



## Introduction

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## Reader: Skills Development



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## I Introduction

Aspects of skills development form an integral part of many rural development programmes. They are often related to agricultural extension or research, are implemented as a stand-alone element or form part of systemic rural development concepts. Strategic approaches, methods and instruments relevant for employment or self-employment in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors are often not accessible to a broader public.

Practitioners in the field and their advisors are the reader's main target group. It aims at creating awareness for the difference skills development can make to people living in rural areas. It provides access to a number of strategies, tools and practices proven to be successful for target groups in their rural setting. Approaches presented range from policy to implementation level and cover those developed and practiced by the German development cooperation as well as examples practiced by other members of the donor community. They refer to:

- the need for creating and maintaining a conducive environment for skills development;
- the role of policies and a legal framework for skills and rural development in general;
- advantages and limitations of centre-based skills development compared to non centre-based forms;
- different funding mechanisms and their pros and cons;
- capacities needed by different groups of development agents like managers, trainers, coaches / mentors or moderators of learning processes;
- the role and different forms of needs assessment;
- strategies and concepts and their applicability according to target groups and framework conditions;
- experiences with different methodologies as well as approaches to curriculum development and certification;
- ways of broadening access, achieving outreach and going for mass impact;
- approaches to quality management.

Throughout the text, reference is made to projects and programmes all over the world. Their experiences are compiled in a separate volume (Skills Development in Rural Areas, Volume II: Good Practices and Case Studies), and examples further detailed in this volume are marked **in green color**. Considerations on methodologies and concepts are the content of Volume III. Both can be accessed under ([www.gtz.de/agriservice](http://www.gtz.de/agriservice) > further information > thematic readers, or <http://www.gtz.de/en/themen/laendliche-entwicklung/8572.htm>).

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## II Why specific concepts of skills development in rural areas and with rural target groups?

### 1. The context

In developing countries and emerging economies, up to 80% of the total population and 75% of the absolutely poor live in rural areas. In addition to the well-known factors that generally dictate the living conditions of the poor, the following challenges are impacting on poor people's livelihoods in rural settings:

- Natural disasters (droughts, floods etc.) and calamities (e.g. insects).<sup>1</sup>
- Remoteness and low population density combined with fragile infrastructure (roads, telecommunication etc.), which increase transaction costs for goods and services and hamper mobility and access to information and basic services.
- Barter trade often determining local economies, reducing flexibility and limiting access to services built on cash economy (like micro-credits).
- Women often having the sole responsibility for both, raising children and securing the livelihood of the entire family, thus being even more restricted in their mobility.

The prerequisites for participating in economic growth, such as adding value to agricultural products in rural areas or accumulating assets, are difficult to achieve. In the light of these limitations, the diversification of income-generating activities (beyond agricultural production) of farm households, small and micro-entrepreneurs and self-help groups deserves special attention.

One pivotal pre-condition for the development of employment and self-employment is (basic) education and skills development, both important parts of capacity development.<sup>2</sup> According to the respective state of economic development and its perspectives, competences required are different:

- In the light of low prices for agricultural products and stagnant productivity, diversifying the sources of income through small income generating activities outside of the proper agricultural production is often the only way out of extreme poverty in densely populated areas with low soil fertility in **Africa**.

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<sup>1</sup> For more details, refer to GTZ's Reader "Services in Rural Areas" (<http://www.gtz.de/en/themen/laendliche-entwicklung/8572.htm>).

<sup>2</sup> "Capacity development – as GTZ sees it – strengthens the performance capabilities of individuals, organisations and societies: people are to increase their learning capacity and acquire the skills that enable them to assume a role in society." (<http://www.gtz.de/en/17870.htm>)

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- In **Latin America**, and in high potential areas of Africa, the trend is to integrate agricultural production into more comprehensive and efficient value chains. Promotion of economic growth in rural areas often strives for strengthening economic corridors and clusters, opening up new chances for the rural population. A similar trend can be observed in parts of **Asia** with attempts to include rural areas in economic reform processes.
- In many parts of Eastern Europe, the extreme and narrow specialisation of former kolkhoz employees requires further training and re-training, and new ways of economic development and related skills development have to be found to prevent the further growth of new rural poverty zones.

### 2. Skills development in rural areas and with rural target groups – what does it mean?

Skills and knowledge are important locational factors. They influence the national and international competitiveness of labour (as a factor of production), of production facilities and of economic sectors and regions. They also play an important part in the distribution of income and the chances of individuals to contribute to and benefit from economic growth. At the same time, skills and knowledge increase the mobility of people, reduce dependency and empower them to become active members of society.

#### Box II-1 Formal, non-formal and informal skills development

##### Formal, non-formal and informal skills development

Formal skills development takes place within the structured and officially certified vocational education and training system of a country. Experience has shown that attempts to create a mass impact in developing countries through formal skills development are rarely sustainable. They do not meet the needs of the majority of the poor.

Non-formal skills development is organised outside the formal vocational education and training system but still has set programmes, times and venues. It is usually of modular structure and may or may not be certified. It is often offered by NGOs and other private providers. It flexibly covers a wide range of topics and provides options for individuals with specific needs and purposes.

Informal skills development is the way how most people in rural areas of developing countries acquire skills. It takes place everywhere and everytime, as when a family member teaches someone how to hoe and plant, or a child being taught to milk a cow.

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In many developing countries and emerging economies, opportunities for human resources development tend to be situated where the economically vibrant sectors are: namely urban areas, industrial production and parts of the service sector. Here, opportunities for HRD are often geared towards higher education rather than towards employment or self-employment. Entry requirements, duration and the place where education and training are offered tend to be correspondingly rigid. Financing has turned into a problem. For all these reasons, formal training often tends to remain closed-off from or at least difficult to access for rural target groups.

