



# EDUCATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Towards  
new policy  
responses

A joint study conducted  
by FAO and UNESCO



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



UNESCO Publishing  
International Institute  
for Educational Planning

Education for rural development:  
towards new policy responses



# Education for rural development: towards new policy responses

*A joint study conducted  
by FAO and UNESCO*

Co-ordinated and edited by

**David Atchoarena,**

UNESCO/International Institute for Educational Planning

**Lavinia Gasperini,**

FAO (Sustainable Development Department)



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United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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International Institute for Educational Planning

7-9 rue Eugène Delacroix, 75116 Paris

e-mail: [information@iiep.unesco.org](mailto:information@iiep.unesco.org)

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## List of abbreviations

<b>ABE</b>	Adult basic education
<b>ABET</b>	Adult basic education and training
<b>AECOFABA</b>	<i>Associações Escola Família Bahia</i> (Brazil)
<b>AEP</b>	Agricultural engineering in production
<b>AET</b>	Agricultural education and training
<b>AICTE</b>	All India Council of Technical Education
<b>APPEAL</b>	Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (Bangkok)
<b>ARDC</b>	Agricultural Research and Development Centre
<b>AUH</b>	Agricultural University of Hebei (China)
<b>BEIRD</b>	Basic Education Integrated into Rural Development (Namutamba, Uganda)
<b>BRAC</b>	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
<b>CAEC</b>	Continuing Agricultural Education Centre
<b>CAU</b>	China Agricultural University
<b>CBR</b>	Community-based rehabilitation
<b>CDD</b>	Community driven development
<b>CEPT</b>	<i>Centro Educativo para la Producción Total</i> (Argentina)
<b>CICE</b>	Centre for In-service and Continuing Education
<b>CIH</b>	<i>Centre d'initiation horticole</i>
<b>CLC</b>	Community Learning Centre
<b>COSDEC</b>	Community Skills Development Foundation
<b>CP</b>	Community Polytechnics
<b>CPAR</b>	<i>Centre de perfectionnement des artisans ruraux</i>
<b>DFA</b>	Dakar Framework for Action
<b>DOA</b>	Department of Agriculture
<b>DTE</b>	Down-To-Earth Program (North Carolina, USA)
<b>EAT</b>	<i>Ecole d'agents techniques</i>
<b>ECD</b>	Early childhood development
<b>EFA</b>	Education for All
<b>EMEFR</b>	<i>Ecole nationale des monitrices d'économie familiale rurale</i>
<b>ENCR</b>	<i>Ecole nationale des cadres ruraux</i>
<b>ENEA</b>	<i>Ecole nationale d'économie appliquée</i>
<b>ERD</b>	Education for Rural Development

<b>ETE</b>	Emerging and transition economies
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>FFA</b>	Future Farmers of America
<b>FFS</b>	Farmer Field School
<b>FMDA</b>	Farm Machinery Dealers Association
<b>GBL</b>	Garden-based learning
<b>GCHERA</b>	Global Consortium of Higher Education and Research for Agriculture
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GER</b>	Gross Enrolment Ratio
<b>GNI</b>	Gross National Income
<b>HAE</b>	Higher agricultural education
<b>HIPC</b>	Highly Indebted Poor Country
<b>ICRAF</b>	International Centre for Research in Agroforestry
<b>ICTs</b>	Information and communication technologies
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally displaced persons
<b>IIEP</b>	International Institute for Educational Planning
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>IPM</b>	Integrated Pest Management
<b>IPPM</b>	Integrated Production and Pest Management
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>ITESM</b>	<i>Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey</i> (Spain)
<b>JIP</b>	Joint Innovative Project (China)
<b>LDCs</b>	Least developed countries
<b>MFR</b>	<i>Maisons familiales et rurales</i>
<b>MLA</b>	Monitoring Learning Achievement
<b>MOA</b>	Ministry of Agriculture
<b>MOE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>NAFTA</b>	North American Free Trade Area
<b>NARO</b>	National Agricultural Research Organisation
<b>NAU</b>	National Agricultural University of Ukraine
<b>NCC</b>	Namibia Chamber of Craft
<b>NEPAD</b>	New Partnership for Economic Development
<b>NET</b>	Nutrition Education and Training (California)
<b>NFPE</b>	Non-formal primary education
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>NORAD</b>	Norwegian Development Co-operation Agency

