

# EDUCATION FOR RURAL PEOPLE



THE ROLE OF **EDUCATION, TRAINING AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT** IN **POVERTY REDUCTION AND FOOD SECURITY**



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Reprinted 2009

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ISBN 978-92-5-106237-1

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## Foreword



his publication was developed to assist policy-makers dealing with rural poverty, food insecurity and education challenges confronting rural people. It seeks to address the correlation between education, empowerment and food security, mainly through a number of “good practice” case studies from all over the world. It is about strengthening their capacity to achieve food security.

Education in all its forms has the potential to empower people, by increasing their self-confidence, their capacity to improve their livelihoods and their participation in wider processes of social and economic change. This book identifies different dimensions of education and training for rural people that have proven useful in developing peoples’ capacity to enhance food security. It covers formal as well as non-formal education, literacy as well as skills training.

At the international level, these different dimensions of education and training for rural people are dealt with by a variety of stakeholders, including the UN agencies. This publication is the result of the review of a collaborative effort between FAO, UNESCO and about 350 partners aiming at contributing to the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action and the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All (EFA).

FAO and Italy have consistently supported efforts aimed at providing stronger linkages between food security and education issues. While the dramatic food crisis, exacerbated by the serious financial and economic crisis has given impulse to a renewed effort of the international community to reduce the impact of these events on poor people and to prevent future emergencies, we are more than convinced that education for rural people must be an essential part of this endeavour. Education for Rural People (ERP) is a worldwide call to action for educating all rural children,


youth and adults. The great majority of the so-called “hard-to-reach children” are concentrated in rural areas. Giving them a wider access to education has been identified by the G8 as one of the crucial issues of development in the field of education. It responds not only to the basic need of reducing inequalities and creating equal opportunities for all, but also to the imperative of providing rural people with better tools, skills and capacity.

We hope that this publication may contribute to further focusing the efforts of the international community in this field and to highlight the task of tackling both simultaneously, namely food security and education, which deserve equal attention and priority.

**Jacques Diouf,**  
Director-General  
Food and Agriculture Organization of  
the United Nations (FAO)

**Franco Frattini,**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
Italy

## Acknowledgements

his book could not have been prepared without the assistance of many individuals who contributed their time, energy and expertise. The authors would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge these contributions. Special thanks go to Reginald Seiders for his work in developing the case studies used throughout the book and to Ingemar Gustafson, Janice Albert, Vera Boerger, Renzo Rosso, Teresa Savanella, Pieter Van Lierop for their kind review and their comments to the manuscript.

Most importantly, the authors wish to thank the Direzione Generale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (DGCS – Directorate General for Development Cooperation) of the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs for the financial support in publishing and disseminating this document.

The authors wish also to thank the FAO Electronic Publishing Policy and Support Branch (KCII) for the important collaboration, as well as Alessandro Spairani, Francesca Bertelli, Véronique Le Vavasseur Todini for their very capable assistance during the preparation of this document, Elena Mazza for final editing, Pietro Bartoleschi for design and lay-out, Arianna Guida (studio Bartoleschi) for desktop publishing assistance and Marzio Marzot for his photo archive and advice.

