30 per cent district road and 50 per cent commune road can not be in operation in rainy season and it affects seriously [the ability of] children [to come] to the school [Viet Nam country report, p. 4].

The factor that many rural *soums* (over 200) in remote areas do not have regular power supply is negatively influencing (a) child-friendly learning environment and education quality ... [*Mongolia country report*, p. 5].

... youth in the rural areas who attend formal schooling comprise ... only 20-30 per cent of the total population due to: limited resources in terms of funds, infrastructure, and manpower – other than being obsolete of the majority of the facilities – biased support services [by] local government ... inaccessibility of the schools ... [*Philippines country report*, p.3].

Although EFA in China made significant advances ... the general level reached is not high, the educational infrastructure is still weak and development has been quite uneven ... The gaps in the level of educational development between the western and eastern regions is very big [*China country report*, p. 3].

The MOE needs to address the issue of uneven distribution of teachers ... because schools in the urban centres and developed areas benefit more than schools in the remote and isolated areas, the high turnover of teachers in critical subjects especially in rural areas can impede students' performance [*Malaysia country report*, p. 8].

Fortunately, country reports indicate that all workshop countries have taken account of their demographic disparities in national EFA plans and are working towards change, as will be reflected in *Part II* of this report.

1.6 Food security considerations remain serious

The workshop took note that China, Thailand and Viet Nam's agricultural productivity made overall figures for the Asian region look very positive. Nonetheless, all country reports, save one (Malaysia) made mention of food security as a high priority. Even the three star performers noted this concern: urban-rural inequity leading to lack of rural knowledge and resources leading to lost productivity leading to migration to urban-based economies. The rural areas are thus left with a demographic dichotomy of elderly and unskilled young people, making the rural labour force not only inefficient, but also less productive.

Though countries that participated in the workshop viewed the problem differently (as noted above, China and Viet Nam currently have programmes to transfer rural human resources to non-agriculture labour), they all agreed

that improvements in education for rural people were essential to food security and to their national development plans. Two countries at either end of the agricultural productivity spectrum exemplified this concurrence as follows:

Rural and regional development in Mongolia is the top priority of the MoFA government policy. It is recognized that for regional development, a guaranteed self-sufficiency in food supply in the provinces is indispensable ... [*Mongolia country report*, p. 2].

The Department of Agricultural Extension (DOAE) has been tasked to increase farmers' potential in term[s] of production, processing, value-added agriculture-based products to identify measures and guidelines for agriculture extension, to control the product quality, and to transfer agricultural technology to farmers so as to generate income and security in their farm occupation [*Thailand country report*, p. 1].

As in Thailand, China has also been in the forefront of promoting non-formal education for rural people as a way to increase agricultural productivity, not only to meet its own needs, but also to be competitive on the world stage:

Since the qualification of farmers is not high, and they cannot produce agricultural products that are cheap and can meet the standards of international markets, they might be driven out of business as a result of market competition. Therefore, the desire to be successful in international competition is another reason for the Government to provide technical training to agricultural producers [*China country report*, p.2].

Yet, in its discussion of globalization, the workshop also recognized that the Asia-Pacific region suffers from serious environmental degradation: the air and water in many parts are among the most polluted in the world, half of its forest area has been lost to over-logging, and half of its fish stock lost to industrial pollution and over-fishing. Participants, thus, took note of education for rural people as a means of ensuring food security, product quality, and a 'competitive edge', but also as a means of maintaining a country's long-term sustainability and quality of life.

1.7 Ethnic minorities and underserved groups in rural areas need special attention

The workshop acknowledged that as a nation becomes more economically developed, certain minority rural populations tend to become

increasingly marginalized if not provided with special attention. In fact, all country reports are running programmes for underserved or ethnic rural groups. For many, remoteness was at the heart of addressing education for these groups. Malaysia's remote rural Sabah and Sarawak regions have benefited from the most unique approach: the use of helicopters to provide transportation to centralized rural schools. For Mongolia, the challenge of providing education to nomads was taken on by instituting boarding facilities and mobile schools. Viet Nam has placed emphasis on more investment in training human resources to teach in its mountainous regions, combined with suitable policies such as exemption from school fees, and a 100 per cent increase in salary for teachers working in remote rural areas. The Lao People's Democratic Republic has similarly emphasized increasing its qualified staffing in isolated and disadvantaged rural areas, and the Philippines is targeting children of fisherfolk and small farmers for scholarship support. Perhaps Cambodia reports the most fundamental approach, "the construction and furnishing of several thousand primary school classrooms, especially in underserved areas" (*Cambodia country report*, p. 1). Meanwhile, Thailand and Indonesia have created special curricula for rural areas based on local languages and culture. Additionally, through non-formal education, country reports overwhelmingly stressed the use of ICT, most especially radio and television instructional programming.

1.8 Quality education for rural people requires greater spending

As an outcome of the rural profiles noted above, the increased expense required for education for rural people is clear. While it was mentioned during the workshop that rural areas encompass many varied populations, one commonality was evident – the expense of educating rural populations is relatively higher than that of providing education in urban areas. Many of the actions participant countries have taken, as recorded above, simply bear witness to these costs. Smaller but more schools, transportation services, boarding facilities, supplementary feeding programmes, scholarships and subsidies, financial incentives for teachers and creation of localized curriculum, all demand larger budgets. Yet, country reports suggest that investments in education for rural people do make a difference.

Table 1.3 Dynamics of education in Indonesia

	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004
Student				
Primary school	28 690 131	28 926 377	29 050 834	29 247 546
Junior secondary	9 563 434	9 757 132	9 936 647	10 167 311
Senior secondary	5 478 603	5 712 745	5 941 786	6 192 610
Higher education	3 199 174	3 348 567	3 441 429	3 551 092

Source: Office of Research and Development, MoNE, 2004

Enrolment increases 2002-2004 were made possible by addition of educational institutions and teachers that also drastically increased [*Indonesia country report*, p. 4].

In China, through the implementation of a set of specific measures (such as free textbooks and stationery, government subsidies for boarding/meals/tuition fees, and school construction/renovations), the school dropout rate has decreased and the average rate of basic education has been increasing [*Mongolia country report*, p. 3].

The Chinese Government formulated in a timely way the *Guidelines for the Development of Chinese Children*. As a consequence, in the 1990s ... the enrolment ratios of primary-age children increased from 97.9 per cent in 1991 to 99.1 per cent in 2000, with the gender gaps reduced from 1.22 per cent to .07 per cent. Gross enrolment in lower secondary rural schools increased from 69.7 per cent to over 85 per cent. At the same time, illiteracy rates among rural people significantly declined [*China country report*, p. 3].

Notwithstanding the overall added costs to ERP, the workshop noted that rural schools *can* have a comparative advantage through: (a) local-centred pedagogy – that creates truly practical and impacting learning through use of the local environment; (b) community linkages – integrating the community into the learning process to make the education process thoroughly participatory; (c) innovative practices – limited resources often demand innovative techniques; and (d) inspiring renovation of the system – witness Thailand’s bi-lingual approach to teaching minorities (see *Box 3*).

Box 3. Thailand: overcoming language obstacles for education
Suchin Petcharugsa
Northern Region Non-formal Education Centre, Lampang

In 1976, Thailand began its first programme focused uniquely on providing functional literacy skills to the Pwo Karen northern hill-tribe communities. The programme sought to better integrate the hill-tribes into the Thai nation by providing Thai language and culture, vocational skills, problem-solving skills and civic responsibility. All subjects were taught in the Thai language.

Through this programme, the government realized the necessity of starting education in Thai at an early age, and in 1981, an elementary education programme primarily for hill-tribe children, but also including adults, was launched. Curriculum was based on an abundance of Thai-language materials, and content included (a) Thai language and mathematics (35 per cent) and (b) life and social experience (65 per cent), further broken into central content (80 per cent) and local content (20 per cent). Unfortunately, while these two programmes were a beginning, after 20 years, authorities admitted that they had not achieved the results they had expected.

Thus, so began Thailand's approach of integrating local language into its education programmes for hill-tribe communities. The technique would build a 'literature bridge' to learning through a bi-lingual approach. Since the hill-tribes had no written language, however, the first step would require orthography development, including field evaluation and testing, alphabet design (using the Thai alphabet as a base), drafting of an alphabet chart, spelling guide and picture dictionary, and ultimately, community involvement in the drafting of a 'Big Book' by local teachers working with the project.