<b>NRM</b>	Natural resources management
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OPAM</b>	<i>Opera di Promozione dell'Alfabetizzazione nel Mondo</i> (Italy)
<b>PAPF</b>	<i>Programme alphabétisation priorité femmes</i> (Senegal)
<b>PBL</b>	Project-based learning
<b>POCET</b>	<i>Proyecto en Comayagua de Educación para el Trabajo</i> (Education for Work Project in Comayagua)
<b>PRA</b>	Participatory Rural Appraisal (Ghana)
<b>PRSPs</b>	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
<b>REFLECT</b>	Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques
<b>RNR</b>	Renewable natural resources
<b>SACMEQ</b>	Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
<b>SAP</b>	Structural Adjustment Programme
<b>SFEP</b>	Social Forestry, Education and Participation Pilot Project (Thailand)
<b>SIMCE</b>	<i>Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación</i> (Chile)
<b>SNED</b>	<i>Sistema Nacional de Evaluación del Desempeño de los Establecimientos Educativos Subvencionados</i> (Chile)
<b>SSA</b>	Sub-Saharan Africa
<b>SWAPs</b>	Sector-Wide Approaches
<b>TLC</b>	Total Literacy Campaign
<b>Triple A Approach</b>	Assessment, Analysis and Action
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UPE</b>	Universal primary education
<b>WA</b>	Western Australia

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## Definitions

*Adult education (or continuing or recurrent education):* The entire body of organized educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education (in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship), whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong, improve their technical or professional qualifications, further develop their abilities, and/or enrich their knowledge with the purpose:

- of completing a level of formal education;
- of acquiring knowledge and skills in a new field; and/or
- of refreshing or updating their knowledge in a particular field.

*Agriculture:* a broad class of resource uses which includes all forms of land use for the production of biotic crops - whether animal or plant. The term 'agriculture' is to be understood in a broad sense, to include fisheries, marine products, forestry and primary forest products.

*Basic education:* the whole range of educational activities that take place in different settings and that aim to meet basic learning needs as defined in the World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990). It thus comprises both formal schooling (primary and sometimes lower secondary) as well as a wide variety of non-formal and informal public and private educational activities offered to meet the defined basic learning needs of groups of people of all ages.

*Early childhood development (ECD) programmes:* programmes which offer a structured and purposeful set of learning activities either in a formal institution (pre-primary or International Standard Classification of Education 0) or as part of a non-formal child development programme. Early childhood development programmes are normally designed for children aged 3 years or above and include organized learning activities that constitute on average the equivalent of at least 2 hours per day and 100 days per year.

*Education for All (EFA):* in April 2000, more than 1,100 delegates from 164 countries reaffirmed their commitment to EFA at the World

Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal. They adopted the Dakar Framework for Action – a bold, practical document laying out goals and strategies for achieving Education for All.

*Education for rural people:* FAO and UNESCO launched in 2002 a new flagship within the Education for All (EFA) initiative with a focus on Education for rural people. The flagship is a call for collaborative action to increase the co-ordination of efforts targeting the educational needs of rural people. The partnership is open to members committed to working separately and together to promote and facilitate quality basic *education for rural people*.

*Flagship programme:* a series of inter-agency flagship programmes were launched or consolidated following the World Education Forum. These programmes focus on the major thrusts of the Dakar Forum, for which special co-operative efforts are needed. Each one is supported by a number of education-for-all partners. Some are led by UNESCO, while others by various United Nations agencies. FAO and UNESCO are joining efforts in the establishment of a new flagship within the Education for All (EFA) initiative with a focus on education for rural people.

*Food security:* a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

*Formal education:* education provided in the system of schools, colleges, universities and other formal educational institutions that normally constitutes a continuous ‘ladder’ of full-time education, generally beginning at age five to seven and continuing up to 20 or 25 years old. In some countries, the upper parts of this ‘ladder’ are constituted by organized programmes of joint part-time employment and part-time participation in the regular school and university system: such programmes have come to be known as the ‘dual system’ or equivalent terms.