Initial, further and re-training form a continuous process of life-long learning. Lack of access to or inappropriate provision of skills and knowledge leave the potential for income generation untapped and perpetuate the marginalisation or exclusion of economic sectors, regions and target groups.

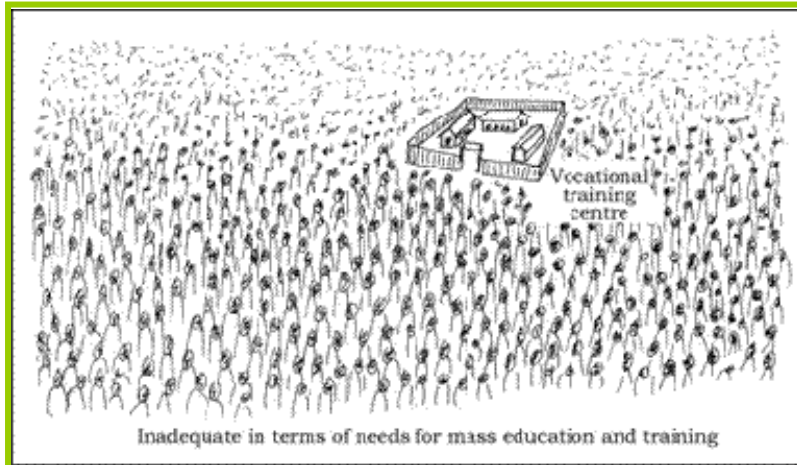
All methods of providing information or advice as well as imparting knowledge include aspects of skills development. When distinguishing it from rather selective and specific problem solving approaches (as e.g. extension services) or from general education, it can be understood as:

- the opportunity for individuals or groups of gaining directly and broadly applicable, long-term relevant options or alternatives for improving their quality of life and
- being determinant for the quality and productivity of labour as a factor of production.
- The consequences of this definition of skills development are that:
- The focus rests with different concepts and arrangements of non-formal training being provided or reaching out to rural target groups. Formal, centre-based long-term agricultural education and training plays a less important role.
- Agricultural extension services imply skills development aspects as far as guidance does not address specific problems only, but integrated local development approaches.

The extent to which skills development is relevant for improving the living conditions of target groups in rural areas is determined by the following factors:

- The degree of flexibility in adapting form and content to the conditions and needs of rural target groups;
- The potential to make different concepts of training and levels of intervention match the respective state of factors of production;
- The attention being paid to and the influence possible on political, economic and infrastructural framework conditions in order to make sure that demand and supply have a chance to meet;
- The readiness to permanently negotiate and monitor agreements between relevant stakeholders, e.g. in the areas of financing, organisation of training and regulatory issues.

### Box II-2 Vocational Training



### 3. Skills development and poverty reduction

Poverty reduction is the overarching aim of the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as of the German Federal Government's Action Programme 2015. The Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), in its respective position paper, puts cooperation in the field of skills development in the context of pursuing the MDGs.

Poor people themselves should drive sustainable poverty reduction. It is them who have the greatest motivation for and the strongest interest in positive change. Skills development – in the context of lifelong learning – can help poor people to discover and enhance their own potential and to play an active role in economy and society. In order to contribute to sustainable poverty reduction, skills development must:

- make the economy more dynamic in places where poor people live;
- enable poor people to voice their interests and to find appropriate ways to be represented in social and political processes;
- be integrated into comprehensive strategies for promoting economic development and employment (as e.g. in the case of the [Morocco project](#) fighting desertification);
- take into account the specific situation of women and youth (as pursued e.g. by [projects in Cameroon and Tunisia](#)).

Skills development is not a panacea for all that is wrong with the quality of life of the poor or the only way to address the informal economy's constraints to lead out of poverty. Issues such as access to land, micro-credits, raw materials, markets, access to information and services and an enabling environment are equally important. Skills development is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for addressing poverty.

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If they are to have a direct impact on poverty reduction, skills development initiatives need to directly impact on the work and life situation of poor people. For doing so, they need to fulfil a series of requirements, the most important being:

- Immediate impact on livelihood, e.g. through the diversification of production or through reconstruction after natural disasters.
- Orientation towards the the roots of poverty: Poverty has different origins, among others modernisation processes and related structural change or violent conflicts. Skills development in a post-conflict situation needs to include skills for reconstruction as much as competences to re-build trust and overcome trauma situations, whereas structural change processes require enhancing mobility and skills necessary for managing new technologies.

Most skills development is geared towards indirect poverty reduction. One of the requirements for the improvement of production and service processes is qualified staff. This is true for the application of new and adapted technology, for guaranteeing minimum social and environmental standards, for competent management or for the integration of small and micro-enterprises into the added value chain.

Stronger and more competitive businesses will only contribute to poverty reduction if these improvements lead to more poor people finding employment. Therefore, skills development initiatives aimed at poor people should be geared towards those economic sectors with high growth combined with high employment potential.

#### **4. Critical factors for success or failure of skills development interventions in rural areas**

The following aspects have proven to be critical for the success or failure of interventions:

##### **4.1 Conducive environment for skills development**

Social, economic and political framework conditions, the relevance of the modern economic sector in comparison to traditional sectors, the existence – or absence of – education, basic health or other services significantly determine the chances of skills development concepts to achieve an impact on the living conditions of target groups. In many countries, a significant difference to skills development in urban areas is the absence of government as a provider and even as a regulatory body.