The second step of the literature bridge involved the construction of teaching materials using local cultural themes to provide familiarity and encouragement to the reading process. Orthography specialists and local teachers held a number of writers' workshops, first at Payop University in Chiangmai, and then in the villages, at which time, the whole communities participated.

Although this year-old programme is still in its infancy, and it is too early to evaluate for success, the initial level of community interest and involvement is very positive. Some lessons have already been learnt as strategies for minority groups: (a) learn together through doing and reflecting (great time and effort will be necessary for results); (b) build competence, confidence and commitment by providing ownership and continuous support; (c) teachers must be learners before they can become facilitators in localizing curriculum; and (d) the localization process *can* reduce cost of materials development and empower learners.

Part II

Directions for planning, management and monitoring

Continuing its operational approach, the second part of the workshop consisted of panel presentations on directions for the planning, management and monitoring of ERP programmes.

2.1 Improving education

2.1.1 Promoting access to learning

Presenters addressed two methods for increasing rural populations' access to education: school feeding programmes, undertaken by the World Food Programme (WFP), and community learning centres (CLCs), supported by UNESCO.

School feeding programmes

Of children in the East Asia Pacific region, 27 per cent are malnourished. The workshop noted that hunger and malnourishment lead to ineffective learning, which in turn, leads to drop-out and fuels the cycle of poverty that prevents children – and rural communities – from reaching their potential. Worldwide, WFP statistics show that 120 million chronically hungry children do not attend school at all. Of those 180 million chronically hungry children that do attend, 150 million will drop out before completing four years of primary education. Of these drop-outs, 55 per cent are girls. For this reason, food security is essential if schools are to be effective, and education is necessary for food security to be realized. This is particularly true in rural areas.

Recognizing the inextricable link between food and education, WFP began two programmes bringing food into the classroom: the School Feeding Programme, providing high-protein foods directly to hungry children to aid their ability to function at school, and the Take-home Ration Programme that gives students staple rations to provide for family meals. The Food for Education (FFE) approach has three objectives: (a) getting children,

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

Towards these aims, the use of food as an ‘enabler’ was emphasized. Food enables families to send their children to school and keep them there (making up for perceived opportunity costs); it ensures malnourished children at least one nutritious meal per day; it enables a child to concentrate and learn; and it helps close the gender gap. Furthermore, since implementing its Take-home Rations Programme in 1994, WFP has recorded a doubling and tripling of school attendance where rations are provided. Drop-out rates have decreased in ration programme areas, and stereotyped gender roles are changing as girls become providers for their families.

Table 2.1 Analysis of Food for Education (FFE) strategies

	On-site feeding	Take-home rations
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces short-term hunger in the classroom • Increases learning capability in classroom • Provides incentive to send children to school • Encourages children to stay in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves food security at home • Provides income transfer to families • A strong incentive to send children/ girls to school • Encourages children to stay in school • Can be targeted to the neediest
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not benefit other family members • Not solely targeted to the neediest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not alleviate short-term hunger • Students’ food intake may not improve

Source: WFP.

Recognizing these advances, it was underscored that FFE programmes were specifically focused on rural communities where food was truly needed. FFE programmes like school feeding were not intended to replace meals provided at home, but rather, to be a supplement ‘snack’, high-protein biscuits for example, that would keep children alert and concentrated in class. Workshop participants were also informed of other ways that the FFE programmes would be expanded: (a) increasing the emphasis on nutrition and use of fortified foods; (b) focusing more on secondary schools and adolescent

girls; (c) integrating FFE into comprehensive school health programmes; and (d) integrating food for training activities into interventions.

Community Learning Centres (CLCs)

CLSs refer to rural communities. All workshop countries had UNESCO-supported CLC projects underway, and this presentation sought to expand upon the theme ‘Improving Access to Learning’ to include the learning community. Indeed, the speaker noted that the CLC concept was not new, but was a powerful proven mechanism to impact on community development, alleviate poverty, and raise the quality of rural local life through lifelong learning, “helping to make more inclusive the ‘all’ in Education for All”. Since members of the CLC community, itself, ran the centres and identified services needing to be offered, each CLC was context-specific and multi-purpose, often combining education and training, community information services such as ‘libraries’, community development activities, and linkages to other educational sources.

CLCs can be an important source of education in remote and disadvantaged rural communities, where the flexibility built into them allows CLCs to reach those who may otherwise be unreachable. The holistic, integrated approach of CLC activities is another crucial aspect of their success in rural areas. Learning subjects offered through CLCs may include: basic education and literacy; agriculture and other skills for income generation; re-skilling to adjust to changed economies; environmental education; population and gender issues; health and HIV/AIDS; peace and civic rights; culture; and science and technology. Once communities become involved in learning, the awareness of and respect for the right to education is also enhanced. Several factors that help to implement CLCs were noted:

Community participation	Capacity building
Resource mobilization	Linkages and partnerships
Monitoring and evaluation	Gender mainstreaming
Appropriate ICT	Promoting the right to education

The role of outside support was also addressed. While the CLC concept is sound, as evidenced by the large number of centres throughout the region, its implementation remains challenging, and there is great disparity in achievements both within and between countries. As initial local enthusiasm for a CLC wanes in the face of day-to-day operational challenges, ennui and apathy may set in. A multi-layer of support that includes centralized policy

organization, state- and district-level backstopping, and donor assistance can help to offset these challenges. This support can be made through mechanisms (such as seed money for the initial pilot set-up and operation, technical support, capacity building for management and training, resource development at the national and regional levels, support in inter-country collaboration and information sharing, and finally, technical support for centre sustainability and expansion).

Box 4. Lessons learnt from CLCs

- Pay careful attention to the selection of rural communities (establish sound criteria).
- Undertake a careful assessment of needs and the dynamics of selected communities (for sustainability).
- Training: including assistance to strengthen management and operation of CLCs, in establishing linkages/partnerships.
- Link education with a variety of income-generating and other community development activities; CLC links beyond the education sector are essential.
- Network among NGOs, government and international organizations to share experiences, attract funding.
- Involve all citizens in the communities.
- Integrate environmental issues and other relevant issues specific to the community.
- Provide sufficient reading and learning materials (library).
- Compile community database (demographic/ location of services/resources/ local expertise and other information).
- CLC may serve a cluster of villages to reach out to a larger population and to save resources.

Lessons in improving access – participant approaches

The following strategies were presented by country participants during the workshop as approaches to improving access for ERP:

- Early childhood education programmes – inculcating the education process early to begin the approach to lifelong learning, and freeing young mothers to continue their own education.
- Rurally sensitive school mapping – recognizing that rural communities are not monolithic – it was noted that small schools, although expensive,

can provide unity and maintain social aspects of a community (Cambodia); boarding schools can effectively bridge distances (Malaysia, Mongolia); clustering may improve efficiency (Lao People's Democratic Republic); and multi-grade teaching is a cost-effective formula (Cambodia, Malaysia).

- Reaching out through developing linkages between extension services and community-based organizations.
- Distance education programmes employing ICT.

2.1.2 Promoting relevance and quality

In considering relevance and quality, the workshop focused on how to shape education programmes to fit local rural conditions, thereby empowering rural people to create sustainable livelihoods.

Curriculum change to improve relevance

Curriculum localization emphasizes the involvement of local teachers and authorities in the development of lessons to make education for rural people more relevant, and therefore, more effective. Through the process of integrating the realities of the community by consulting with local authorities, experts, and parents, curriculum localization becomes not only a way to improve the quality of education in the school setting, but also a way to involve the community, as a whole.

Of course, one practical implication of developing a local curriculum is the need for competent local staff who can carry out the task, as well as sufficient resources. Another crucial stage in carrying out curriculum change involves communicating to the public and stakeholders new teaching approaches to avoid misunderstanding and resistance. Here, the concern for balance was emphasized. The intent in changing curriculum for local relevance is *not* to destine rural students to a rural life, but rather to make lessons more meaningful for them, and thus improve quality.

One way of providing this balance is through the decentralization of a country's national curriculum. Decentralization allows districts or schools greater autonomy to design their own syllabus based on national standards. Effective decentralization includes the following: mobilization of local resources, sharing of best practices, information exchange, strong commitment of stakeholders, identification of relevant key messages, availability of leadership at all levels, and government and community support.

