

RURAL DEVELOPMENT through DECENT WORK

FOR GROWTH, PRODUCTIVE JOBS, INCOME, FOOD SECURITY, GOOD WORKING CONDITIONS, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, RIGHTS, VOICE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, CRISIS RESILIENCE



International Labour Office

Themes

Rural Policy Briefs

Skills for rural development

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Skills are central to improve employability and livelihood opportunities, reduce poverty, enhance productivity, and promote environmentally sustainable development. Coordinated efforts are needed to develop an integrated approach that improves access to relevant, good quality education and training to all rural women and men.

Why action is needed

- Rural people's access to education and training is often limited by financial barriers (e.g. training and transportation costs) and non-financial barriers (e.g. scarce education and training infrastructure, inflexible training schedules).
- Especially for poor rural children and adults, the opportunity costs for education and training may be too high to give up their income-generating activities and unpaid duties that help sustain their families.
- Many rural people do not have basic education. This also hampers their access to technical and vocational training or other skills development.
- Unequal gender relations and traditional gender roles entail specific difficulties for rural girls and women in accessing education and training.
- Education and training is often of inadequate quality. Teachers and trainers may be unqualified, equipment and technology out-dated, and teaching and training methods ill-suited to rural contexts.
- In many developing countries, training systems tend to operate in isolation from the labour market and employers' needs, so training does not always match skills demand.
- Environmental degradation and climate change present risks to rural livelihoods that need to be managed and mitigated. This requires developing new, innovative



Facts and figures

- Rural livelihoods are becoming diversified. Agriculture is the main source of livelihoods, but an increasing share of rural households' income comes from non-farm activities.¹ One in four rural workers is employed full time in non-farm rural work.²
- While some farmers are engaged in high-return agricultural businesses (for example, agri-business value chain activities and export-oriented cultivations), in developing countries many are still engaged in low-productivity subsistence farming.³
- Education and skills increase the ability to innovate and adopt new technologies in agriculture and enhance farmers' performance.⁴
- Evidence from Asia suggests that better education and training increases the chances to find high-paying non-farm employment, whereas lack of education tends to limit options to agriculture or low-wage non-farm employment.⁵
- Access to training is a major constraint among rural people in developing countries. For instance, nearly 90 percent of agricultural workers in India have no formal training,⁶ and a study among small scale entrepreneurs in Kenya indicated that over 85 percent of rural informal sector operators have no business or technical training at all.⁷
- Rural girls and women are often the most disadvantaged. The global secondary school attendance rate for rural girls is 39 percent as opposed to 45 percent for rural boys and 59 percent for urban girls.⁸
- Training outside the formal training system is often the most important source of skills training in developing countries. For example in Benin, Senegal and Cameroon, informal apprenticeships account for almost 90 percent of all trades training.⁹
- Many rural youth face great disadvantages when trying to enter urban labour markets because of their low level of education and lack of relevant skills and work experience.



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strategies and skills to be able to learn about and use new environmentally friendly technologies.

- The severity and persistence of the food crisis makes it crucial to increase productivity in agriculture, agribusiness and other relevant rural industries, for which appropriate skills are indispensable.

Policy options

Developing an integrated approach to rural skills development

- Integrate skills development into rural development policies and strategies, such as agricultural policies, and private sector development and entrepreneurship policies.
- Strengthen coordination and collaboration with the private sector in skills development both to increase the relevance of training, and to improve and facilitate its delivery. Involve particularly employers' organizations, but also workers' organisations, NGOs and community groups, in planning and implementing programmes.
- Assess labour market needs and economic opportunities, and link training to the skills requirements in the particular rural context.
- Collect and analyse data disaggregated by gender, age, ethnicity, disability and other relevant dimensions to be able to design appropriate services and programmes.
- Develop diversified skills development policies that consider formal, non-formal and informal training.¹⁰ While access to good quality formal training is important, including innovative non-formal and informal skills training into national training systems is also key to improving skills provision in rural areas.

Expanding access to quality education and vocational training

- Expand the outreach of both schools and training institutions in underserved rural areas.
- Provide free basic education as it is a stepping stone to further skills training and provide financial incentives (e.g. vouchers) and non-financial incentives (e.g. meals at school and take-home rations) to improve attendance.
- Provide affordable technical and vocational training by reducing financial entry barriers, and design interventions to include those most disadvantaged in accessing education and training, such as working children, women in poverty, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and ex-combatants.
- Complement technical and vocational training with basic education (literacy and numeracy) and life skills (e.g.

confidence building, health management, social awareness). This enables participants to benefit more from the technical and vocational training, and may be particularly relevant for those most marginalized.

