

The Role of Relevant Basic Education in Achieving Food Security and Sustainable Rural Development

- **Organisation:**
Catholic University of Leuven
- **Partners:**
World Agroforestry Centre
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Kenya, Malawi, Zimbabwe

Background and Objectives of the Research

Food insecurity and under-education are still common in many developing countries. The challenges are enormous, especially in rural areas where food insecurity, poverty and educational deprivation often create a vicious circle. Climbing out of this 'poverty trap' can not be achieved by addressing one sector alone. It is therefore essential to explore feasible measures in which these interrelated issues can be tackled together, focusing on interventions which have the greatest effect on poverty reduction.

Basic education initiatives in rural areas which have used agricultural or environmental experience as a means of making teaching and learning more relevant and the potential impact of this kind of approach on food security and sustainable rural development were studied. This was done through a global literature review, looking at different policies, initiatives and analyses complemented with field work in Kenya, Zimbabwe and Mali. Potential implications for policy and suggested areas for increased investment are proposed.

The main objective of this study is to contribute to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of development policies and cooperation of the European Community, the European Union and other development actors by understanding the ways by which relevant basic education can contribute to achieving food security and sustainable rural development. Many development

policies – including the European Community's development policy which is currently under debate and review – encourage approaches which integrate multiple strategies for poverty reduction. These include food security and sustainable rural development, as well as promotion of equitable access to education. The results of the current study are expected to further improve poverty reduction policies, programmes and projects by revealing the dynamic interplay between education relevance, food security and sustainable rural development.

Research Findings

- Relevant basic education contributes to rural development; the quality and relevance of schooling can positively influence productivity
- Relevant basic education can help imparting life skills which are useful in alleviating poverty in rural areas
- School curricula are often overloaded and leave little room for local interpretation; rural teachers are often poorly equipped
- Teaching and learning support materials are in many cases inadequate
- Agricultural and environmental experiences can be used as a way of making basic education in rural areas more relevant to the local situation
- Community ownership is crucial for relevant and effective basic education

In cooperation with



Policy Recommendations

- There is need for a concerted multi-sectoral effort in rural areas of the developing world to develop basic education geared towards rural development
- Basic education in rural areas should focus on learners' needs
- **School curricula should be meaningful regarding the life** situations of rural children and relevant to local needs and conditions
- Improved pre-service and in-service teacher training should be supported
- Adequate teaching and learning materials should be provided
- Improved school-community linkages should be encouraged
- More effective monitoring and sound scientific research and analysis of basic education in rural areas should be supported

For further information on this research project, please visit:

EC-PREP website: www.ec-prep.org

Catholic University of Leuven website: www.kuleuven.be

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EC-PREP is supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). In 2001, DFID, in collaboration with the European Commission, launched the European Community's Poverty Reduction Effectiveness Programme (EC-PREP). The main objective of this research initiative is to produce findings and policy recommendations that support and contribute to improving the European Community's effectiveness in attaining poverty reduction targets via its external assistance programmes. The programme has funded 13 Research Projects and 10 Commissioned Studies, which relate to one or more of the six focal areas of EC's development policy. More information about the research funded by EC-PREP can be found on www.ec-prep.org.