Basic education for sustainable development

With half the participants representing agriculture ministries, this presentation discussed issues of relevance and quality more extensively in relation to agricultural aspects of the rural environment. The effects of schooling on food security and sustainable rural development depend not only on the number of years of exposure to the schooling system, but also on the quality and relevance of the education received.

The workshop heard several reasons why quality and relevance of education in rural areas is often lower than in urban areas. They included factors relating to the curriculum (such as lack of agreement on education for who and for what; problems of participation of the underprivileged and marginalized; urban bias and irrelevance to local needs; minimum focus on skills for life and sustainable development) and factors relating to teaching and teacher capacity (traditional pedagogies; under-qualification and de-motivation of teachers; lack of support to teachers and schools in rural areas and institutional constraints; need for capacity building of teachers, teacher trainers and education advisers; and the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on teacher numbers).

Given the opportunity costs (especially in the form of field labour) of education for rural people, most rural parents are particularly concerned with the relevance of education to their children and to themselves. The type of schooling offered affects parental willingness to incur the costs of education. Parents are more willing to educate their children if they find the curriculum relevant and the quality of schooling adequate to local conditions.

The importance of creating national strategies that truly combine and actively integrate rural development needs and basic education was stressed. However, such cases are still rare, and this shortcoming is often due to a division of responsibility, with one ministry having responsibility for basic education, and several other ministries (rural development, agriculture, forestry, water, health, etc.) addressing their own projects. Many donors have to work through a particular ministry, and hence, donor support tends to be fragmented, as well.

In order to assist in creating strategies for integrated education, several questions were posed:

- What are the characteristics of a relevant education for rural people?
- What are the skills needed for learners to enhance food security and rural development?
- To what extent is an approach to learning these skills reflected in national policies?
- How are these skills addressed through teaching and learning in primary schools?
- What strategies would allow effective teaching and learning among rural people?
- What recommendations can be made for policy formulation and implementation?

A number of means of answering these questions were identified: (a) global and country-specific literature reviews; (b) interviews with key informants; (c) semi-structured individual interviews with education officials; (d) semi-structured individual interviews with primary school head teachers; (e) semi-structured group interviews, mapping and ranking with primary schoolteachers; (f) semi-structured group interviews, mapping, ranking and structured individual interviews with primary school pupils; and (g) structured individual interviews with parents. It was noted that primary school children could also act as co-researchers, interviewing their parents. Based on the findings of such research, some characteristics of a relevant curriculum can be formed (see *Table 2.2*).

Poor-quality and irrelevant education for rural people exists at all levels; improvements can first be made at the primary school level, where children develop their basic attitudes and approaches to learning. Curricula should be streamlined to avoid or reduce overload from non-essentials and to focus on the main priorities (see *Table 2.3*). In order to increase the pace of rural development, schools must teach children the essential skills of the primary curriculum by combining core content with local content.

Table 2.2 Some characteristics of relevant basic education

	Requirements	Possible indicators
<i>Input factors</i>	<i>Relevance of the curriculum and teaching practices</i>	
	Relevant curriculum content	– Conformity of curriculum to local rural conditions
	Relevant teaching methods	– Variety in teaching methods used (e.g. active student involvement, group work, practicals) – Application of learner-centred teaching – Use of mother tongue in early years
<i>Input factors</i>	Students' assessment	– Frequency of students' assessment – Frequency of feedback on homework and assessment
	Contextualization of teaching and learning	– Degree of linking theory with practice, related to students' experience
	<i>Availability of relevant teaching and learning materials</i>	
	Access to textbooks, reading materials and teacher guides by students and teachers	– Availability of relevant textbooks and reading materials to students – Availability of teacher guides and background materials to teachers
	Availability of other teaching and learning materials	– Use of locally available resources in teaching and learning – Use of the local environment in teaching and learning (e.g. school garden, trees around the school, agricultural practices)

<i>Facilitating conditions</i>	<i>Parent and community participation in schools</i>	
	Operational support for the schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Monetary and/or in-kind contributions – Labour contribution (e.g. construction, site preparation)
	Community participation in school governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Activeness of parents, school committees, school boards – Authority, functions and roles of the committees
	Communication between school staff and parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Frequency and usefulness of communications between parents and school staff – Frequency of school public events
<i>Facilitating conditions</i>	Involvement of community in the education process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Parents assist and monitor students' homework – Community members serve as information resources
	<i>Enabling school environment</i>	
	Regular communication between school head, teachers and students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Frequency of staff meetings – Head teacher works closely with teachers and shares responsibility – Frequency of student-teacher interactions
	Positive attitude of students and teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Low absenteeism – Degree of students' participation in classroom – School day and classes start and end in time
	<i>Capable teaching force</i>	
	Qualified teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Quality of pre-service teacher education – Frequency and suitability of in-service teacher training – Motivation of teachers – Subject-matter knowledge
	Teaching staff stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Closeness of teachers to the school – Percentage of teacher turnover – Number of years teachers have taught in the same school

Outputs	<i>Skills as learning outcomes</i>	
	Students' performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Examination results – Skills acquired
	Economic returns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Productivity of students

Source: T. Vandenbosch, T. Nanok and E. Tollens (*Appendix 4*).

Table 2.3 Skills for agriculture, food security and sustainable rural development

Basic skills needed for agricultural production

- Literacy (reading and writing)
- Numeracy
- Basic decision-making and problem-solving skills
- Technical and vocational skills in agriculture; land and water management

Additional skills needed for food security and sustainable rural development

- Planning skills
 - Management skills
 - Social, interpersonal and communication skills
 - Negotiation skills
 - Facilitation skills
 - Critical thinking (necessary for fostering innovation and change)
 - Food preservation and processing skills
 - Marketing skills
 - Leadership skills
 - Business skills
 - Income-generating skills
 - Entrepreneurial skills
 - Awareness about social, political and legal institutions (necessary for the development of skills for effective participation in civil society)
-

Source: T. Vandenbosch, T. Nanok and E. Tollens (*Appendix 4*).

Finally, schools should tap into people and learning resources for teaching children about their rural environment, agricultural skills, and other practical skills and knowledge that complement the academic curriculum. Teachers should be encouraged to connect children to their local rural environment. Likewise, rural communities should be encouraged to use schools as centres for education and social activities beyond primary school. Rural schools

should be hospitable to adult literacy classes, extension activities, women's groups, community functions, and other activities and events. This not only brings parents into the school, it also helps transform the school into a multi-function learning and meeting centre and puts it at the centre of the community.

Lessons in improving relevancy and quality – participant approaches

The following strategies were presented by country participants during the workshop as approaches to improving relevancy and quality for ERP:

- *Focus on sustainable livelihoods* – while poverty reduction and agricultural productivity were important, the realities of rural labour transfer and urban migration patterns must also be taken into consideration.
- *Social, cultural and political dimensions must not be overlooked* – recognizing that different nations have different needs (Malaysia's need to encourage 'national unity' as a cause for a common curriculum in contrast to Indonesia's need to recognize local cultural differences, propelling a localized curriculum).
- *Participatory approaches to needs assessments* – encouraging local-level stakeholders to participate in the decision-making processes involved in curriculum development.
- *Competency-based curricula* – that allows for leeway in adapting national standards to the local rural environment.
- *Pay special attention to recruiting and retaining qualified rural teachers* – realizing that teachers are a key component to provision of a relevant and quality education, offer financial incentives, honorariums, support mechanisms, and improved living conditions.
- *Provide certification of non-formal education programmes* – that acknowledges the value of education at whatever the level, and reinforces the value of providing quality at the non-formal level as well.

2.1.3 Promoting equity

Two panel presentations looked at equity issues as regards gender, and as regards ethnic and underserved minorities. The second discussion of ethnic minorities, presenting a specific programme focused on the Pwo Karen hill-tribes of northern Thailand, is detailed in *Box 3* (under *Section 1.8*).

Gender in education for rural people

In addressing gender equity in education for rural people, policy-makers needed to consider more than just the number of girls versus boys enrolled in school, as was often the approach. Parity constitutes a first step, but true equity required equal opportunities to attend school, equality in the learning process, of learning outcomes and of job opportunities and earnings. In no country is this yet the case.