In many cases, remote areas are characterised by traditional economies with their own production and exchange mechanisms (e.g. barter trade). Creating links with a country's modern economic sectors avoiding, as much as possible, the risk that these traditional economies and the people depending on them are being steam-rolled is the challenge. In creating those links, skills development plays an important role again (e.g. how to bargain, how to deal and to keep accounts in cash economies).

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Looking at the context skills development has to take place in, and linking skills development with other services is a precondition for creating an impact on rural families' livelihoods:

- Skills development needs to take factors into account determining individual livelihoods, like access to land or climate / natural disasters, non-agricultural income opportunities, possibilities of asset creation etc. It needs to link up with related support services e.g. in asset creation, in producing tradable surpluses, in increasing the value added to products (e.g. through working along value chains and attaching skills development to each link of the chains), or improving the access to markets (information, contacts).
- Basic education initiatives or formal primary and secondary education (where in place) can play an important role for either linking skills development with education (e.g. functional literacy and numeracy as in the [Cameroon project](#)) or guiding youth from school to work.
- Linking skills development with the improvement of infrastructure like labour-intensive road construction and maintenance or the construction of schools or health centers improves living as well as business conditions in remote areas at the same time. Further information provides the [Laos project](#).
- Linking skills development to agricultural extension services, such as Farmer Field Schools or other participatory approaches with an inherent adult education concept is dealt with in the Reader on Participatory Extension (refer to reader "Extension approaches, <http://www.gtz.de/en/themen/laendliche-entwicklung/8572.htm>).
- Access to credits is essential for small businesses to grow. At the same time, making productive use of credits requires skills.

#### **4.2 Policies and legal framework for rural skills development**

What is considered to be government functions and what are the responsibilities of other (private) stakeholders, or how vocational education and training services are organised under the specific conditions of rural areas, is determined by historical and political factors. Many good practices of rural skills development are not embedded in and sustained by a conducive government policy or by regulations. Nevertheless, sustainability of such initiatives depends, to some extent, on conducive political and legal frameworks.<sup>3</sup>

Where formal skills development is offered, it predominantly falls under the responsibility of the respective sector Ministry (e.g. Ministry of Agriculture), which is in charge of regulatory issues and is

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<sup>3</sup> See as well Reader: Service Provision in Rural Areas (<http://www.gtz.de/en/themen/laendliche-entwicklung/8572.htm>). The systemic service concept links success factors on the levels of enabling policies with those of capable providers (capacity and coordination) and the target group (self organisation and quality demands).

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often the sole formal skills provider and financier. In such cases, it is often offers or regulates integrated approaches of skills development and extension services.

Non-formal and informal skills development in rural areas and for rural target groups is slowly gaining the attention of policy makers especially in countries where donors and development banks are pushing the development of Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS), often in connection with Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAP) – e.g. in Laos, Uganda or Rwanda. In these cases, interest at policy level in non-formal skills development for rural areas and with rural target groups is mostly high, the most tangible results of this interest being that private / NGO initiatives are finding a supportive climate for their operations or at times even government support or co-ownership by government. For more in-depth information refer to the [case studies from Ivory Coast, Laos and Uganda](#).

There are as well bottom-up initiatives – as in the case of the [Argentina project](#) – of formal and non-formal training providers to influence government policies by promoting success stories publicly and by making the respective government aware of the benefits it could draw from.

Related sector policies (e.g. on microfinance, on small enterprise development, on rural development etc.) or other sectors' strategic plans (e.g. Five-Year Plans as drawn up in many countries) are sometimes making reference to skills development in rural areas or for rural target groups or can serve as reference points when it comes to a policy dialogue with national or provincial governments (e.g. five-year handicraft plan in Rwanda).

In a growing number of countries, a tendency can be observed to create multi-stakeholder Training Authorities to take over regulatory functions (like the development and implementation of training standards, accreditation, certification procedures) and to bring all sector-specific skills development under the umbrella of these Training Authorities (e.g. South Africa, Uganda, Laos, Bhutan).

### 4.3 Organisational set-up

Different modes of delivery are requiring suitable organisational structures. Basically, two types of organisational set-ups can be distinguished:

**1. Centre-based skills development** requires the management of permanent and temporary staff for training delivery, administration and support services as well as the establishment and maintenance of the necessary infrastructure like buildings (often including hostels), land and equipment. Next to a number of trainers permanently employed to cover the standard curricula, learning facilitators are often contracted as and when required for special courses or to cope with peak numbers of trainees. Fixed costs through permanent staff together with maintenance of buildings and equipment as well as re-investment in equipment are major challenges for the management.

Centres delivering formal skills development depend for most regulatory functions on the government. They receive standard curricula and have to stick to testing and/or examination procedures which are

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not always related to the realities in their region. As described in the [Laos case study](#), many training institutions delivering partly or exclusively non-formal skills development have their own staff for needs assessment, curricula development, course design and testing / examination issues or relate closely to respective government institutions.

Where training centres share responsibilities for skills development delivery with farmers (alternate training or apprenticeship scheme), the risk of losing contact with the reality on the farm can be reduced. As the [Argentina case study](#) shows, shared responsibility needs to be properly reflected in implementation (e.g. joint committees for examinations or for course modification) and management structures (e.g. boards) and trainers need to be obliged to work with the farmers, e.g. by supervising the trainees on the farm or by offering counselling or advisory services to the farmers, in many cases the trainee's parents.