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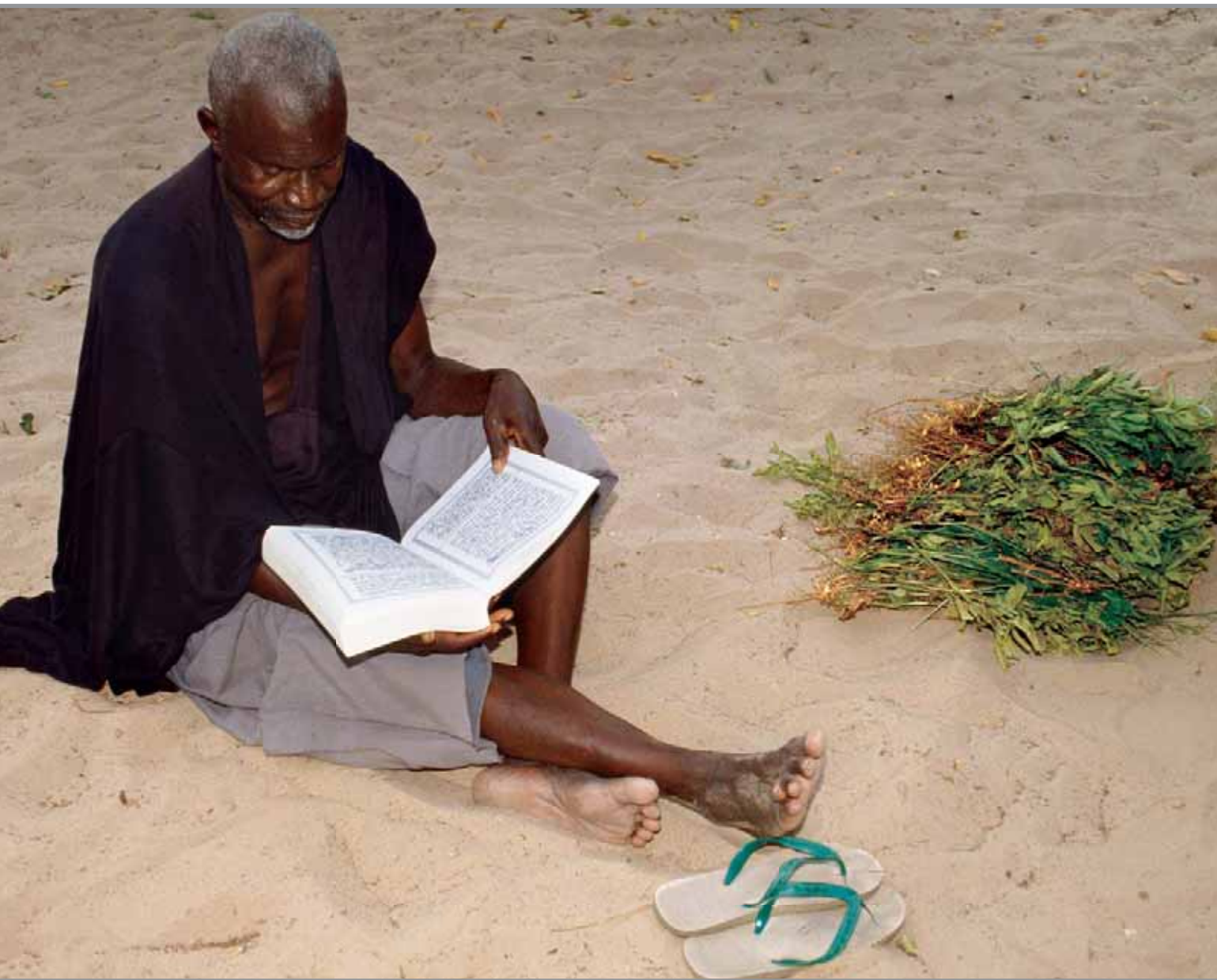


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## Acronyms

- ADB** African Development Bank
- ACE** Community Education Association
- ADEA** Association for the Development of Education in Africa
- AdexFAR** Appui au développement de l'expertise en formation agricole et rurale  
(Support to the valuation development in agricultural and rural training)
- AIDS** Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
- AKADEP** Akwa Ibom Agricultural Development Programme
- AprenDes** Innovaciones en Descentralización y Escuelas Activas  
(Innovations in Decentralization and Active Schools)
- BRAC** Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
- BRIGHT** Burkinabé Response to Improve Girls Chances to Succeed
- CCODER** Centre for Community Development and Research
- CDC** Community Development Committee
- CEC** Community Education Committee
- CGIAR** Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
- COPE** Community-Owned Primary School
- CSD** Commission on Sustainable Development
- CSRL** Center for Sustainable Livelihoods
- CSSP** Community School Support Programme
- DFID** Department of International Development (UK)
- DGCS** Direzione Generale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo  
(Directorate General for Development Cooperation)
- ECLAC** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
- EDUCO** Educación con Participación de la Comunidad  
(Education with Community Participation)
- EFA** Education for All
- EMIS** Education Management Information System
- EQUIP1** Educational Quality Improvement Program
- ERP** Education for Rural People
- ESCU** Educational Support to Children of Underserved Populations
- FAO** Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- FFS** Farmers Field Schools
- GDLN** Global Development Learning Network
- GFAR** Global Forum on Agricultural Research
- GTZ** German Agency for Technical Cooperation