Although it was acknowledged that in some Asian countries girls have an advantage as far as opportunities to attend school – because of cultural practices (i.e. older boys, especially, often stay at home to learn the important work of supporting the family through farming) – the equity imbalance in education is overwhelmingly biased against girls. UNESCO figures show that two thirds of the 115 million children not attending school are girls, and not surprisingly, two thirds of the 860 million illiterate adults are women. The majority live in rural areas, which limits economic opportunities of livelihood even more for those adults without even the basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Inequity in education is, thus, not only a major infringement of the rights of women and girls, but also an economic and social development obstacle. The workshop recognized that the higher the level of educational equity, the more positive the impact on economic growth, fertility rates, health, farm productivity and labour supply.

In order to improve equity for ERP, a number of barriers need to be overcome: (a) persistent poverty and limited access to all kinds of social services; (b) costs (direct and opportunity) for access to education that are high for rural people; (c) socio-cultural resistance to girls' education; (d) low teacher qualifications (often one- (male) teacher schools); (e) poor school environment/infrastructure or lack/absence of schools, incomplete schools and distance from home to school; and (f) curriculum not contextualized enough, language of instruction often being a problem.

As a start, participants were urged to accelerate their work on gender equality. To achieve this, notice needed be taken to the collection of qualitative data and reliable sex-disaggregated data from rural areas. The progress that Indonesia and Cambodia have made on this front was noted. Appropriate strategies such as flexible delivery also needed to be more widely implemented and, finally, government decision-makers had to accept

the challenge of allotting greater expenditure per child for those living in rural areas.

Lessons in improving equity – participant approaches

The following strategies were presented by country participants during the workshop as approaches to improving equity for ERP:

- *Target research on gender and minority groups* – in order to identify both quantitative and qualitative inequities in education for rural people and access needs. Look at disparities in urban versus rural areas, and within the rural area.
- *Set government policy that supports/encourages equity programmes* – only through increased attention and budgets can equity in education be achieved.
- *Use a positive discrimination approach* – that gives gender and ethnic rural minorities an edge through enrolment advantages, scholarships, training programmes, and subsidies.
- *Promote non-formal education programmes* – that specifically target factors and subjects that motivate girls/women and minorities to learn.
- *Take note of language and cultural differences that can be a barrier to wider learning* – with awareness that education of different ethnic groups is not just a teaching process, but a learning process of how best to make programmes effective.
- *Involve the community in the education process* – whether it be changing perceptions about the need for girls to attend school or the feeling of being a member of a marginalized group, the more communities participate in learning, the greater the understanding of and value for education.

2.2 Choosing appropriate approaches

The workshop examined programmes representing two very different, but successful, approaches to effectively educating rural people. The first presentation discussed the Thai Education Foundation's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) field schools, a comprehensive programme that uses the local environment as a tool for learning. Conversely, the second Thai RuralNet project employs a formerly 'outside' learning tool – computers – to strengthen the experience of education for rural people.

2.2.1 Integrated learning

Integrated pest management, farmer field schools and REAL education

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

Currently, IPM education projects are underway in Thailand and Viet Nam. The approach in Thailand, aptly titled REAL education (Rural Ecology and Agricultural Livelihoods), receives support from both the ministries of education and agriculture, as well as FAO support of the IPM component. The Viet Nam project, meanwhile, owes its existence to support from academic collaboration (Cantho and Michigan state universities) and corporate financing. The speaker noted that one significant difference between the two countries was leeway to create curriculum: Thailand allows for 20 per cent of curriculum content to be localized, whereas Viet Nam's curriculum is entirely determined at the central ministry level.

The REAL approach is based on the Farmer Field Schools framework used for adult education, but while adults use the field observations as a basis for making decisions about crop production and protection practices, school students use these observations as a starting point for learning about a wide range of topics: food chains and life cycles, water pollution, soil erosion, biodiversity, and pesticide use. Rather than being textbook concepts, the subjects become tangible, and are not only used to educate about the environment, but carry over to other academic subjects: science projects, mathematics exercises, art, and even essay writing and poetry. Exhibitions are organized to share this work with the community.

One of the biggest carry-overs to the community, however, has been the programme's lessons regarding the dangers of pesticide overuse. Realizing that rural children are most vulnerable to pesticide poisoning, and therefore could act as instigators of change, REAL education programmes have involved children in the surveying of parent and neighbour farmers. Presentations of survey results in village meetings have had a dramatic

impact on local awareness of pesticide problems and the spraying behaviour of farmers. As the workshop heard, farmers' assessment of the pesticide issue can change when their own children explain to them in a community meeting, backed up with scientific data, that their practices put the whole village at risk. It is thus that farmers begin to take an interest in IPM, seek technical support through collaborating with agriculture extension agents and Farmer Field Schools, and bring the project into a full community development circle through increased learning, decreased use of pesticides and increases in the number of organic gardens.

As for the students, benefits such as increased confidence in knowledge, ability to present reports in front of people, ability to see connections among different components (water, soil, insects, fertilizer and rice yield), maturation of positive self-image, and building of social relationships were noted.

In implementing integrated approaches such as IPM/REAL education, the following should be noted: (a) such approaches can link schools more closely to their communities in ways that support student learning and community development; (b) schools act as a catalyst for community development through the '3 Ds': Demonstration, Direct contact, Diffusion; (c) integrated projects require an effective support system involving local organizations on the community side for technical support; and (d) effectiveness depends on affecting the core of teaching: the learning process.

2.2.2 Decentralization

Thai RuralNet

This project is also based on the premise of providing education not for academic performance per se, but for making life better in a concrete way. Towards this aim, Thai RuralNet advocates a decentralization of the education process that provides local communities with the capability to determine their educational needs. This capability is gained through working together as equal partners in education with government and international assistance, providing information, facilities and learning resources such as computers.

Two projects that illustrate the various ways that computer technology can be implemented have, thus far, been undertaken by ThaiNet. One is a collaborative effort with a community 4-H group; the other, a larger university-based project that networks rural scholars. The first not only instructs rural youth about how to use computers, it also introduces them to

methods of seeking information pertinent to them through a web site focused on education for rural people. This web site employs drawings, photos and user-friendly tools to make the learning process fun, as well as educational. Information gained from and created on the computer is then reinforced with real-life experiences provided through the 4-H agricultural programme.

The rural scholar network is based on the idea that ICT can be a very important tool for disseminating rural-skills knowledge. Rural scholars with experience in a variety of agricultural and livestock skills document different aspects of their expertise. The information is then backed up with a video demonstration of the information, and easy-to-use computer screens formatted in the language of the target community. Such an approach not only allows for documentation of traditional rural knowledge, it allows computer users to determine what information is important to them, and focus in on it, to make for a very concrete, localized approach to learning.

2.3 Developing targeted assessment, monitoring and evaluation instruments for ERP

All participants were urged to ensure that their EFA national plans included (a) realistic monitoring of ERP strategy closely related to national EFA priorities; (b) ERP monitoring, assessment and evaluation work plans; and (c) capacity building for EFA-ERP monitoring and assessment. Considering that what cannot be measured, cannot be implemented, data collection plays a vital role in achieving successful EFA programmes, particularly in regards to scaling up pilot programmes into national programmes. This information, however, must be the right information. The ERP assessment strategy focus is not on simply improving more of the same, but on how to reach non-achieved targets, neglected rural groups and improve quality. Any assessment strategy would need to consider the increasing marginal costs of education for more inaccessible rural populations (e.g. cost of providing education to 1,000 in the city versus linguistic minorities in remote regions), and recognize that what may be a standard formula for 'success' in an urban area, would not be effective in certain 'non-standard' rural environments. The need for innovative, non-conventional approaches that are cost-effective in the context of the target environment was emphasized.

Table 2.4 Education for whose needs? Sub-national analysis of disparities

Who are neglected? What knowledge, skills? How to increase access Cost-effective delivery How to decrease disparities Contextual indicators analysis Contextual gender analysis	Early childhood	Formal basic education	NFE out-of-school youth and adults
Remote isolated communities	?	?	?
Subsistence farming/fishery areas	?	?	?
Seasonal itinerant/nomadic workers	?	?	?
Minority language groups	?	?	?
Learners with disability/special needs	?	?	?
Rural poor and homeless	?	?	?
Rehabilitation of prisoners	?	?	?
Refugees and displaced population	?	?	?
List relevant neglected groups	?	?	?