*Functional literacy:* a person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective function of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his or her own and the community’s development.

*Informal learning:* a form of learning not structured or organized by any institution; it occurs through everyday interactions with the environment that offer new information and insights, e.g. through conversation, reading, radio and television broadcasts.

*Literacy:* a person is literate who can both read and write, with understanding, a short simple statement on his or her everyday life.

*Non-formal education:* any organized and sustained educational activities that do not correspond exactly to the above definition of formal education. Non-formal education may therefore take place both within and outside educational institutions, and cater to persons of all ages. Depending on country contexts, it may cover educational programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, life skills, work skills, and general culture. Non-formal education programmes do not necessarily follow the 'ladder' system, and may be of differing duration.

*Rural areas:*

- a space where human settlement and infrastructure occupy only a small share of the landscape;
- natural environment dominated by pastures, forests, mountains and deserts;
- settlements of low density (about 5-10,000 persons);
- places where most people work on farms;
- the availability of land at a relatively low cost;
- a place where activities are affected by a high transaction cost, associated with long distance from cities and poor infrastructures.

*Rural development:* encompasses *agriculture, education, infrastructure, health, capacity-building for other than on-farm employment, rural institutions and the needs of vulnerable groups*. Rural development aims at improving rural people's livelihoods in an equitable and sustainable manner, both socially and environmentally, through better access to assets (natural, physical, human, technological, and social capital), and services, and control over productive capital (in its financial or economic and political forms), that enable them to improve their livelihoods on a sustainable and equitable basis.

*The six Dakar goals (see also EFA):*

1. Expand early childhood care and education.
2. Free and compulsory education of good quality by 2015.
3. Promote the acquisition of life skills by adolescents and youth.
4. Expand adult literacy by 50 per cent by 2015.
5. Eliminate gender disparities by 2005 and achieve gender equality in education by 2015.
6. Enhance educational quality.

*Universal primary education (UPE):* full enrolment of all children in the primary school age group, i.e. 100 per cent net enrolment ratio.

*Sources:* FAO and UNESCO.

## Foreword

Despite unprecedented growth in world incomes and unparalleled improvements in global standards of living over the past few years, mankind has failed to rid the world of abject poverty and hunger. The numbers speak for themselves:

- 840 million undernourished people;
- 1.5 billion people who live without access to safe drinking water;
- 2 billion people who live without electricity;
- 860 million illiterate adults, more than half of whom are women;
- 130 million children out of school;
- 14 million children who have lost their mothers or both parents to AIDS.

Within each of these groups – and many of them overlap – the majority live in rural areas. Indeed more than 70 per cent of the world's poor are rural poor.

In this new millennium, in which our daily news is often dominated by terrorism, we know that inequalities feed delinquency and crime, which in turn frequently constitute a sign of the poor's exasperation with world inequalities. One of the major inequalities affecting the rural poor is their unequal access to quality education, which is so important for social and economic development.

The reduction of poverty, as well as food security and basic education form the core of the new discourse of development aid. However, the rural nature of these challenges is often overlooked. Poverty and illiteracy remain overwhelmingly rural phenomena. Poverty in rural areas is closely linked to illiteracy as well as to other forms of deprivation such as malnutrition, infant mortality, and poor access to water.

Urbanization will not solve the problem and, in fact, it is anticipated that over 60 per cent of the poor will continue to live in rural areas of developing countries in 2025. Rural poverty and illiteracy are not just transition problems or a crisis of adjustment in a process of modernization: they are structural development challenges.

The vast majority of the rural poor depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Therefore rural development faces a key challenge to achieve both poverty reduction and Education for All. Accumulated evidence, as well as development theories, teach us that education is a powerful instrument of economic, social and cultural change.

In order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, specifically the first two goals, which focus on reducing hunger and poverty by half and ensuring universal primary education by 2015, we need to change the traditional working modalities of international aid agencies and address the needs of the world's biggest neglected majority – rural people. This can be achieved through new multisectoral and interdisciplinary alliances and partnerships among aid specialists working in education and those working in agriculture and rural development. By taking the initiative of launching the research leading to this publication, FAO and the International Institute for Educational Planning of UNESCO have tried to take a step in that direction.