**2. Non centre-based skills development** In cases where (predominantly non-formal) skills development is offered in villages or on the production site, organisers often offer comprehensive packages (modules) from the stage of target group identification and course design up to implementation and follow-up. Training providers are often organised as foundations or trusts and are mostly non-profit organisations. Many of them work with a lean set-up of a core staff for management, administration and quality assurance in skills development design and delivery, and employ permanent field staff to facilitate and structure the self-organisation of learner groups in communities. The [Brazil, Uganda and Ivory Coast case studies](#) show different approaches to include communities. Field staff are mostly community members or are at least coming from the same area as the target groups for skills development. Trainers with formal qualifications (graduates of a teachers' training) are rather the exception; more importance is attached to the trainers' integration in the cultural setting and their practical expertise in the respective training subject. In Europe, leader farmers may be trainers as well (BUS approach – applied partly in Burkina Faso on pilot scale)

In some cases, self-organisation is driven to an extent that learner groups form their own associations in a bottom-up approach and organise their skills development independently. Next to ownership and relevance aspects, the learner group approach as applied in the [Laos case study](#) ensures that families and communities contribute important resources to make skills development happen like sheltered venues, food for trainees and trainers and their time in designing and monitoring the training. Networking plays a pivotal role, as shown in [Ivory Coast or Uganda](#).

Government involvement tends to be strong and supportive where there is interest in bridging the gap between formal vocational education and training and non-formal skills development and in creating and following an integrated training policy, as is the case in Ivory Coast and Laos. Generally, there is little evidence in governments restricting initiatives in rural skills development (other than by general

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regulations which hamper NGO or private sector activities), as this is, in most countries, an area not well covered by government-driven skills development activities.

Families and communities are important stakeholders for skills development in remote rural areas. The “path to prosperity”, encompassing as well asset creation or producing a tradable surplus, starts there. In many cases, the family’s farm is the only asset to depart from when broadening the basis for income generation and, at the same time, is providing the field for practical training. Strengthening communities by letting them decide on skills and knowledge relevant for better surviving in their specific environment or opening up ways of marketing surpluses is the key for preventing migration. This can only be successful by respecting traditional social structures and involving e.g. village chiefs or shamans, asking them for advice and leadership, as done in the **cases of Ivory Coast and Uganda**, in setting up new initiatives.

**4.4 Funding mechanisms**

The requirements, advantages and disadvantages of funding mechanisms and their potential to contribute to financial sustainability of skills development need to be assessed in the light of the living and working conditions of the rural poor.

The feature common to both, skills development for vulnerable target groups in urban and rural areas is that full cost recovery is rarely feasible. In the absence of public attention and powerful lobby groups, the specific challenge for training providers in rural areas is to combine different funding mechanisms and to be inventive and innovative in accessing untapped resources.

Funding of skills development is mainly done in the following ways:

**Box II-3 Funding of skills development**

Procedure	Advantages and disadvantages
Budget provision according to inputs (like salaries, maintenance, investments, running costs) considered to be necessary to run skills development.	+ security for providers. - no incentives for efficiency and demand orientation.
Budget provision according to output of skills development (e.g. number of students at a certain time, graduates, or self-employed ex-trainees).	+ cost-efficiency. - tendency to exclude “weak” students. Pre-requisite: external M&E.
Tendering: Government or private parties invite training providers to compete for designing and implementing skills development delivery.	+ cost-effectiveness. - needs capacities for organising tenders and for quality control. Pre-requisite: effective M&E system in place.
Voucher systems: Trainees receive vouchers and buy skills development modules or courses to their choice.	+ influence on access for specific target groups. + competition between providers. - training market often not transparent. - prone to corruption
Loans or grants for accessing skills	+ when specific target groups are addressed: can

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<p>development.</p> <p>Matching grants: The training contribution a provider can raise elsewhere is matched by a government grant of the same or a smaller size.</p> <p>Revolving fund: A credit or donation is used for developing and selling e.g. training courses or training materials in areas of high demand and of purchasing power available. The income generated returns to the fund (see case study Laos).</p> <p>Training incentives to farmers or local companies in the form of tax rebates, reimbursement of training costs (both by government) or by offering collateral services like counselling (see case study Argentina).</p> <p>Cost recovery and other income generation by training providers: Training fees, renting out venues or equipment, selling training materials or having staff contracted by third parties for assignments, extension services, "selling" training or concepts to donor agencies etc.</p>	<p>positively influence equity issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- loans are usually for the better-off.</li> </ul> <p>Pre-requisite: Bank to administer loans and grants as experience proves management by non-financial institutions to be difficult.</p> <p>Pre-conditions: Works, when government shows interest in what the training provider is doing. Needs an M&amp;E system on the government side.</p> <p>Risks: The matching grant might come with conditions, which influence the flexibility to offer skills development negatively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ helps to get new products started without fully depending on sponsoring.</li> <li>- absorbs management capacities at the training institution (monitoring).</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ help to secure practical skills development on the work place.</li> <li>+ work towards the sustainability of income generation at farms (case of collateral services).</li> <li>- tax rebates and reimbursement of training costs work with formal enterprises only.</li> <li>+ boosts cost-effectiveness.</li> <li>+ creates an entrepreneurial spirit within the institution.</li> <li>- when combined with other funding mechanisms: Needs separate management and accounting -&gt; challenge for management.</li> <li>- balance between economic and training interests difficult to maintain.</li> </ul> <p>Pre-requisites: Financial autonomy and/or at least clear regulation on the use of income generated by the training provider. The institution's training mandate to be a priority. Transparent accounting procedures.</p>
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Aspects like monitoring costs per trainee or calculating development costs for new courses are usually paid little attention to. A good example for efficient costing and monitoring of costs provides the Brazil case study. Useful principles for keeping cost aspects in mind are set by the Ivory Coast project, where e.g. trainees are asked to design their own skills development projects and submit them for funding.