Source: UNESCO Bangkok presentation.

Workshop participants needed to consider the following questions in identifying indicators for assessments, monitoring and evaluation of rural learning needs:

- What rural groups have little or no access to quality and relevant education?
- What information do you need to analyze their needs and performance?
- Are the available indicators adequate, reliable and timely for planning, monitoring and evaluation of ERP?
- Which agencies should work together to collect relevant data on their learning needs annually?

- Give some examples of good practices concerning data collection and analysis for regular monitoring.

The workshop was then presented with lists of indicators for global EFA, MDG Education and EFA fast-track monitoring, and reminded that now is the time to develop mid-decade assessments since development of plans takes from two to four years. A number of countries were identified as having unreported data in the 2003 Global Education Statistical Digest, and workshop participants were reminded of areas that should not be overlooked in providing monitoring indicators:

- Education finance and expenditure
- Literacy
- Urban/rural and socio-economic data
- Marginalized target groups
- Data on ECCE
- Life skills
- Geographical data for school mapping (GIS)

Though lack of monitoring and evaluation structures in a programme can be political – projects that are implemented without concern for monitoring are usually intentionally destined to fail – it was recognized that many more countries simply lack the capacity to effectively collect data, which require both resources (skilled manpower, materials, facilities, logistical support, capital investment in infrastructure and recurrent operational costs) and institutional development (leadership and management operations, systems development and maintenance, administrative structures, regulatory systems and working procedure/task management). The importance of collaboration with international and donor communities in statistical capacity building (SCB) partnerships with a specific focus on ERP was stressed. Such partnerships, as with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) can serve a number of purposes: (a) improve the quality of data collected in each country; (b) build national capacity of data collection and analysis; (c) improve the analysis of EFA progress and correspondingly the process of monitoring ERP; (d) develop measures for the performance of international agencies, bilateral agencies, and NGOs and their partnerships with countries; and (e) facilitate the exchange of information and data collection methods between countries.

These partnerships work on two fronts. At the country level, they assist with diagnoses of needs and feasibility, policy anchor for national action plans, pilot projects, national products, and full-scale national implementation. At the regional level, partner collaboration provides peer review for generalization and quality assurance, generic modules with tools, test application through mutual technical assistance, and dissemination.

The presentation concluded with a reminder for all countries to report any new national systems of definitions, such as that for ‘urban’ and ‘rural’, to UNESCO.

2.4 Group discussion and recommendations

Participants from the agriculture and education sectors further focused on evaluating development plans for rural people in their respective fields. The groups examined the following guidelines:

- What can be done to promote access, equity, relevance, and quality education and training for rural people?
- What concrete actions are needed to strengthen collaboration between agriculture and education sectors?
- What concrete recommendations would you make?

2.4.1 Education

Access and equity

- Certify non-formal training.
- Target scholarships at underserved groups (girls and minorities, as appropriate).
- Educational assistance for the poor and needy (scholarships, free uniforms, relief from school fees, etc.).
- Employ mobile teaching techniques – employing qualified parents or community members.
- Create distance-learning infrastructure through use of ICT and follow-up classes.
- Evaluate distance learning through monitoring systems based on open university in each country.
- Provide boarding schools in remote areas.
- Interface parental participation/work at schools with school fees to contribute towards defraying costs.
- Address parent perception of opportunity costs by integrating education with development programmes that improve family income.
- Address cultural values that limit educational opportunities for girls through empowering approaches such as take-home rations and community daycare.
- Develop innovative supportive systems for teachers and community members to implement active learning methods and help farmers in income generation.

Relevance

- Balance local (20 per cent) and national curriculum content (80 per cent).
- Teach the existing curriculum using community/human/material resources to promote active learning.
- Have a national standard based on competency rather than detail mandated content.

Quality

- Provide better pay/incentive for teachers, especially for rural areas.
- Give national recognition awards for teachers in rural/remote areas, as well as for local 'experts' that contribute to education rural areas.
- Develop innovative support systems at the school and classroom level to help teachers use active learning techniques.
- Encourage adequate data collection focusing on the issues affecting target groups.

Concrete actions for ministry collaboration

- Create an enabling policy environment focusing on strengthening collaboration across ministries.
- Allow for cross-ministry collaboration through short-term exchange of staff.
- Support innovative cross-sectoral projects at the ministerial level.
- Create collaborative mechanisms at the district level.
- Extend ministry collaboration more to non-formal education projects.

Concrete actions for UNESCO/FAO

- Continue programmes to bring policy-makers together.
- Follow up with technical support, sponsoring visits to successful programmes.
- Provide training and assistance on monitoring and evaluation procedures.
- Generate sources of financial project support.
- Link the flagship programme with the upcoming World Decade on Education for Sustainable Development activities.

2.4.2 Agriculture

Access and equity

- Overcome barriers to meeting needs through extension, education and training.
- Target village groups that are already well-organized, including improvement clubs for rural communes, rural youth clubs, farmers' organizations, indigenous people's organizations, herders (Mongolia), mass organization and trade unions (Lao People's Democratic Republic).
- Consider availability and proximity of educational training facilities: All countries provide training and educational facilities for agriculture either operated by local, provincial, district and sub-district, county and township governments. Instruction is also done through demonstration farms and farmers field schools. Some state colleges and agriculture universities are also operating educational and training centres.
- Ensure availability and use of appropriate delivery systems (all countries use radio and TV; information extension media e.g. poster, leaflet; computer and mobile phone; in China, use of DVD to transfer technology).
- Some state colleges and agriculture universities are also operating agricultural training centres.

Relevance

- Regularly assess needs. Since agriculture is needed based and depending on the season, regular assessment of training and education must be done by various stakeholders.
- Plan an appropriate education and training curriculum to be very flexible, give attention to livelihood and job generation activity, and incorporate regular monitoring.

Quality

- Ensure the availability of qualified staff.
- Give high priority to resource allocation through counter-parting.

Concrete actions for ministry collaboration

- Co-ordinated planning.
- Counter-parting schemes.
- Collaboration between experts and trainers.
- Joint activities such as IPM that incorporate agriculture subjects in the education curricula.

- Complementary relationships between resource people and trainers.
Concrete actions for FAO/UNESCO
- Implement joint projects.
- Provide expertise and funding.

Conclusion

The 2004 flagship workshop on ‘Addressing learning needs of rural people through national plans for agriculture, rural development and Education for All’ concluded with observations from workshop organizers, David Atchoarena, Malcolm Hazelman, and A.H.A. Hakeem.

David Atchoarena provided an overview of the workshop. He reflected on the variety of rural populations that were discussed through the country reports. He reminded participants that in designing education strategies for rural people, policy-makers must first know the specific rural community they seek to target. Noting that ‘rural is plural’, he underscored the heterogeneous character of rural populations, and emphasized the importance of assessment programmes in establishing ERP. Yet, while not monolithic, one commonality did exist for rural people: higher rates of poverty. Thus, if countries were to achieve growth and overcome development challenges, they would necessarily need to increase efforts in education for rural people. In emphasizing the need for specific strategies, however, he stressed that disparities in rural/urban education do not simply go away with development, but rather, must be continually evaluated and addressed.

In considering the country reports, David Atchoarena noted both bad and good news. On the negative side, countries reported rural poverty in spite of economic growth, food security challenges, underserved minority and at-risk populations, and higher costs for education for rural people. He cautioned participants that cost was not merely a planning issue, but also a political issue that reflected the extent to which governments are willing to spend to educate their rural people.

On the positive front, the country reports suggested that ERP was given greater recognition since the flagship’s creation in 2002. He expressed hope that the flagship programme would continue to further this progress, and encourage increased attention from both the ministries of education and agriculture in participant countries. He lauded the specific policy attention that China and Indonesia had given to educating their rural people. Additionally, country reports indicated that rural schools could have a comparative advantage: allowing for innovative pedagogy that combined theory and practice, strengthening linkages with the local community, and even inspiring renovation of the entire educational system.

The workshop then reviewed directions for improving education for rural people through improvements in relevance, access, quality and equity. Relevance was crucial not only for raising the level of education, which could result in migration out of the rural community, but more pointedly, for creating sustainable livelihoods in the rural community. Similarly, the need for competency-based curricula in adult education programming was underscored. Participants were urged to consider the social, cultural and political dimensions – and sensitivities – of education planning, as well, which required participatory approaches when assessing needs.