While reaching the rural poor might appear to be more costly and time-consuming than reaching the urban or peri-urban poor, we believe that this is a task that can no longer be neglected or postponed. If we want to contribute to building a world where peace prevails over war and terrorism, and prosperity over poverty, the cost-effectiveness of international aid for education for rural people needs to be analyzed in the long term and as part of a holistic approach.

A key message of this publication is that 'business as usual' and 'more of the same' will not solve the education problem in rural areas. The challenge is to find specific modalities to address the demand and supply issues that education faces in these areas. The challenge is also to link education interventions with broader poverty reduction and rural development efforts. Education for All will never be achieved in areas affected by poverty, high mortality, gender and other forms of discrimination.

But as we talk of reform and development, let us not forget the particular qualities of education for rural people that could be exported to schools in urban areas and make the latter richer – pedagogically, intellectually and academically – precisely by being more practical in

orientation. Rural life has fertilized education in many ways and this rich heritage should not be ignored and lost, but nurtured and enriched.

In industrialized countries, the social environment of children is increasingly devoid of adults – the adults they interact with are parents and teachers and a few others. There no longer exists the gradual and growing participation in the adult world and the world of work, where the grown-ups impose discipline and set the tone and the tasks at hand that need to be done. Bringing the life outside of school back to school is hence a great pedagogical challenge, and especially in modern and urban schools.

Education in rural areas takes place at many different levels, from multigrade primary schools to agricultural universities. In many countries social change and economic development have been organized by providing not only basic education (which is acknowledged as a priority), but also specific training to improve techniques employed in the rural economy. Furthermore, recent work on social capital shows that knowledge constitutes a key element for strengthening rural communities and facilitating their adaptation to change.

But, education cannot solve all problems. In a world where rich countries pay US\$1 billion a day in subsidies to their farmers – six times the amount allocated to aid – raising the educational level of the rural poor in developing countries will not, in itself, do the job. Promoting human development through domestic policies that recognize rural issues, including education policies, is highly necessary, as documented by this publication. However, such commitment and policy efforts will not produce their full impact unless the international community clearly recognizes that the present inequalities of globalization fuel mass poverty. Even more importantly, the international community must take appropriate action.

**John H. Monyo**

Assistant Director-General  
Sustainable Development Department  
Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the United Nations

**Gudmund Hernes**

Director  
International Institute  
for Educational Planning  
United Nations Educational, Scientific  
and Cultural Organization, Paris

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## General introduction

# Rationale for the book

*David Atchoarena and  
Lavinia Gasperini*

Despite the efforts invested since the 1960s and the mobilization of the international community declared at the Jomtien Conference in 1990, the rural areas of many developing countries are still lagging behind where education is concerned. The fact that the slow pace of progress towards universal basic education is largely due to the persistence of low enrolment rates in rural areas is often overlooked. The rural space is also often at a standstill in terms of economic development.

The big challenge of the new century is the reduction of poverty. Virtually all countries and donors agree on the importance of reducing poverty and its attendant problems of inequity, lack of respect for basic human rights, ill health, lack of knowledge and skills and marginalization of large numbers of people. The figures speak for themselves.

An estimated 1.2 billion people world-wide are classified as poor. In practical terms this equals the current population of China, is more than the population of India and more than four times the population of the United States. A startling fact is that over 70 per cent of the poor, or 840 million in developing countries live in the rural areas. They are caught in the vicious cycle of being unable to access the services and opportunities that might take them out of poverty – education, gainful employment, adequate nutrition, infrastructure and communications – because they are poor.

It is often forgotten that the problem of poverty is first of all a problem of rural poverty and food security. In many poor countries, rural areas have seen little or no economic development and population pressure now constitutes a threat to agricultural resources and the natural environment.

Statistics on the impact of hunger are sobering:

- 36 million people died of hunger or of its immediate consequences during the year 2000 and of these a child below the age of ten died every seven seconds;
- It is estimated that there are 840 million undernourished people world wide, of whom 777 million are in developing countries;
- 180 million children under the age of ten are undernourished.

