

CONCLUSIONS
and
KEY POLICY
CONSIDERATIONS

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY POLICY CONSIDERATIONS REACHED IN THIS BOOK

- >> **Progress to date.** 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 alleviation, food security and sustainable natural resource management.

- >> **More work remains.** 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). There are many reasons for this, but lack of investment in education, training and capacity development of rural people is likely to be among the fundamental reasons for lack of progress.

- >> **The value of ERP.** ERP is a public good and a long-term investment. Expanding and improving ERP is expensive but absolutely essential. There are strong arguments for investing in ERP. 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. Social stability, peace and democracy have a direct relation with inclusion of all citizens in education.

- >> **ERP: a policy and programme priority.** Today's greater challenge for national governments, international agencies, bilateral donors and NGOs operating in education and training is to increase their policy and programme emphasis on ERP and ensure common monitoring of progress. The World Bank has increased its emphasis on agriculture and rural development. UNESCO, on the other hand, has de-emphasised the profile of "rural" in both its recent strategic plans and plans of work. UNESCO and the World Bank, given their lead roles in EFA and the Fast Track Initiative, can ensure that ERP becomes an integral part of Poverty Reduction

Strategy Papers and EFA National Plans. The EFA Fast Track Initiative can foster ERP by prioritizing support for those countries committed to promote education of their rural citizens.

- >> **Financing ERP: a national and international priority.** UN Secretary-General indicates that “failure to provide Education for All puts an entire generation at risk” and that “right now, children from poor communities, rural areas and minority groups are almost always struggling to learn under worse conditions than others in society” (UN-DPI, 2008). As indicated by the Beijing EFA High-Level Group meeting, ERP needs to be a priority in national and international public resource allocations. ERP needs to be at the core of national plans for EFA and obtain an increased share of public funding. Capacity development initiatives to support long lasting resource allocation and implementation of these plans are needed. As stated in the foreword to *Education for rural development: towards new policy responses*, “business as usual” and “more of the same” will not permit these targets to be met either in rural areas or at a global level. Major policy and resource allocation shifts will need to take place if significant progress is to be made in EFA and poverty reduction.
- >> **Reliable data on ERP.** Improved statistics as well as education management information systems are needed for effective policy planning, programme delivery, monitoring and evaluation of progress towards universal ERP and drawing lessons for better management and performance. Pro-poor policies call for disaggregated education and literacy data into rural and urban populations as is done for male and female populations in the UNESCO international statistics, the EFA Global Monitoring Report, as well as within national EMIS. Examples can be drawn from what is done for statistics of other development sectors.
- >> **Partnerships.** Partnerships among international organizations, governments, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, universities and others will continue to be an essential ingredient of a successful ERP initiative.

- >> **Intersectoral cooperation at national level.** At the national level, coordination between ministries of agriculture and education is essential if rural people are to be effectively served. Each of them has assets and expertise critical to these efforts, but neither has all the resources to pursue this alone. Coordination combined with capacity development for all professionals supporting ERP are important.

- >> **Working as One UN: intersectoral cooperation at the international level.** As lead agency for the ERP partnership, FAO will continue to advocate for stronger governmental commitments for a higher level of resources for ERP. FAO, as a knowledge-based organization, will continue to collect, analyze, interpret and disseminate the knowledge required for the world to meet the food and nutrition needs of all its citizens and to provide global governance “with respect to ... the improvement of education and administration relating to nutrition, food and agriculture, and the spread of public knowledge of nutritional and agricultural science and practice” (FAO, 1945). FAO remains the only global resource for research, policy and technical expertise on agricultural education and training. The FAO Programme of Work and Budget focuses prevalently on technician training, literacy, skills training and lifelong learning for rural people, including extension as a means to support the transformation of agriculture. UNESCO and the World Bank are uniquely suited for facilitating ERP implementation at the national level, given that this role lies within their mandate to support the advancement of education that can be effectively pursued through their privileged dialogue with ministries of education. EFA National Plans, the Fast Track Initiative, poverty reduction strategies and national rural development plans as well as the One UN initiative can yield significant results as the lessons from the ERP first phase are implemented. 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.** ERP will need to expand beyond the past approach whereby agricultural education for farmers was the primary focus of education in rural areas. Today, a broader view of the life and economic skills necessary to thrive in rural areas has emerged. There is a need to broaden the agricultural education paradigm to a paradigm of developing rural communities' capacity to promote sustainable rural development. Enhanced human capital in the rural space can be trained for increased on-farm productivity and for off-farm employment opportunities as well as learning that leads to improved social well-being, social capital formation and satisfactory livelihoods.
- >> **Needs-based approach.** The “one size fits all” standardized education strategy is not effective in reaching rural people. At the national level, the hallmark of the ERP implementation will be a systemic needs-based approach. Mapping education and training (including extension) diversified needs of rural people and targeted interventions for expanding access and improving quality of education and training for all children, youth and adults through relevant curricula are crucial to success. Moreover, since the Paris Declaration in 2005, the idea has emerged that capacity development is largely an internally driven, endogenous process that can be stimulated but not directed from outside.

- >> **Sharing policy lessons.** There are a number of policy alternatives to build rural people's capacity, self-esteem and resilience to address change and crises, many of which have been successfully implemented in various countries around the world. Dissemination of these lessons learned, best practices and research related to ERP is important to develop the capacity at national and regional levels to plan and implement effective policies. 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.** 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 developing school and training centre facilities that take into account the needs of girls and women.

- >> **Rural youth are the future.** Rural youth are the main protagonists for any future programme activity. 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 contribution to our common future is urgent.

- >> **ERP is a major challenge and an obvious opportunity.** The future challenges for ERP arise from the fact that the vast majority of those excluded from education live in rural areas. Therefore, ERP is vital, urgent and essential if the MDGs are to be met.



Final Communiqué of the Fifth Meeting of the High-Level Group on EFA

Maintaining the 2005 Beijing EFA High-Level Group Meeting recommendations on ERP

Education for rural people

“We, Heads of State, ministers, heads and top officials of multilateral and bilateral agencies, and leaders of non-governmental organizations, met in Beijing from 28 to 30 November 2005, at the invitation of the Director-General of UNESCO, for the Fifth Meeting of the High-Level Group on Education for All, whose central theme was literacy and education for rural people ...

12. Since the majority of those left behind and excluded from education live in rural areas, education for rural people is vital and urgent.
13. We recommend that Governments and EFA partners:
 - >> Invest more to reach and serve successfully the poorest, minorities, migrants, unorganised workers and other disadvantaged groups through best practices and other beneficial policies;
 - >> Design and implement targeted strategies, an intersectoral approach and strong partnerships to cater to the diversity of situations and needs;
 - >> In order to address the serious gap in the availability of teachers, design and urgently support strategies of teacher mobilisation and training programmes, including the UNESCO strategy for Teacher Training in sub-Saharan Africa. Where teachers remain insufficient in numbers, create alternative strategies and programmes.
 - >> Promote the quality of teaching and learning, with special attention to the strategies for placing, supporting and retaining qualified and trained teachers in rural areas and improving their working conditions;
 - >> Implement innovative measures, including curriculum reform, distance learning, non-formal education and application of ICTs, to improve relevance, respecting the diversity of local culture and languages, validating local knowledge and adopting flexible calendars; ...”

Source: Fifth Meeting of the High-Level Group on EFA 28–30 November 2005, Beijing, China. Final Communiqué