- Promote a gender-responsive learning environment. For example, consider safe transportation and training facilities, separate sanitation facilities, dormitories, cafeterias, and child care facilities.
- Ensure textbooks and other learning and training materials are not gender-stereotyped and sensitize teachers and instructors to gender equity.
- Encourage training women and men in non-gender-stereotypical trades, promoting for instance training in mechanics for women and textile work for men.
- Develop flexible, modular training. This will benefit those who cannot afford taking time off (for example, due to household or seasonal work) or paying for longer term training.
- Facilitate access to training materials, toolkits and modern equipment and technology, and invest in teacher training, as well as better remuneration for teachers and trainers.
- Consider outreach measures such as mobile or distance learning through information and communication technologies (ICTs). The latter requires, in particular, expanding access to mobile phones, computers and education and training hardware and software, and investing in the ICT training of teachers and trainers.
- Provide career guidance and practical labour market information (e.g. in schools' training facilities and community associations) to enable rural youth to make informed choices about their education, training and employment in the rural context.

Promoting diversified skills development systems

Skills development in rural areas requires various types of skills provision, using innovative methods of delivery, and capitalizing on existing social institutions. In particular:

- Consider linking formal with non-formal training, or combining institution-based education with enterprise-based learning.
- Combine technical and entrepreneurship training, for example through incorporating business knowledge and skills in formal secondary and tertiary education or through developing innovative community-based training programmes (See Box 1).
- Complement entrepreneurship training by facilitating rural entrepreneurs' access to micro-credit schemes, business development services and market information. This may require expanding the scope of these services and ensuring that the right legal framework is in place.
- Promote apprenticeship systems as a viable option for young women and men to learn a trade (See Box 2). Apprenticeships are a practical and usually cost-effective way to develop skills, especially for those who do not meet the entry requirements for formal training.
- Upgrade traditional and informal apprenticeship systems to offer higher quality training and facilitate technological advances and innovations.¹¹ Depending on the local context:
 - ◆ Involve business associations of master craftspeople in upgrading activities
 - ◆ Provide training to master craftspeople in technical, technological and entrepreneurship skills
 - ◆ Improve working conditions within apprenticeships
 - ◆ Improve equal access to apprenticeship for women and men



- ◆ Combine apprenticeship with formal vocational training
- ◆ Develop recognition mechanisms for skills acquired through apprenticeships
- Develop labour-based programmes that improve rural infrastructure as one opportunity for transferring skills and knowledge among the rural population. Labour-based programmes can provide training in construction, maintenance and managerial skills, for instance.

Upgrading skills for increased agricultural productivity

- Support small-scale producers in accessing markets, modern technology and value chains, which can help channel knowledge and information.
- Expand the reach of rural extension services through a combination of formal and non-formal approaches. These services can greatly enhance the technical knowledge and skills of small-scale producers and facilitate environmentally sustainable agricultural practices.
- Train women as extension workers to enable women farmers to benefit from extension services in gender-segregated societies.
- Promote skills development in producer associations and rural cooperatives. Such associations can provide effective avenues for upgrading their members' technical and entrepreneurship skills, and open access to information, markets and institutions providing inputs and know-how.

ILO's role

- The ILO works with its constituents (governments, employers' and workers' organizations) to improve the employability of workers, and the productivity and competitiveness of enterprises through skills development. It assists its constituents through research and knowledge sharing, policy advice and technical assistance. As concerns rural skills development, ILO currently focuses on:
 - ◆ Reforming and strengthening national skills policies and improving training systems
 - ◆ Extending training in rural communities, for example through community-based training initiatives

Box 1

Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE)

TREE is an ILO community-based training programme implemented in Asia and Africa. It promotes income generation and employment opportunities for disadvantaged women and men by ensuring that they gain skills and knowledge they can use in their communities. The TREE strategy differs from conventional vocational training programmes by:

- Identifying potential income-generating activities and related training needs before designing the content and modalities of specific training programmes
- Involving the local community and social partners directly in each phase of the identification, design and delivery process
- Providing post-training support to facilitate trainees' access to wage or self-employment

Source: ILO: *Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE)* http://www.ilo.org/skills/what/projects/lang--en/WCMS_103528/index.htm

- ◆ Developing and upgrading skills in the informal economy
- ◆ Upgrading informal apprenticeships
- ◆ Facilitating entrepreneurship education and management training
- ◆ Promoting skills for a greener economy
- The ILO's Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195) provides guidance on the content and reform of skills policy. It specifically promotes access to education, training and lifelong learning for people in rural areas.