Most non-government centre- and non centre-based training providers raise some sort of (at least nominal) fees for skills development. In many cases, these fees can be paid in kind or through doing some work for the training provider as in the cases of Laos and Ivory Coast.

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#### **4.5 Capacity building of development agents**

Locally-based multipliers and management are of utmost importance when striving for sustainability in rural settings. Recruitment, assessment and capacity building of staff require approaches often different to those in urban settings.

The profile of trainers differs with their role in training: Permanent training staff in centres are predominantly tasked to make a change in skills, knowledge or attitudes of their trainees by sticking to pre-fabricated curricula and – in the case of formal skills development – ensuring that set training standards are met. Organisations providing non centre-based skills development look for “jacks of all trades” instead: learning facilitators who combine technical expertise with good facilitation, communication and leadership skills, know about project planning and implementation, are able to flexibly develop and carry out skills development plans and do the respective monitoring.

##### **Capacity-building: centre-based trainers and management**

Most formal training centres (government as well as private ones) have to recruit their trainers through the government, which in many cases leaves them little influence on the selection of candidates. As this implies as well the adherence to the generally very low government salaries, the implications for staff motivation and qualification are often critical.

There are cases of training centres exclusively or partly delivering non-formal skills development seeking government assistance in providing (and paying the salaries for) trainers. Depending on the conditions imposed by government, the consequences for flexibility in skills development design and delivery can be severe.

In many countries, standard training of trainer (ToT) courses, mostly geared towards aspects of methodology, are offered by government or private institutions and in some instances, centres are obliged to send their staff (especially when offering formal skills development). Little is known on the impact of these rather unspecific capacity building measures.

Some centres expect their trainers to work part-time as extension officers in order to ensure that they keep in touch with real life on the farms.

Specific capacity building for centre-based trainers who deal with target groups in rural areas seems largely to depend on

- the availability of funds (often donor programmes),
- the degree of demand orientation of the centre or the degree stakeholder groups (like communities, farmers' associations or the trainees' families) are participating in decision-making.

The situation of staff development in centre-based formal and non-formal skills development is better in countries where government takes an active interest in linking formal and non-formal skills development and is formulating respective policies and strategies for upgrading trainers (e.g. South Africa or Laos): Rural areas are slowly moving towards the focus of attention. Next to specifically

developed ToT programmes, there are for example tandem, group or mentoring approaches, attaching less experienced training staff to more experienced colleagues or forming teams for counselling and supervision.

With the exception of managing centre-owned farm land, management training needs are similar to those of urban-based training centres. In many instances, capacity building could be done jointly.

#### **Capacity building: Non centre-based trainers / learning facilitators and management staff**

There are mainly two types of actors in non centre-based and non-formal skills development initiatives, which are running individually developed skills development concepts:

- Facilitators in charge of mobilising communities or learner groups and guiding them, in a culturally accepted way, through the process of identifying their skills needed and planning, organising and evaluating their skills development. In many cases and for many subjects, these facilitators act as well as trainers.
- Trainers for specific subjects, expected to be an expert in the field with practical experience and the ability to share this experience with others (see case studies [Ivory Coast and Uganda](#)).

What counts first, are solid “anchorage” in the respective social context, to be in good standing with traditional and modern authorities and the ability to gain and maintain acceptance with local stakeholders and target groups. Formal schooling requirements are mostly ranking second.

As these development agents were often not exposed to structured training situations, capacity building for staff is a priority issue for most non centre-based skills development initiatives. Besides structured introduction and further training courses (including methods like “micro-teaching” or subjects like moderation techniques and conflict management), peer counselling, supervision and mentorship programmes are applied. In many cases, individual staff development plans are developed and monitored.

Management structures are usually lean, calling for individually designed management training measures. Tools for analysing the strengths and weaknesses of service organisations can be found under [www.gtz.de/agriservice](http://www.gtz.de/agriservice) > further information > methods and instruments: e.g. Service Interaction Analysis (SIA), or Analysis of service organisations).

#### **4.6 Needs assessment**

Clarity about knowledge and skills needs of rural people is an essential precondition for selecting the proper concepts and strategies.

To a much larger extent than in urban and industrialised environments, families or clans build production units. They are an important source for needs analysis. Local producer groups or rural communities are playing a similar role in determining needs for skills development which enables individuals to stay in their rural environment and to earn a decent living there.

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In many instances, social events can be used to introduce a training needs assessment and the methodology applied informally. To seek the approval of Chiefs or other traditional leaders before even talking to other community or family members has often proved to be the key for success.

A professional assessment of training needs requires a strategy which looks as much at the needs perceived by individuals and groups as at the skills, abilities or attitudes necessary to perform in economic sectors with a development potential. Methodologies used are, in many cases, not documented in a way which allows easy access for other interested users. Many projects are using elements of the participatory rural appraisal tool box<sup>4</sup> or refer to other methods of participatory action research as done in the [Rwanda case](#). Others are relying on personal interviews with individuals or groups (household mapping) especially in remote areas where communities are small or almost non-existent. In order to check individually perceived skills development needs against market conditions, the [Laos project](#) uses a combination of interviews in local communities and surveys of goods and labour markets.

For long-term structured skills development, DACUM (an acronym for developing a curriculum, a methodology introduced by the Ohio State University; for an overview refer to: [http://www.ateec.org/curric/dacum/dacum\\_overview.htm](http://www.ateec.org/curric/dacum/dacum_overview.htm)), strictly adapted to local conditions, seems to be an attractive and quick instrument as well for assessing skills needed to perform a specific job in a structured way.<sup>5</sup> The methodology consists of a one or two day storyboarding process, involves the “experts in the field” and builds on what a person does in terms of duties and tasks. A further step of identifying knowledge, skills and attitudes needed has to be added to the original version in order to make it a target group-driven instrument. In a very simplified and adapted form, this tool might well fit into the “participatory rural appraisal” tool box.