In addressing the issue of access, country reports showed a positive trend towards starting education early through pre-school programming. Not only was such a development good for the child, but often good for the mother, who could be freed up to continue her own education. Rurally sensitive school mapping (small localized schools, boarding schools, clustering, and multi-grade teaching), linkage with extension services or CLCs, and distance education programmes were also welcome strategies that countries employed to improve access.

Certification of non-formal education and creation of learning pathways between formal and non-formal education were recognized as ways to improve quality of ERP. Countries reported that the main challenge to improving quality, however, was the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers. Strategies to address this challenge included provision of financial incentives to rural teachers, outside support mechanisms and recognition, and improved living conditions/housing.

Improvements in equity, it was noted, were most successful when done through targeted policies for improvement. Thailand's specific curricula for Karen hill-tribe communities served as an example, as did positive discrimination models of financial support for target groups in Cambodia, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines and Viet Nam. Finally, the promotion of non-formal education and basic adult education was underscored as essential in bridging the equity gap.

Participants were reminded of the need to choose appropriate approaches when planning and managing ERP programmes. While approaches such as integration of sectors, decentralization of curricula, and collaboration among education and agriculture authorities had, in general, proved greatly successful, such strategies could only prove effective given appropriate country conditions: i.e. adequate local-level organization, central-level support, public-sector culture conducive to collaboration, etc. Likewise,

data gaps from the region indicated a need for monitoring, and evaluation instruments that specifically addressed rural populations. Such instruments needed to be formulated/expanded at (a) the country level, to collect relevant data on ERP and produce targeted indicators related to specific policy objectives; and (b) the international level, to include ERP in the global EFA monitoring process. Participants were provided with a sample of indicators for rural statistics.

David Atchoarena concluded his remarks with a word of thanks to all the participants and his colleagues from FAO and UNESCO Bangkok. He particularly welcomed the first-time participation of the UNESCO INRULED Office from Beijing. In closing, he stressed the need for ongoing efforts and collaboration, most especially at the operational country level, from which any success in ERP had to come.

Malcolm Hazelman stated that he was pleased by the progress participant countries had made in ERP since the first flagship workshop in 2002. Noting the flagship's objective of fostering collaboration and partnership both between ministries and among countries, he hoped that participants would continue the efforts on which they had reported during the workshop, and build on lessons learnt and relationships made through the flagship. He furthermore challenged participants to follow up with their ministers of education – many of whom had been attending a concurrent conference on EFA in Bangkok – to accentuate the ERP component in EFA programming. He thanked all who participated in the workshop and looked forward to future collaboration.

A.H.A. Hakeem credited the efforts all participants had made in preparing very useful reports for the workshop. He encouraged the country participants to maintain the strong work that had been reflected in their reports, and give further attention to capturing hard, disaggregated data for rural populations. In emphasizing the importance of such data, he reminded them that the future agenda for their efforts must ultimately come from the rural people themselves.

Special gratitude was conveyed to the Government of Thailand and to the Italian Development Cooperation for their generous support of the workshop. In conclusion, participants were assured that their input and the resulting documentation from the workshop would be used in planning future flagship activities.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Information note

Rationale and justification

The World Food Summit (WFS – Rome, 1996) *Plan of Action*, the *Dakar Framework for Action* (Dakar, 2000) for achieving Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), provide both the political framework and a set of actions to meet commitments made by governments to reduce by 2015 the number of poor, undernourished and illiterate people to *half* their present level and ensure universal primary education. The majority of the undernourished, the poor and illiterate are in rural areas. In order to meet the targets of the WFS, of the EFA goals, of the MDGs and of the WSSD, it is crucial to focus on ‘Education for Rural People’ – within the global partnership initiative launched by FAO and UNESCO during the WSSD – and to ensure that investment in the basic education of rural people becomes a key aspect to achieve poverty reduction, food security and sustainable development.

In demographic terms, many educational and poverty-related problems are largely rural problems. More than half of the world’s population and more than 70 per cent of the world’s poor are to be found in rural areas where hunger, illiteracy and low school achievement are common. Educating people in rural areas is crucial for achieving sustainable development. Poverty reduction strategies are now placing emphasis on rural development that encompasses the concerns of all those who live in rural areas. Such strategies need to address provision of basic education for many target groups: children, youth and adults, giving priority to redressing gender imbalances and the urban bias/lack of relevance of the curriculum. This complex and urgent challenge should be addressed systematically, through appropriate policies, strategies and implementation mechanisms of national rural development and Education for All action plans.

The lack of basic learning opportunities is both a contributing cause and an effect of rural poverty in many countries in Asia. Even where schools exist, various economic and social obstacles prevent some children, especially girls, from enrolling. The opportunity cost of schooling is one of the main obstacles for poor families, who often count on their children’s labour and

earnings. In addition, ‘school learning’ may appear quite irrelevant with respect to the more immediate survival needs in many rural settings.

This workshop offered an opportunity to review the extent to which concerns of rural people are addressed through policies, strategies, and implementation mechanisms in the national rural development and EFA plans of selected countries in Asia.

Seminar objectives

- Present and discuss the main findings from country reviews of the extent to which concerns related to learning needs of rural people are addressed through national agriculture, rural development and EFA action plans of selected countries in Asia.
- Facilitate knowledge sharing among planners and implementing partners of rural development and EFA action plans based on good practices and lessons learnt to improve planning and implementation of activities to support rural people.
- Explore ways of promoting partnerships (including intersectoral co-operation) at national, subregional and regional levels to better address concerns of rural people within the framework of poverty reduction, food security and rural development strategies, as well as EFA strategies.

Participants

Participants included high-level government representatives from ministries and agencies in charge of educational planning and for human resource and rural development in ministries of education and agriculture. Representatives of NGOs involved in education projects in rural areas or/and in rural development projects with a strong component in education and training, were also invited. Discussions focused primarily on topics linked to basic education in rural areas. They dealt with issues such as decentralization, improving the relevance and quality of learning in rural areas, promoting greater focus on skills development, sustainable development, innovative approaches to teaching in rural areas, addressing the special problems facing ethnic minorities including language of instruction, addressing the shortage of teachers and poor quality of teachers, and health and nutrition issues, including HIV/AIDS.

Methods of work

The workshop involved two types of sessions:

1. Presentations and discussions in plenary
2. Group work.

Through presentations and discussions in plenary and group work, the workshop provided a platform for sharing among participating countries ways of undertaking better analyses of the education contexts and needs of rural people, the development of better policies, innovative strategies, and effective implementation, monitoring and assessment mechanisms within the framework of achieving the WFS, the WSSD, the MDG and the EFA goals. Opportunities were provided to share innovative strategies for increasing access to hard-to-reach rural groups – such as working children, remote populations in mountainous areas and small islands, nomadic populations, refugees and internally displaced people, rural disabled people and other rural marginalized groups. Attention was also focused on ways of increasing access through school feeding programmes, non-formal approaches to education, the use of alternative delivery systems – including distance learning, expansion of early childhood programmes and measures such as the training and employment of more female teachers and scholarship programmes to increase enrolment of girls. Discussions also focused on sharing effective strategies and good practices on improving the quality of education through better incentives for rural teachers, increasing the relevance of curriculum to the needs of rural people, using appropriate teaching learning materials, and encouraging greater involvement of the community in education and better use of appropriate information technologies.

Preparation for the workshop

Guidelines were sent to selected participants to help them prepare their reports.

Participating officials:

- from the ministries of agriculture and rural development were requested to review their agriculture and rural development plans and strategies and prepare a report on the extent to which basic education for rural people is addressed in them;
- from the ministries of education were requested to review their national EFA action plans and prepare a report on the extent to which the rural situation has been analyzed and rural concerns reflected in the plan.

Participants from the ministries of agriculture, rural development and education were also invited to make reference in their presentations to innovative strategies designed to meet issues relating to: (a) access to, and the quality of basic education and training for rural people; and (b) enhancing intersectoral co-operation.

Acknowledgement

This workshop was organized with the financial support of the Italian Development Cooperation (DGCS).