In addition to the devastating effects of hunger, there are:

- 130 million out-of-school children;
- 860 million illiterate youth and adults.

While it should be noted that these statistics are global, it is reasonable to infer that a major proportion of the poor is rural, illiterate and undernourished.

Today, globalization is posing new challenges to the improvement of living conditions of rural dwellers, especially the poorest. This situation has a profound impact on agricultural incomes and hence on the living conditions of rural populations and on rural poverty. The current situation and trends connected with globalization and the changing rural environment call for new responses.

It is accepted that farmers with basic education are more likely to adopt new technology and become more productive. With basic education they are better equipped to make more informed decisions for their lives and for their communities and to be active participants in promoting the economic, social and cultural dimensions of development. It is equally accepted that excess rural labour has to find work outside the farm, whether in rural or urban settings and that without basic literacy and numeracy, individuals are unlikely to be hired for anything more than basic wage labour.

A community cannot foster development without an educated population. Businesses, large or small, are unlikely to choose to invest in rural areas if skilled or trainable human resources are unavailable. Similarly, a community cannot retain educated people without an attractive economic environment. Many poor rural areas, mostly but not only in developing

countries, are trapped in this situation. Recognizing the central importance of this dilemma, this publication chooses to adopt a dual approach combining, as much as possible, the rural development perspective with educational issues.

### **A new perspective**

In rural areas of low-income countries, the problem of access to education is acute and, in order to take on the enormous challenges involved in providing education for all, a more holistic view of education is needed. In particular, the issue of educational development in rural areas cannot be properly addressed without mentioning the upheavals that have occurred in the agricultural milieu. The fact is that this milieu has changed a lot, as reflected for instance by the shift in rural labour markets towards non-farm employment and by the persistence – or deepening – of rural poverty.

It is clear to the world development community that a multisectoral and multi-disciplinary approach is needed to reduce rural poverty and that we need to work together if we are to be successful in our goal. While there is at present no single solution to the alleviation of rural poverty, education and training are critical elements. Growth needs to be achieved with equity and rural dwellers need to have the capacity to be participants in the labour market and in society.

Education and training are two of the most powerful weapons in the fight against rural poverty and for rural development. Unfortunately, these are also among the most neglected aspects of rural development interventions by national governments and by donors. Since the decade of the seventies, when there was considerable interest and investment in traditional agricultural education, new investments have been few and far between. There are a number of reasons for the declining interest in traditional agricultural education (including vocational education and training, higher education, research and extension). One of these was a false sense of complacency that arose when the famous green revolution appeared to offer limitless science-based solutions to the production of staple grains, especially rice and wheat. To a certain extent, the policy maker felt that agricultural education had solved the problem of food production and turned its attention to other seemingly more urgent challenges. The growth of urbanization and the change in the balance of

political influence also saw policy makers become more attentive to urban issues than to education in rural areas.

Developing countries and the donor community are adopting a fresh approach to rural problems and the traditional focus on agricultural production has given way to a focus on rural development. There is a belief that if poverty is to be reduced and if sustainable rural development is to be a reality, there has to be concern about all the people who live in what is termed the rural space. In the past 'rural' was synonymous with agriculture. Agriculture was the most important economic sector, for it produced vital food supplies and was the largest employer. Despite its strength, agricultural production could not absorb all surplus rural labour, nor could it influence other sectors such as health, education and infrastructure to invest at a level sufficient to transform rural areas. Today, the rural development approach recognizes that there are many different stakeholders in the rural space. Some continue to make a living from agriculture, while others have a wide range of jobs in non-farm occupations, which range from small villages to larger market towns to peri-urban settlements. The concept of rural development is not new but globalization places it in a different context and leads to the rethinking of rural development policies.

The diverse collection of stakeholders in the rural space will need education and training that differ from that available in the past. What is needed today is a broader educational approach serving the needs of diversified target groups and focusing priority on the basic learning needs of rural children, out-of-school adults and youth and the rural poor. This is what we call education for rural development.