The peoples’ immediate environment is mostly used as the point of departure for assessments aiming at identifying needs for skills development which allows people to stay in their rural environment (see especially [the Cameroon Ivory Coast and Uganda examples](#)). Skills development aspects being considered are:

- How to broaden and strengthen the subsistence basis (diversification);
- How to reduce the dependence from agricultural production only;
- How to become and remain part of the market economy.

For designing and carrying out need assessments, it is important to keep in mind that people in rural areas don’t need task or job-oriented skills development only. More often than not, they need to

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<sup>4</sup> GTZ, Unit 04: Gender-sensitive Participatory Approaches in Technical Cooperation. Eschborn 1995.

<sup>5</sup> For an approach to adapt the DACUM methodology to rural training conditions, [www.gtz.de/agriservice](http://www.gtz.de/agriservice) > further information > methods and instruments: Determining Training Requirements for Upgrading Production Chains.

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compensate for lacks in basic education (literacy, numeracy) in order to make technical and entrepreneurial skills relevant for income generation. These needs have to be equally assessed, and close cooperation with governmental and non-governmental actors in the field of education might be sought.

Organising skills development along value chains requires specific procedures in assessing training needs. It is advisable to have an analysis of existing and potential links of the chain done first before going deeper into training needs per link and than re-grouping the types of needs along the chain.

Most projects emphasise the importance of moderators / needs assessment specialists coming from the same social environment and talking the language of the potential trainees. In some instances, these moderators are specially trained community members (e.g. Ivory Coast) or trainers (e.g. Laos and Argentina). In all cases, the moderators need special training, and even the most adapted and basic needs assessment requires professional staff to carry it out.

In cases where skills development is ongoing, needs assessment should be a continuous process: It is advisable to link needs assessment and tracer studies, as the latter provide valuable inputs on needs for further training or re-training. Needs assessments and tracer studies are important elements of quality management.

**4.7 Strategies and concepts of rural skills development**

How learners are able to learn (e.g. according to individual social and economic pre-conditions or cultural background) and what they are learning for are decisive factors for selecting









- concepts (e.g. long-term training, short courses, competency-based and/or time-based approaches, modular, holistic occupation-oriented models) and
- strategies (focus on modes and places of delivery).

Strategies and concepts applied in the case studies and described in the available literature may be clustered as follows:

**Box II-4 Case studies: strategies and concepts**

strategies	concepts	target groups	application		
Community-based skills development: Rural Training Networks (Ivory Coast, Laos), LearnNet (Vol. III, chapter 3) linked local learning (Uganda) from	Short courses based on individual needs or needs of small groups of learners, often combined with study tours (to a farm, to the next village etc.). Design, coordination and implementation through trained locals.	Everybody who wants to improve his/her living conditions.	Very remote rural areas with little/no access to (basic) education. Improve ment of subsistence conditions and creation of first links to market economies.	Highly flexible	Focus rather on individual empowerment
				↓	↓

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farmer to farmer. Alternate (centre – farm) non-formal skills development ( <i>Escuelas de la Familia Agrícola</i> , Argentina or similar model in Nicaragua; <b>Brazil</b> ), informal apprenticeship schemes.	Mostly modularised and time-based longer-term skills development. Follows cycles of seasons and mostly includes agricultural production, basic entrepreneurial and basic farm management aspects (and consequently aspects of literacy and numeracy).	Youth/young adults with or without basic education from families owning some land or working on land on a permanent basis.	Rural areas with high percentage of subsistence farmers, small-holders or farm workers with no or little access to basic education. Access to market for agricultural products or processed products should be possible.		
Centre-based non-formal skills development. (e.g. <b>Laos</b> ).	Mostly short courses on topics which need the basic infrastructure of a centre (e.g. training on food processing under hygienic conditions).	Everybody who wants to improve his/her living conditions	Rural areas with basic infrastructure and certain population density. Many centres are multi-purpose (as well used for formal training).		
Integrated approaches, linking formal and non-formal skills development (centre-based, alternate training and training types which are not bound to a certain place)	Ad-hoc designed short-term courses linking with formally recognised programmes with horizontal and/or vertical articulation and the possibility of certification / access to higher levels of training/education. Modular and often competency-based approaches. See: South Africa and <b>Laos</b> .	Everybody regardless of prior learning successes. Based on (official) recognition of prior learning.	Interest at the policy level of governments is a pre-condition. As these approaches tend to be complex, institutional capacities at regulatory and implementing organisations have to be there or developed during implementation.		
Formal centre-based or apprenticeship schemes ( <b>Morocco case study</b> ) or formal alternate centre-farm training ( <b>Argentina</b> ).	Long-term, mostly time-based and occupation-oriented training, sometimes including periods of students' projects, (basic) farm management and entrepreneurial aspects. Certificates often allow access to higher levels of	Youth, young adults with formal primary or secondary education completed.	Centre needs access to land (for practical training). Caters for needs of small farmers with growth potential and modern, medium-sized to big farm establishments. Pre-condition: Government		 Focus rather on economic development

Flexibility reduced

Focus rather on economic development

education/training.	interest.
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This table might suggest certain rigidity in what strategies and concepts to use under which conditions. However, flexibility is the trump card especially in remote rural areas, and everything should be considered possible as long as it leads to the desired impact.