Appendix 2:

The role of relevant basic education in achieving food security and sustainable rural development⁴

T. Vandenbosch⁵, T. Nanok⁶ and E. Tollens⁷

Introduction

Effective poverty reduction policies, programmes and projects require a dynamic interplay between different sectors. These include quality basic education,⁸ agriculture and sustainable rural development. The challenges in these fields are enormous, especially in rural areas of developing countries where food insecurity, poverty and educational deprivation often create a vicious circle from which underprivileged households and communities are unable to escape (Watkins, 2000). It is therefore timely and essential to explore feasible measures in which the interrelated issues of food security,⁹ sustainable development and relevant basic education can be tackled together, focusing on interventions that have the greatest effect on poverty reduction.

4. Paper presented at the FAO/UNESCO Workshop on “Addressing Learning Needs of Rural People through National Plans for Agriculture, Rural Development and Education for All”, which took place from 25 to 26 May 2004 in Bangkok, Thailand.
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6. Tutui Nanok, Assistant Social Scientist, Farmers of the Future, Training and Education Unit, World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), Kenya.
7. Professor Eric Tollens, Department of Agricultural and Environmental Economics, Catholic University of Leuven (K.U. Leuven), Belgium.
8. While the term ‘basic education’ refers to the teaching of basic mathematics, literacy and other skills to children and adults, in formal, non-formal and informal settings, this paper is concerned only with schooling at the primary level. Thus, we use the terms ‘basic education’ and ‘primary education’ interchangeably
9. Food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their daily needs and food preferences for an active healthy life.

Many development strategies have tended to treat equitable access to quality education and food as separate issues. It is still rare to find national strategies that really combine and actively integrate rural development and basic education. This is often due to a division of responsibility, with one ministry having responsibility for basic education, and perhaps several other ministries (rural development, agriculture, forestry, water, health, etc.) addressing their own remits (Vandenbosch *et al.*, 2002; Atchoarena and Gasperini, 2003). Many donors have to work through a particular ministry, and hence donor support tends to be fractionated as well.

There is quite some literature available on some aspects of the linkages between education and development. Many studies have looked at the impact of the number of years of education on productivity. While there is substantial evidence on the benefits of greater educational attainment for subsequent productivity, evidence on the role played by educational relevance is scarce. This paper looks at how the relevance of basic education influences food security and sustainable rural development. There are several recent initiatives around the world aiming to improve the relevance and effectiveness of basic education by linking learning to rural environments with a focus on issues such as agriculture, forestry, land and water management, sustainable development or environmental protection. Some of these experiences would suggest that successful projects in education for rural people have the potential of affecting rural livelihoods. However, little is known on how these programmes aiming at improving educational relevance can contribute to food security and sustainable rural development.

The hypothesis of our study is therefore: “The effects of schooling on food security and sustainable rural development will depend not only on the number of years of exposure to the schooling system, but also on the quality and relevance of the education received.”

Education and rural development

Private economic returns to schooling are substantial. The importance of basic education to improving individual lives has been argued from various perspectives. From a narrow perspective of agricultural improvements, basic education improves farmer productivity. From a somewhat broader perspective of food security and rural development, it facilitates off-farm employment and the economic development of rural areas. Often the returns are highest for primary education, more moderate for secondary education

(some studies suggest however that the returns on secondary education are comparable to those for primary education), and lower (but still considerable) for higher education.

Education affects development through its enduring impact on various dimensions of cognitive competence: literacy (reading and writing), numeracy and problem-solving (Scribner and Cole, 1999). These cognitive skills affect an individual's productive behaviour and ability to use the products of technological change correctly.

Education is a cornerstone of sustainable rural development; primary education is its foundation. It improves the productive capacity of rural societies and their institutions. There are various explanations of why schooling contributes to economic productivity and development (Carnoy, 1995). These include the following:

- Individuals acquire skills in school that enable them to be more productive.
- What individuals learn in school makes them more likely to adopt new technologies and practices.
- Schooling helps individuals function more effectively in modern production organizations.
- Schools socialize people into functioning effectively in modern society.
- The discipline of learning taught in school helps individuals learn new skills outside of school.

Basic education and agricultural productivity

Of particular importance for rural development is the productivity of farmers, since the vast majority of the rural poor depend on agriculture and natural resources for their livelihoods. The direct effect of basic education on agricultural productivity is well documented. Workers and farmers with more education are generally more productive than those with less education. Four years seems to be the threshold beyond which education pays off, at least in rural areas of developing nations, particularly in Asia. Kurosaki and Khan (2004)¹⁰ showed that the effects of primary education on crop productivity are positive but the additional gain from higher education is small.

10. This is a study in rural Pakistan.

Lockheed, Jamison and Lau (1980) summarized the findings of 18 studies containing 31 data sets from 13 developing countries. They concluded that 4 years of primary education increased the productivity of farmers 8.7 per cent overall and 10 per cent in countries undergoing modernization (largely in Asia). Education increased the ability of farmers to allocate resources efficiently, and enabled them to improve their choice of inputs and to estimate more accurately the effect of those inputs on their overall productivity. Phillips (1994) reviewed an additional 12 studies using 22 data sets (with more recent data and greater representation of Latin America), and confirmed these general trends. He considers that the average increase in output owing to an additional four years of schooling in the studies is 10.5 per cent.

Appleton and Balihuta (1996) point out that these surveys included only two African studies (both on Kenya), and that education was not found to be significant in either. They review several additional African studies and find that the effect of schooling on agricultural output is usually not significant, though in some cases it can be large, indicating that there is substantial variation in returns to schooling both within and between the areas surveyed. The authors suggest several possible reasons for the lack of significance of education in the African studies, including small sample sizes (for a few of the studies), errors in measurement of farm production, and wide variation in the actual effects of education on agricultural output in different areas and under different farming systems. These reviews illustrate the need for further investigation of the effects of education on farm productivity in Africa.

Numeracy and literacy are developed through basic education and are both very valuable skills for rural farmers. Farmers who can read, write and understand numbers can allocate inputs efficiently, and thus increase productivity (Jamison and Mook, 1984). Numeracy helps farmers estimate the profitability of past activities and the risk of future ones. Reading and writing help farmers keep records and properly apply agricultural technologies. Cotlear (1986) stresses the relationship between education and technological innovation by emphasizing the importance of non-cognitive aspects of education – such as receptivity to new ideas – which put the educated farmer more easily in contact with new technologies. A modern or technically changing agricultural environment is correlated with higher returns to education (Phillips, 1994).

Education also affects production by developing analytic modes of problem solving. Cotlear (1986) notes that education increases the ability of farmers to think abstractly, enabling them to recognize the causal relation

between technology and output. An example of this comes from Eisemon's (1989) survey of farmers in Kenya, which examined the effect of primary education on the cognitive skills of farmers. Farmers who had been to school were able to construct causal models of events in the natural world and to demonstrate how these events could be controlled by humans. They were able to observe, diagnose and correct common agricultural problems better than farmers with fewer years of education. They actively sought to solve problems, while unschooled farmers did not. Farmers' understanding of how technology could improve productivity was enhanced by a primary curriculum that taught science in conjunction with farming practice, and that emphasized scientific theory over memorization.

Gurgand (2003) showed that education provides a higher relative advantage – and therefore has a higher economic value – when the environment is more unstable and more difficult to deal with. This gives empirical support to the notion that education improves the capacity to adapt to change and disequilibria, on top of its static technical effects.

Facilitating off-farm employment

Successful rural development goes beyond increased productivity in agriculture, and the provision of quality primary education has efficiency enhancing effects on various rural activities. Expansion of off-farm job opportunities, particularly via small- and medium-sized enterprises, is a necessary condition for reducing the size of the agricultural population and labour force (Tollens, 2002; Tollens, 2003). Changes in the occupational composition of the labour force – formal and informal, prevent overcrowding on the land and make possible higher levels of productivity and per capita income (Johnston and Clark, 1982). Youth and adults who seek a transition from farming to off-farm employment often require basic skills in literacy and numeracy, if not the experience of formal learning and discipline that comes from attending school. They need to be able to make business transactions, to weigh and measure, and to read documents.

Increasing the educational attainment of farm households is affecting off-farm activities, including the reallocation of time away from farm work. Off-farm work has a higher return to education than does farm work (Jolliffe, 2004). Households with better-educated members will therefore act more quickly in devoting more capital and labour to non-agricultural activities (Fafchamps and Quisumbing, 1998; Yang and An, 2002; Yang, 2004). As a result of these allocative effects, education contributes significantly to sustained rural income growth.

