

THE ERP PARTNERSHIP



After six years from inception, the ERP partnership is composed of a group of approximately 350 members committed to fostering ERP. ERP members represent the national and international public sectors including international organizations and governments, as well as media, academia, business sector and civil society like NGOs, farmers, youth and women organizations. Several volunteers have graciously supported the ERP Coordination Unit and the attendees of the ERP capacity development and other initiatives have provided invaluable inputs to shaping the ERP policy and knowledge. ERP utilized these partnerships to promote capacity development and the exchange of good practices as well as policy dialogue on ERP with member countries and international organizations and to promote cooperation among ministries of education and ministries of agriculture, donors and with the civil society. FAO has provided the physical, financial and technical resources to host the ERP Coordination Unit at FAO headquarters since 2002.

ERP PARTNERSHIP RESOURCES

Activities under this programme have been mainly funded by FAO regular programme and through financial support to FAO by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (DGCS), the Republic of San Marino, the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, and the World Food Programme (WFP). Additional support through non-cash resources was provided by UNESCO headquarters and UNESCO-IIEP through staff time as well as from other UNESCO units, notably the UNESCO regional offices in Bangkok and Santiago and the UNESCO office in Beijing.

The French Agency for Development in the framework of the *Appui au développement de l'expertise en formation agricole et rurale* (AdexFAR) project, the French Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Global Development Learning Network (GDLN) of the World Bank, the European Commission, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the Farmers of the Future initiative of the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), the Global Forum



on Agricultural Research (GFAR) and a network of NGOs from the North and the South as well as the US-based Iowa State University and some Italian, Colombian and British universities also contributed mobilizing cash and non-cash resources needed for the implementation of the ERP partnership activities. In addition, all members contributed through their involvement in ERP activities since this is the main condition for membership. The NGOs' contribution in fostering ERP at national and international levels has been and is very significant given that they are a key stakeholder in promoting field work with rural people. Hereafter follows a description of ERP activities.



RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND SHARING

ERP started with an in-depth global study revisiting the interaction among education, agriculture, food security and rural development, jointly conducted by FAO and UNESCO-IIEP and an assessment of the state of public policies on ERP and the concepts that inspire them. During this phase, interaction between specialized institutions was promoted, relevant data collected and analyzed, and findings from the study published in the book *Education for rural development: towards new policy responses*, which sets the policy framework for the ERP initiative (FAO/UNESCO-IIEP, 2003). The partnership expanded its research to the contribution of higher tertiary agricultural education to enhancing rural people's lives by publishing four case studies (FAO/UNESCO-IIEP, 2004b; FAO/UNESCO-IIEP, 2004c; FAO/UNESCO-IIEP, 2005c; FAO/UNESCO-IIEP, 2005d). Collaboration with EARTH University, with the Sustainability, Education and the Management of Change in the Tropics (SEMCIT)

seminar series and with Iowa State University, as well as specific capacity development workshops called by FAO and UNESCO on this topic were undertaken.

All these activities ensured that ERP would be developed according to a solid research base. A global repository of the knowledge base of ERP has been established at FAO and is accessible worldwide via the Internet (<http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/>) in five languages. An ERP Series, available in hard copy as well as online, has been publishing further ERP research and allowing the sharing of new knowledge and good practices. The DVD and online publication of the ERP Tool Kit with teaching and learning materials for formal and non-formal agricultural education and other subjects relevant to rural people's lives, for teachers and instructors, farmers, extension personnel and the general public (http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/ERPtktoolkit_en.htm) is an example of the focus placed on producing and sharing training materials to strengthen national capacity to promote ERP at country, regional and international levels.

POLICY DIALOGUE AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Through seven regional and three donors capacity development workshops, the partnership examined how the EFA National Action Plans as well as the Rural Development Plans were focusing attention on the educational needs of rural people. The regional workshops focused on ERP in Asia (FAO/UNESCO-IIEP, 2002; FAO/UNESCO-IIEP, 2006a), Latin America (FAO/UNESCO-IIEP, 2004b), Africa (FAO/UNESCO-IIEP, 2006b; FAO, 2007a) and the Caribbean (FAO/UNESCO-IIEP, 2006c) targeting decision-makers from the ministries of agriculture and education as well as civil society, international organizations and academia.