**HIV** Human Immunodeficiency Virus  
**IBDR** International Bank for Reconstruction and Development  
**ICRAF** World Agroforestry Centre  
**ICT** Information and Communication Technology  
**IFAD** International Fund for Agricultural Development  
**IFPRI** International Food Policy Research Institute  
**IICA** Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture  
**IIEP** International Institute for Educational Planning  
**IWGE** International Working Group on Education  
**LTT** Local Task Teams  
**MAFRD** Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development  
**MDG** Millennium Development Goal  
**MEST** Ministry of Education, Science and Technology  
**NGO** Non-governmental Organization  
**OECD** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  
**OSCE** Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe  
**PRSP** Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper  
**RCDC** Regional Community Development Committee  
**SEMCIT** Sustainability, Education and the Management of Change in the Tropics  
**SFT** Strategy Formulation Team  
**SIDA** Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency  
**SIFE** Student in Free Enterprise  
**SOFI** The State of Food Insecurity in the World  
**TVET** Technical and Vocational Education Training  
**UN** United Nations  
**UN-DESA** United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
**UN-DPI** United Nations Department of Public Information  
**UNDP** United Nations Development Programme  
**UNESCO** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
**UNFPA** United Nations Population Fund  
**UNICEF** United Nations Children’s Fund  
**UPE** Universal Primary Education  
**USA** United States of America  
**USAID** United States Agency for International Development  
**USDA** United States Department of Agriculture  
**VEDCO** Volunteer Efforts for Development Concerns  
**WFP** World Food Programme  
**WSSD** World Summit on Sustainable Development



## Executive summary

A large, stylized green letter 'N' with a textured, brush-like appearance, positioned at the start of the first paragraph.

early one out of six people of the current inhabitants of the world is suffering from hunger and illiteracy and the majority of them are in Africa. Education for Rural People (ERP) is a policy approach aimed at contributing to the reduction of the 963 million food insecure people, the 776 million illiterate adults and the 75 million illiterate children within the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework.

Education, labour, land, livestock and infrastructure are the key assets enabling rural households to escape poverty, and ERP is one of the most powerful weapons against hunger. A 2007 report from the British Department for International Development (DFID) indicates that more than US\$ 11 billions are needed annually for education if Africa is to have any hope of getting all children into primary school by 2015.

This book presents a synthesis of lessons learned since the launch in September 2002 of the ERP global partnership designed to contribute to the acceleration of progress towards the MDGs.

ERP is one of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development of the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development. The partnership – launched during the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) - is a worldwide *call to action* to foster rural people's capability to be food secure, to manage natural resources in a sustainable way and to provide education for all rural children, youth and adults. The partnership aims at contributing to remove barriers that prevent poor people from using their capacity including barriers such as the urban-rural knowledge and education gap. ERP works through the identification of political, institutional, organizational and individual opportunities and constraints that poor people face in accessing education and training services at all levels of education in both formal and non-formal settings. ERP seeks to empower the rural poor to become fully integrated actors of the development process by promoting collaboration among the education, agriculture and rural development sectors to ensure education and skills training to all rural people. The strategy addresses



research, knowledge generation and sharing, advocacy, policy and capacity development, as well as normative and field work. ERP is also one of the nine flagships of the Education for All (EFA) programme led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The ERP partnership flagship operates under the leadership of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and in close collaboration with UNESCO.

The most important products of ERP to date have been the knowledge generated and disseminated, the innovations identified, and the lessons learned by ERP partners related to policy and practice in areas such as education quality and access, gender-responsive learning environments, parent and community engagement, and accommodation of non-traditional learners, to name just a few. These knowledge products formed the basis for national and regional capacity development meetings worldwide.

Education is essential to FAO, as indicated in its Constitution "... the Organization shall promote and, where appropriate, shall recommend national and international action with respect to: ... the improvement of education ... relating to nutrition, food and agriculture, and the spread of public knowledge of nutritional



and agricultural science and practice ...” (FAO, 1945, Article I, 2b), to achieve the following goals:

- >> “raising levels of nutrition and standards of living ...;
- >> ... bettering the condition of rural populations;
- >> and ... ensuring humanity’s freedom from hunger” (FAO, 1945, Preamble).

ERP employed a research-based policy approach involving both FAO and UNESCO in promoting multisectoral alliances between ministries of education and agriculture. ERP worked simultaneously at the policy and field levels with an emphasis on the policy work to ensure the highest impact in terms of cost-effectiveness.

Research was conducted to collect successful responses to challenges confronting policy-makers and government and civil society frontline practitioners working to provide effective education and training for rural people. This information, as well as ERP good practices and training materials, was published in the global repository of the knowledge base of ERP (<http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/>) and shared worldwide through electronic and print formats so that the public could benefit from the experiences of others working in this field. The following table summarizes some of the important challenges and responses identified.