Educational relevance in rural areas

During the past ten years, nearly every developing country has made a concerted effort to get more children into school. In many countries, enrolment numbers and ratios have increased impressively. Successful strategies for educating children in rural areas, however, remain somewhat elusive. The curriculum¹¹ may be overloaded, irrelevant to rural communities and ineffective at teaching such essentials as mathematics and science; or teachers may use little discretion in adapting the curriculum to what students know and what their needs and interests are. This makes learning difficult for rural children, who see little relevance of what is being taught to their own experiences at home and in their communities.

Great inequities in the quality of schooling still exist between rural and urban areas. Results on a test of children in Bangladesh to measure basic skills, for example, found the proportion of urban children satisfying the criteria to be more than double that of rural children (Greaney *et al.*, 1998). Another study in Peru (Cotlear, 1986) found a particularly marked difference in quality of formal education between urban and rural schools. The effects of urban schooling on productivity were found to be much stronger than those of rural schooling.

The quality and relevance of education in rural areas is often lower than in urban areas due to a combination of factors (Vandenbosch *et al.*, 2002):

- Factors relating to the curriculum:
 - Lack of agreement on education for who and for what.
 - Problems of participation of the underprivileged and marginalized.
 - Urban bias and irrelevance to local needs.
 - Minimum focus on skills for life and sustainable development.
- Factors relating to teaching and teacher capacity:
 - Traditional pedagogies, underqualification and demotivation of teachers.
 - Lack of support to teachers and schools in rural areas and institutional constraints.
 - Need for capacity building of teachers, teacher trainers and education advisers.

11. Curriculum: the knowledge and skills to be taught and the methods used for teaching.

- The HIV/AIDS pandemic negatively affects the number of teachers, especially in rural areas with relatively small schools, where the death of a teacher may result in the disruption of schooling, if the teacher cannot be replaced rapidly (Haacker, 2002).

These rural-urban inequities have severe consequences for rural development.

Basic education that is seen to be relevant to rural people's learning needs (and of good quality) would better be able to attract and retain learners (Atchoarena and Gasperini, 2003). The type of schooling offered affects parental willingness to incur the costs of education, because most parents are concerned with the relevance of education and the quality of teaching. Parents are more willing to educate their children if they find the curriculum relevant and the quality of schooling adequate (Spohr, 2002).

The role of relevant basic education

The World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and the Catholic University of Leuven (K.U. Leuven) have initiated a research project aimed at understanding the ways by which relevant basic education in rural areas can contribute to achieving food security and sustainable rural development. This is achieved by gathering and summarizing information about basic education initiatives in rural areas that have used agricultural or environmental experience as a means of making teaching and learning more relevant to the rural situation, and by assessing the impact of this kind of approach on food security and sustainable rural development.

Within this framework, the project is trying to address the following specific research questions:

- What are the characteristics of a relevant education for the rural space?
- What are the skills needed for learners to enhance food security and rural development?
- To what extent is an approach on learning these skills reflected in national policies?
- How are these skills addressed through teaching and learning in primary schools?
- What strategies would allow effective teaching and learning in the rural space?

- What recommendations can be made for policy formulation and implementation?

Methods used in the research include: a global and country-specific literature reviews; interviews with key informants; semi-structured individual interviews with education officials; semi-structured individual interviews with primary school head teachers; semi-structured group interviews, mapping and ranking with primary schoolteachers; semi-structured group interviews, mapping, ranking and structured individual interviews with primary school pupils; and structured individual interviews with parents. The research team is multi-disciplinary, with experts in educational science, food security and rural economics. Primary schoolchildren also act as co-researchers, interviewing their parents.

Although the research is still at its initial stage and most of the actual fieldwork still has to be carried out, we have tried to describe some of the preliminary findings on the following pages.

Characteristics of relevant basic education

We have summarized some of the characteristics of relevant basic education in *Table 2.2*.

Skills formation for food security and sustainable rural development

By skills formation we mean the development of social capacity for learning, innovation and productivity (Brown, 1999). Thus, rather than seeing skill acquisition simply as a technical issue, this approach aims to take account of the economic, political and cultural contexts within which skills are defined and learned. Skills themselves are understood to be more than just narrow technical competencies, and also include interpersonal, communications, teamwork and creative skills. Both the learning of skills and their practice are acknowledged to be inherently social rather than individual in nature (Tikly *et al.*, 2003). Even the practice of subsistence agriculture is more than just the application of technical skills.

The importance of basic skills, notably numeracy and literacy, is recognized in most countries as a foundation for further development and basic education is given a high priority. Low literacy levels are sometimes recognized as a problem in developing agricultural and other basic vocational skills (Tikly *et al.*, 2003). However, the role of basic education goes beyond that of laying a foundation for an individual's occupational skill development. There is considerable reference in the literature to the notion of 'externalities', that is, "the value of a well-educated workforce in

general which helps the ability of a nation to adjust quickly to changes in technology and markets” (Kuruvilla and Chua, 2000).

We have listed some of the skills needed for agricultural production, food security and sustainable rural development in *Table 2.3*. Not all of these skills will be addressed directly through primary education. The role of primary education is to lay a foundation that will allow these skills to be developed through non-formal, informal and further education. Most of the skills are interlinked and are used simultaneously in practice.

Recommendations: How to make education relevant to rural people

The relevance of basic education is a major concern in rural areas of the developing world. When schools are relevant and educate many children well, the process of rural development can occur relatively quickly; when schools are bad and educate few children well, education’s impact on development is relatively slow. Sound investment in human and social capital appears to be an essential part of any good economic strategy for broad-based and equitable rural development.

The problems of education quality and relevance in rural areas need to be recognized and addressed through coherent, explicit policies and strategies. There is strong evidence that the quality and relevance of schooling can influence productivity. Efforts to expand basic education programmes to reach more learners in rural areas need to be accompanied by measures to ensure that the content, quality, delivery and relevance of those programmes effectively meet learners’ needs. Policy-makers and others have to seek ways to make the content and approaches of primary education more meaningful and effective within the context of sustainable rural development.

Although poor-quality and irrelevant education exist at all levels, improvement must begin at the primary school level, where children develop their basic attitudes and approaches to learning. Improving the quality and relevance of education for students in primary schools is a prerequisite for developing the human resource base required to meet the changing demands of rural labour markets. To initiate a deeply rooted and sustainable process of rural development, human capital strengthening must be broadly based and allow a progressively larger share of the general population to participate in the process of economic transformation.

Teachers are the key to effective learning and relevant basic education. Successful educational innovation lies largely with the teacher, as the interpreter and deliverer of the curriculum. Unfortunately, teachers are often inadequately prepared and supported in their work. Increased efforts to reorient teacher education courses and programmes towards relevant teaching and learning can empower teachers to play an important role in making basic education relevant. The capacity of the teacher to interpret the curriculum and relate it to the local rural context will depend on a number of factors, including personal motivation, competence in a range of teaching and learning strategies and professional attitude, especially towards learners. The recruitment and training of teaching staff in villages should be encouraged, as this will allow relying more on available local skills and talent.

While rural schools should not look like urban schools, they must offer the same opportunities as urban schools for children to advance through the school system to higher levels. Though the national curriculum is often poorly suited to rural schools, modifications must be acceptable to all stakeholders, including ministry officials and parents.

Curricula should be streamlined to avoid or reduce overload from non-essentials and to focus on the main priorities. To increase the pace of rural development in developing countries, schools must teach school-age children the essential skills targeted by the primary curriculum. Curricula should combine core content with local content.

People and learning resources for teaching children about their rural environment, agricultural skills, and other practical skills and knowledge that complement the academic curriculum should be made available to schools. Schools should be encouraged to connect children to their local environment.

Communities should be encouraged to use schools as centres for education and social activities beyond primary school. Schools should be hospitable for adult literacy classes, extension activities, women's groups, community functions, and other activities and events. This not only brings parents into the school, it also helps transform the school into a multi-function learning and meeting centre and puts it at the centre of the community.

Collaboration is required to train extension agents and primary schoolteachers to listen and respond to expressions of needs and problems outside of their own professional setting. Extension agents can learn to deal not only with agriculture, and teachers not only with schools, but instead, both can deal with the broader rural space.

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