Through such activities, education policy makers and planners learned from agriculture and rural development staff involved in non-formal skills training and extension, and in technical and vocational and higher agricultural education. Extension, frequently marginalized by the rigidity of a single sector approach where formal and non-formal education are addressed as separate realities, benefited from the exchange of practices with other delivery modalities. National case studies on ERP were produced as part of the preparation of the seven regional workshops and studies on Eastern

Europe countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Kosovo, were also produced under FAO normative programme. These and other activities are reported in http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/ERPotheractivities_en.htm.

Overall, good progress has been made in mainstreaming ERP in the international policy agenda. ERP is included in a number of key policy statements like, for example, the Report by the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization to the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly (UN, 2004) on achieving the universal primary education goal of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. ERP was discussed at national and international policy forums such as the 2005 EFA High-Level Group Meeting held in Beijing, where ERP was identified as a strategic global policy priority for the coming years. The ADEA 2008 Biennale and the International Conference on Education (Geneva, 2008), the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (Bonn, 2009) have focused on equity in education and training and addressed the urban-rural education gap as key challenges to the achievement of the MDGs. Several other international events or policy documents acknowledging ERP importance are reported in the ERP site http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/ERPUNdocuments_en.htm.

ERP worked through its partners simultaneously at the policy, capacity building and grassroots levels. Both normative and field works were undertaken. Emphasis was on the policy level to ensure the greatest impact, cost-effectiveness and a multiplier effect (FAO/UNESCO-IIEP, 2005a). Other examples include the Kosovo Strategy for ERP (MEST/MAFRD/FAO, 2004) and the preparation of guidelines for planning and monitoring ERP implementation (FAO/UNESCO-IIEP, 2007b). The online tool kit responds to the need for competencies and basic skills that are in demand among rural people, such as management of crops and forests; soil and water management; land rights; issues related to animals and pastoralism; biodiversity, rural finance, agribusiness and marketing; book-keeping; fishery; food and nutrition; as well as other aspects important to sustainable livelihoods such as planning ERP, HIV/AIDS, gender, peace education and training for conflict management, and communication. The ERP Tool Kit is constantly updated through member's inputs and is available at http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/ERPtktoolkit_en.htm. The impact of the ERP partnership on the media is documented in http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/ERPArticlesPresslast_en.htm.

REASONS FOR SUCCESS

The magnitude of the endeavour to promote ERP cannot be addressed by any single organization or institution. The success of the ERP global initiative is attributed, among other reasons, to the following:

- >> partnerships forged have expedited and facilitated implementation;
- >> a strong partnership between FAO and UNESCO including active participation of Field Offices from both organizations;
- >> successful alliances and collaboration among ministries of agriculture and education, NGOs, international organizations and academic and research institutions and the media in developing countries and at international level;
- >> a holistic approach linking normative and pilot field work which facilitates the development of a sound foundation (theory) to move forward the partnership initiative;
- >> the strategic choice to focus the ERP programme on upstream policy and capacity development which ensures cost-effectiveness and a multiplier effect;
- >> the informal management style that allowed great freedom to explore ideas and build new relations and to operate at a very low cost; and
- >> permanent monitoring of the validity of our commitments – FAO's as well as those of partners.

THE ERP PARTNERSHIP WAY FORWARD

Educating all rural people is a huge challenge, and much is still to be done considering the number of illiterate adults and out of school children living in rural areas. The policy work being well established, it is now appropriate to shift to a phase whereby resources will be focused on implementation at country level. During this next phase, new investments will be needed at the national level. 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). UNESCO and the World Bank are uniquely suited to facilitating ERP implementation at the national level given that this role lies within their mandates to support the advancement of education at such a level. 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. FAO is in a good position to contribute as a supporting entity to the work of UNESCO in the specific areas of FAO expertise.

At the national level, the hallmark of the ERP implementation will be a systemic needs-based approach that fosters education (including extension) by expanding access and improving quality for all children, youth and adults. This can be done only by strengthening multisectoral and interdisciplinary institutional linkages and developing new alliances between ministries of agriculture and ministries of education as well as with civil society.

The educational needs of rural people have to remain a priority of international public organizations, donors, and in international deliberations and conferences. Specific focus on ERP is needed in the EFA Global Monitoring Report, and in declarations and recommendations of the next international conferences on poverty reduction and food security as well as on education, and at future EFA High-Level Group meetings.