The beginning of the new century finds the international donor community, NGOs and national governments agreeing that a main development objective should be to alleviate poverty. Given that 70 per cent of the world's poor are rural and that many of them depend on agriculture and natural resources for income and survival, rural development becomes central to poverty reduction.

The definition of rural development has been further refined to see the process encompassing the rural space rather than seeing it as widening the reach of agricultural development. Within the rural space are to be found, in addition to agriculturalists and a large proportion of the population

classified as poor, a wide variety of communities engaged in various trades and professions. Many of these live in villages, small towns and in peri-urban settings. Their needs for information, education and skills often differ from those who are engaged in farming and who may live in more isolated areas of the rural space. Rural development in the refined definition encompasses agriculture, food-security, education, infrastructure, health, capacity-building, for other than on-farm employment, rural institutions and the needs of vulnerable groups.

In order to bring about significant change, education systems reformers must appreciate the complexity of the rural environment.

The strategy of focusing policies of education for rural development on the expansion of agricultural education at the secondary and higher levels is now viewed as largely obsolete. To meet the challenges facing the rural world today, an integrated view of education is required, centred on access to quality basic education for all. The goals of food security, poverty reduction and meeting the needs of the rural labour market require that rural development policies give priority to basic education and strategies that fully recognize the special nature of the rural environment.

## Purpose and scope of the book

With a view to advancing this line of thought and drawing operational lessons from it to guide countries in the reform of their education, training and rural development policies, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has joined forces with UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) to conduct an international study on education and rural development. Resulting from this joint initiative, the first aim of the book is to review the status of the topic from the standpoint of public policies and the conceptual frameworks on which they are based. It will also attempt to shed light on what may be called 'good practice'.

The findings of the study are meant to serve not as models but rather as points of reference for all those who are seeking ways of developing education in rural areas and contributing more effectively to rural development. They will be disseminated widely in the international arena and will lead to consultations with the countries concerned, at the regional and in some cases national levels, and with the donor community, in order

to ensure that rural people's learning needs are truly taken into account in education aid policies. The book will also be a tool to support the operational activities of the Education for rural people flagship, a global partnership initiative co-ordinated by FAO and UNESCO as part of the Education for All strategy.

The review does not pretend to be exhaustive and certain areas, such as extension services and distance education which are dealt with in recent FAO publications, were deliberately left out. Other important areas may have suffered from the choices retained for the study. The selection of country experiences focuses on developing countries and attempts, as much as possible, to balance examples across regions. However, the availability of information did not always make this possible. This book also perhaps places an over-emphasis on description, analysis and policy discussions while avoiding giving specific and practical advice regarding the 'how-to'. The reader in search of ready-made answers will be disappointed by the fact that there are no quick fixes. Rural communities must build human and institutional capacities for development and implement long-term strategies to bring about change. There is thus still very much scope for a solid follow-up consultation process at the national level in working with rural development and education sector stakeholders to continue the process of generating country-specific strategies.

## Structure of the book

*Chapter I* provides a contextual and theoretical introduction to the new rural development and poverty reduction thinking, as well as a discussion on the contribution of education to rural development. In *Chapter II* the book reviews in depth the provision of basic education in rural areas and offers some policy directions for improvement. Further exploring a particular dimension of basic education, *Chapter III* devotes specific attention to strategies linking the formal school teaching with students' life environment, including agriculture, and to garden-based learning. The intention here is to provide updated information and new insights on much-debated aspects which are often associated with rural areas although their application is much broader. *Chapter IV* shifts the analysis from education to work and discusses the implications of the transformation of rural labour markets for skill development. A particular concern is the rise in rural non-farm employment and the need to enlarge

the policy focus from agricultural education and training to technical and vocational education for rural development. This debate is taken further in *Chapter V* which considers higher level skills and the contribution of the tertiary education sector to rural development. Special attention is given to the reform of higher agricultural institutions and lessons based on case studies are provided to document good practice in institutional reform. Finally, *Chapter VI* concentrates on the main findings of the study and discusses policy implications and possible responses for donors and countries.

Each chapter can be read independently to offer the opportunity for readers already familiar with the area of education for rural development to jump directly to their field of specific interest. Policy-makers mostly concerned with key directions for reform may choose to start their reading with the final chapter.