#### **4.8 Methodology, instruments and contents**

The results of needs assessment have to be converted into training delivery. In an ideal situation, this means for example the development of training standards or (occupational) profiles which, for their part, need to be translated into curricula and syllabi. Achievements should be checked against set benchmarks through assessments.<sup>6</sup> After completing their training, trainees often receive a certificate to prove to the outside world that knowledge, abilities or attitudes have been acquired or – in the case of competency-based approaches – that the ex-trainee is able to perform a set of tasks. All these elements form part of the quality management of skills development (refer also to the reader on quality management under [www.gtz.de/agriservice](http://www.gtz.de/agriservice) < further information < thematic readers).

##### **What proved to be useful for formal vocational education and training:**

Skills development is mostly done according to set profiles or training standards and doesn't vary much over the years. Methodologies used for the development of profiles or standards, curricula, tests and examination are the same as for other technical and vocational education and training. In some cases, the assessment and recognition of prior learning – irrespective of the way it had taken place – provides an entry door from informal and non-formal to formal skills development and herewith the chance for learners to progress vertically to higher levels of training and/or education.

##### **What proved to be useful for non-formal skills development:**

Needs-orientation ranks first. This leads at times to a situation where curricula are developed ad-hoc, and the flexible inclusion or exclusion of subjects in the course of skills development is a must. This requires flexibility on the training material side, in the [Laos project](#) through the development of training material packages which can be arranged and re-arranged at short notice. Another way to deal with changing needs of often inhomogeneous target groups is to prepare small (sometimes 2-3 hours long) modules which can be combined flexibly and are either part of the "standard repertoire" of all trainers as in the case of the [Rwanda project](#) or can be bought-in easily as in the case of the [Laos project](#) or with the CEFÉ approach. In cases like the [Ivory Coast of the Uganda projects](#), training plans, developed between trainees and trainers substitute more elaborate curricula herewith guaranteeing

<sup>6</sup> See also Reader on Quality Management ([http://www.gtz.de/de/dokumente/en-bulletin15\\_2007.pdf](http://www.gtz.de/de/dokumente/en-bulletin15_2007.pdf)).

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that the contents and methodologies are adequate for both, the trainees and the trainers, and that the learners remains owners of the learning process.

Non-formal skills development is often carried out by experienced practitioners with little or no recognised formal education. Curricula and training materials have to take this into account.

Non-formal skills development programmes and courses often combine approaches to impart a basic mix of knowledge, abilities and attitudes: Next to the development of technical, business, entrepreneurial or management skills they strive for the empowerment of individuals or groups by developing key competences like problem solving, communication or self-organised learning and in many cases include elements of functional literacy and numeracy. The planning, implementation and evaluation of real-life projects by the students, guided by trainers is a methodology used in [Laos, Rwanda, Ivory Coast and Brazil](#); it is paying attention to the complexity of project-related learning.

Formal assessments of knowledge, abilities or attitudes are often replaced by the evaluation of the success of projects implemented by learners. These are as well opportunities to define further needs of skills development necessary to improve performance. Another way of assessing the outcome of skills development are skills or innovation competitions ([as in Rwanda](#)) where individuals, groups or organisations compete. Non-formal assessment in the form of the assessor's or even the trainee's perception of progress is equally important.

Whereas many organisers of skills development consider certificates as superfluous or even counter-productive (as trainees might be tempted to train for the sake of a certificate and not for a real-life application), trainees all over the world tend to value training without certificate less than the one which leads to a recognition of success in writing. Many of them have to compete in societies which are highly relying on written proofs, or they simply appreciate this form of expressing recognition. There is a growing tendency to issue certificates. In cases where a certain non-formal skills development measure has gained a good reputation with local employers, credit institutions etc., this might be even more useful than an official certificate issued by a government institution.

### **Combining formal and non-formal skills development**

Organising skills development along value chains might call for a mix of formal and non-formal measures. A relatively formal curricula approach might be useful in order to secure the knowledge, abilities and attitudes required along the whole line of production and commercialisation of goods. Methodologies as mentioned above under "formal skills development", adapted to local conditions, might give the desired results.

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#### 4.9 Access and outreach or scaling up

Skills development in rural areas and/or for rural target groups needs to deal with constraints like low population density, long distances between farms and villages or huge catchment areas with socially or culturally inhomogeneous population structures. Questions most skills development approaches have to deal with are:

- How do we reach out from where we are, to our target groups in remote areas?
- How do we improve access for more members of our target groups or even for more target groups (scaling-up)?

Strategies to answer these questions differ between centre-based and non centre-based skills development.

##### Centre-based skills development

The most common answer of centres to improve access is the creation or expansion of hostels and offering hostel places at conditions target groups can afford. In some rural training centres, hostel places consist of not much more than a mat to rest on, a place to store some personal things, meals, access to water and sanitation and a place where to do some home work. Other centres, as in the case of the [Rwanda project](#), are involving the respective community to offer places to stay to the students, sometimes against payment.

Alternate / apprenticeship training models are as well an option to increase access and outreach as shown in the cases from [Argentina and Brazil](#). The practical skills development can be done on the parents' farm, thus reducing costs for the trainee. At the same time, centres can be utilised by a higher number of trainees.

Some centres, as in the case of the [Laos project](#), are offering mobile non-formal skills development by sending their staff out to any place where a learner group is meeting.

A completely different approach to broaden access for different social target groups is the flexible design of entry requirements. This can be done by re-designing courses and programmes to open them for new target groups, but as well by providing upgrading courses for trainees not meeting the original requirements or by applying concepts of recognition of prior learning.