CHALLENGES	RESPONSES
<p>① <b>Access to education and training</b></p>	<p>Positive discrimination policies and programmes for rural people including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt;&gt; education and training fee removal</li> <li>&gt;&gt; free access to learning materials</li> <li>&gt;&gt; school feeding programmes to improve attendance</li> <li>&gt;&gt; free school transport programmes</li> <li>&gt;&gt; expansion of the school network and training centre construction</li> <li>&gt;&gt; double-shift classes and after-hours adult education</li> <li>&gt;&gt; targeting the needs of specific rural groups</li> <li>&gt;&gt; satellite schools in remote areas for the youngest children and girls</li> <li>&gt;&gt; application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as appropriate</li> </ul>
<p>② <b>Quality of education and training</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt;&gt; improved teacher training professional development</li> <li>&gt;&gt; creation of conditions for teachers retention in rural areas and reduction of rotation</li> <li>&gt;&gt; design of training materials to address rural life problems</li> <li>&gt;&gt; combining academic and life skills for greater relevance</li> <li>&gt;&gt; use of school gardens as living laboratory and integration in school curriculum</li> <li>&gt;&gt; provision of a safe and adequate learning environment</li> <li>&gt;&gt; farmer participation in curriculum planning and training events</li> <li>&gt;&gt; use of improved monitoring and evaluation tools</li> </ul>
<p>③ <b>Decentralization and community involvement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt;&gt; combining national and local curriculum planning</li> <li>&gt;&gt; community participation in curriculum development</li> <li>&gt;&gt; community-based approaches to increase community ownership</li> <li>&gt;&gt; education that is relevant to rural livelihoods and the community</li> <li>&gt;&gt; parent-teacher associations to improve school resources</li> <li>&gt;&gt; involvement of community also through school gardens</li> <li>&gt;&gt; community monitoring of quality and relevance</li> </ul>
<p>④ <b>Gender responsive learning environments</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt;&gt; flexible training programmes to accommodate labour peaks</li> <li>&gt;&gt; well-supervised boarding facilities to safeguard women and girls</li> <li>&gt;&gt; school meals for all rural children</li> <li>&gt;&gt; take-home rations for girls as an incentive for families</li> <li>&gt;&gt; half-day farmer training for women with responsibilities at home</li> </ul>
<p>⑤ <b>Organizational and institutional efficiency</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt;&gt; coordination among ministries of education and agriculture</li> <li>&gt;&gt; coordination among public providers of extension and education, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector</li> <li>&gt;&gt; multi-stakeholder participatory planning of programmes to support ERP</li> <li>&gt;&gt; extension officers running adult basic education classes</li> </ul>



⑥	<b>Accommodating non-traditional learners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt;&gt; flexibility in the training and education calendar to accommodate weather, cropping patterns, nomadic movements</li> <li>&gt;&gt; providing education for out of school rural children, youth and adults (especially girls and women), retired child soldiers, refugees and displaced persons, people in inaccessible and remote areas, disabled persons, ethnic minorities, working children, the elderly, nomads and pastoral communities, people suffering from diseases, and others</li> <li>&gt;&gt; use of front-line extension staff to reach remote audiences, use of farmer-to-farmer training approaches, use of non-formal basic education approaches</li> </ul>
⑦	<b>Redefining agricultural education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt;&gt; revised curricula at technical and vocational agricultural education and training colleges for improved training of technicians</li> <li>&gt;&gt; improved training of trainers for agricultural education</li> <li>&gt;&gt; agricultural education that reflects the fact that both on-farm and off-farm competencies and skills are important to sustaining livelihoods of people in rural areas</li> <li>&gt;&gt; agricultural education that reflects changes in technology, global supply chains, market and health challenges, on-farm and off-farm employment, environmental changes, and enterprise development</li> </ul>
⑧	<b>Skills training for rural people</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt;&gt; increased and improved formal and non-formal skills training for youth and adults</li> <li>&gt;&gt; training for school drop-outs</li> <li>&gt;&gt; diversifying competencies and skills to reduce vulnerability and foster resilience to address shocks</li> <li>&gt;&gt; providing literacy and numeracy training together with skills training</li> <li>&gt;&gt; training in both life skills and job skills</li> </ul>
⑨	<b>Recruitment and retention of extension staff and school teachers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt;&gt; recruitment of teachers and extension staff from rural areas</li> <li>&gt;&gt; bonuses and higher salaries as incentives for rural staff</li> <li>&gt;&gt; provision of subsidized housing</li> <li>&gt;&gt; posting newly qualified staff in pairs</li> <li>&gt;&gt; creating career progression options</li> <li>&gt;&gt; provision of land and training in agriculture</li> <li>&gt;&gt; profit sharing in school-based income-generating activities</li> </ul>
⑩	<b>Effective pro-rural people-centred policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt;&gt; increased financing for ERP</li> <li>&gt;&gt; education and training data disaggregated for urban and rural people</li> <li>&gt;&gt; policies that recognize the diversity of needs of rural people</li> <li>&gt;&gt; policies that recognize agro-ecological and geographical circumstances as well as socio-economic and cultural differences of residents of rural areas</li> </ul>