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Box 2

Upgrading informal apprenticeship

ILO recognizes informal apprenticeship as an important training system in the informal economy. In informal apprenticeship, an apprentice and a master craftsperson conclude a training agreement that is embedded in the local norms and traditions. The apprentice (usually a young learner) acquires the skills for a trade or craft in a micro or small enterprise, learning and working side by side with an experienced craftsperson.

Based on country research in Tanzania, Mali, Malawi, Ghana and Egypt, the ILO is developing a guide for upgrading informal apprenticeship systems. The upgrading involves the gradual improvement of a training system embedded in the culture and traditions of societies, and its inclusion in the national training system.

An ILO project in Niger (2005-2010) established a dual apprenticeship system combining learning at school and at the workplace in ten pilot trades, building on informal apprenticeship practices. In 2010, project activities to upgrade the informal apprenticeship system started in Benin, Burkina Faso and Zimbabwe.

Source: See: http://www.ilo.org/skills/what/events/lang--en/docName--WCMS_104967/index.htm

¹ The World Bank: *World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development* (Washington: 2007) and IFAD: *Rural Poverty Report 2011: New Realities, New Challenges, New Opportunities for Tomorrow's Generation* (Rome: 2010)

² UNEP: *Green Jobs: Towards Decent Work in a Sustainable, Low-Carbon World* (Nairobi: 2008)

³ ILO: *Promotion of Rural Development for Poverty Reduction, International Labour Conference Report IV* (Geneva: 2008)

⁴ Hartl M.: *Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Skills Development for Poverty Reduction – Do Rural Women Benefit?* Paper submitted to FAO-IFAD-ILO Workshop on "Gaps, Trends and Current Research in Gender Dimensions of Agricultural and Rural Employment: Differentiated Pathways out of Poverty" (Rome: 2009)

⁵ ILO: *Promotion of Rural Employment for Poverty Reduction, International Labour Conference Report* (Geneva: 2008)

⁶ Singh, R.: "Education, Skills and Vocational Training and Access to Rural Non-farm Employment", in the *Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (2008)

⁷ Haan, H.: *Training for Work in the Informal Sector: New Evidence from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda* (ILO, Geneva: 2002)

⁸ UN: *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009* (New York: 2009)

⁹ ILO: *Introductory Guidebook on Upgrading Informal Apprenticeships* (Forthcoming); and ILO: *Apprenticeships in the Informal Economy in Africa*. Employment Sector Report No. 1, (Geneva: 2007)

¹⁰ Non-formal training is structured, usually school/institution-based training that is not recognized by the formal training system, for example, training imparted by NGOs. Informal training is commonly non-structured training, for example, at the workplace.

¹¹ ILO: *Introductory Guidebook on Upgrading Informal Apprenticeships* (Forthcoming)

Links

- ✚ ILO: Skills and Employability Department. <http://www.ilo.org/skills>
- ✚ ILO: International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin, Italy, for training courses on skills policies. <http://www.itcilo.org>

Tools

- ✚ ILO: *Rural Skills Training: A Generic Manual on Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE)* (Geneva: 2009)
- ✚ WHO: *Community-Based Rehabilitation: CBR Guidelines*. WHO, UNESCO, ILO, IDDC (Geneva: 2010)
- ✚ ITC-ILO: *Know About Business (KAB)*, Entrepreneurship Education in Schools and Technical Vocational Training Institutions (Turin: 2008)
- ✚ ILO: *Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB)*, Training Programme and Modules.

Other Materials

- ✚ ILO: *Apprenticeship in the Informal Economy in Africa*, Workshop Report, Geneva, 3-4 May 2007 (Geneva: 2008)
- ✚ ILO: *Improving Skills and Productivity of Disadvantaged Youth*. Employment, Working Paper No. 7 (Geneva: 2008)
- ✚ FAO-IFAD-ILO: *Investing in Skills for Socio-Economic Empowerment of Rural Women*, Policy Brief (Rome: 2010)

Contact

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