## Key conclusions and policy considerations addressed in this book include

(see Conclusions for more details on this subject):

- >> **Considerable progress has been made.** Six years of policy, advocacy and capacity development work has led to important international recognition of ERP's key role in achieving the MDGs and especially of its key role in poverty reduction, food security and sustainable natural resources management.
- >> **Much work remains to be done.** Despite the important progress made towards all eight MDGs, according to the United Nations, "we are not on track to fulfil our commitments" (UN, 2008, p. 3).
- >> **ERP is an essential foundation stone for achievement of the MDGs.** Better educated rural people have better employment prospects, better health, greater food security, less vulnerability to shocks, and better coping mechanisms in dealing with the forces of climate change, food crises, globalization and challenges to cultural traditions.
- >> **ERP is a policy and programme priority.** National governments, international agencies, bilateral donors and NGOs need to increase their policy and programme emphasis on ERP. In particular, UNESCO and the World Bank, given their lead roles in EFA and the Fast Track Initiative can ensure ERP becomes an integral part of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and EFA National Plans.
- >> **Funding for ERP needs to be a national and international priority.** Major policy and resource allocation shifts will need to take place if significant progress is to be made in poverty reduction and EFA. ERP needs an increased share of public resource allocations and needs to be at the core of National Rural Development and EFA Plans.

- >> **Effective management of ERP requires reliable data.** Improved statistics as well as Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) are needed. Pro-poor policies call for the disaggregation of education and literacy data into rural and urban populations in the UNESCO international statistics, the EFA Global Monitoring Report, as well as within national EMIS.
  
- >> **Partnerships are essential to progress.** Partnerships among international organizations, governments, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, universities, the private sector, the media and others will continue to be an essential ingredient of a successful ERP initiative.
  
- >> **Intersectoral cooperation at national level.** Coordination between ministries of agriculture and education is essential if rural people are to be effectively served. Each has assets and expertise critical to these efforts.
  
- >> **Working as One UN.** Intersectoral cooperation at the international level is essential. As the lead agency for the ERP partnership, FAO will continue to advocate for stronger governmental commitments for a higher level of resources for ERP. UNESCO and the World Bank are uniquely suited for facilitating ERP implementation at the national level within their mandates to support the advancement of education and training and given their privileged dialogue with ministries of education. UNESCO's leadership and technical support to ERP at the country level during this next phase would need to be strengthened, and FAO is in a good position to contribute as a supporting entity to the work of UNESCO in the specific areas of FAO expertise.
  
- >> **Redefining agricultural education.** Today, a broader view of the life skills necessary to thrive in rural areas has emerged. There is a need to broaden the agricultural education paradigm to embrace the concepts of sustainable rural development.

- >> **Needs-based approach.** The “one size fits all” standardized education strategies are not effective in reaching rural people. Rural people have a variety of specialized needs that have to be addressed to expand access and improve quality of education and training for children, youth and adults.
  
- >> **There are many options for assisting rural people to develop their capacity.** These options have been successfully implemented in various countries around the world. This book was designed to support capacity development initiatives such as the 2009 UNESCO World Conferences, and further activities, including ERP specific initiatives.
  
- >> **Rural girls and women are the most vulnerable.** Rural girls and women suffer geographical and gender discrimination. Strategies to boost rural girls’ participation in education and female literacy include removing cost barriers, strengthening rural schools as gender-sensitive centres of quality learning, developing gender-sensitive learning content and school environments.
  
- >> **Rural youth are the future.** Youth of today are the leaders and the farmers of tomorrow. Rural youth represent the majority of the population in the majority of less developed countries and explicit focus on their needs and potential contributions to our common future is urgent.
  
- >> **The future challenges for ERP** arise from the fact that the vast majority of those excluded from education live in rural areas. Therefore, education for rural people is vital, urgent and essential if the MDGs are to be met.

Preparing rural citizens to engage successfully in knowledge-based economies, to respond to market and climate changes, to develop their resilience to address a variety of shocks, and to weather food crises associated with global economic shifts are essential to their well-being. Preparing rural people to be active citizens contributing to foster peace and democracy and enjoying long, healthy and creative lives is central to the achievement of the MDGs.