##### Non centre-based skills development

Many non centre-based skills development initiatives have outreach and access as their guiding principles. Bottom-up approaches like the [rural training networks in Ivory Coast](#), based on self-organised learner groups are a good example. Involving communities in designing their own skills development can be an effective way to influence e.g. the access for women.

Generally, courses, programmes and projects are designed to take the respective entry conditions of participants as the point of departure.

### Access in terms of vertical and horizontal articulation

Countries striving for integrated non-formal and formal skills development are working on systems which allow vertical and horizontal progression from one training level to another as well as between the general education and the training system (e.g. [South Africa, partly Laos](#)). Ideally, this would allow students, starting with a basic skills development or a functional literacy course, to progress over years up to university studies. These systems are highly complex, and the ideal situation is still far. Some interesting components helpful to bridge gaps where existing systems don't allow progress exist, like the official recognition of prior learning.

### 4.10 Quality management

Monitoring and evaluation systems are commonly understood as part of quality management.<sup>7</sup> There are approaches such as quality management elements or systems for training centres, which are worthwhile documenting here because of their relevance for skills development.

#### Input monitoring

Accreditation of training providers is an instrument used by [the Ivory Coast](#) project to ensure quality training delivery. In the case of [Rwanda](#), trainers are being certified according to internally developed occupational standards.

#### Monitoring the output

Many training providers do some sort of output monitoring.

- Most formal training providers see the results trainees are achieving at examinations or tests as an important element of their monitoring procedures.
- Where training standards exist, skills development is mostly being evaluated against these standards.
- Where trainees are working on their own real-life projects, monitoring and final evaluations of the outcome or impact are often built in as an element of skills development.
- Site visits by trainers (e.g. on farms in the case of alternate or apprenticeship training) or supervision of training lessons by peers or superiors are other elements used in the process of skills development to monitor quality.
- There are cases like the [Brazil project](#) where external consultants are hired to do an evaluation on site.

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<sup>7</sup> See as well Reader on Quality Management of Services ([http://www.gtz.de/de/dokumente/en-bulletin15\\_2007.pdf](http://www.gtz.de/de/dokumente/en-bulletin15_2007.pdf)).

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### Impact monitoring

It is widely accepted that, due to an attribution gap, it is not possible to measure a single project's contribution to higher aggregated development goals. It is also impossible to construct and observe a 'parallel universe' without the project's intervention. To complicate things further, it is believed that training – even if it addresses immediate needs – is generally one of the development interventions with a very distant impact horizon.

Nevertheless, there are different tested procedures in place for contributing towards a meaningful outcome (e.g. the use persons are making of skills development) and impact monitoring. Those being implemented include the following:

- Only few training providers seem to carry out tracer studies in order to check on the ex-trainees' whereabouts and changes in their lives through skills development. Good practices can be found with the [Laos and the Morocco](#) projects.
- Some providers use the methodology of project-related skills development to introduce impact indicators to their students and have them formulate and evaluate the desired impacts themselves.
- Where participatory rural appraisal methods are used (as with the [Ivory Coast project](#)), the picture of e.g. a village, created at the beginning of a skills development intervention can be used, years later, to measure the impact. This requires developing indicators from the start, which clearly refer to the change skills development is supposed to make.
- Especially some non centre-based skills development initiatives are working with self-evaluation and reflection methodologies building on the target groups' impressions of changes created through a specific intervention.

There is quite some expertise available on impact monitoring in the form of guidelines and project experiences which, put to good use, would prevent training providers to re-invent the wheel.

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### III LITERATURE and LINKS

#### **Finding New Things and Ways that Work**

A Manual for Introducing Participatory Innovation Development (PID)

By LBL, International Department, Lindau, Switzerland, 2004.

To order by Internet: [www.lbl.ch](http://www.lbl.ch)

This manual contains a collection of training modules for initiating participatory innovation development (PID) activities.

#### **The Extension Butterfly**

A model to illustrate the functions of extension in the context of rural development.

BY LBL, International Department, Lindau, Switzerland, 2003.

To order by Internet: [www.lbl.ch](http://www.lbl.ch).

#### **Linking local learners - Negotiating New Development Relationships between Village, District and Nation**

Edited by Clive Lightfoot, Carine Alders and Frands Dolberg. CTA, 2001.

This book describes the development of a learning approach to guide the complex organisational changes associated with decentralisation and privatisation of agricultural extension. It also describes how information and communication tools (ICT's) could support learning.

#### **Farmer Empowerment**

Experiences, lessons learnt and ways forward

Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), commissioned by DANIDA. September 2004.

To order by internet: [diis@dcism.dk](mailto:diis@dcism.dk)

#### **Education for Rural Development: Towards New Policy Responses**

A joint study conducted by FAO and UNESCO, 2003.

Available: FAO: ISDN 95-5-104983-1; UNESCO: ISDN: 92-803-1220-0.

This book makes a contribution to countering conventional wisdom and educational policies that have guided the provision of education in rural areas for several decades. It uses recent sources of information to reformulate education issues in the framework of the emerging rural development discourse. Various contributions describe current trends and innovations in improving the provision and quality of basic education in rural areas. This book also discusses skills development challenges,

and analyses emerging strategies developed by innovative higher education institutions to cope with the new educational and rural environment.

### **Skills development in Rural Areas**

CD-Rom with strategies, tools, critical success factors and good practices for policy makers, planners and implementers

By GTZ Eschborn, 2005

Please contact [Lucie.Bosotti@gtz.de](mailto:Lucie.Bosotti@gtz.de)

### **<http://www.gtz.de/en/17870.htm>**

In spotlighting this theme for the year 2007, GTZ aims to join the current debate on capacity development, contribute to a definition of the concept, share experience, explain its approach and also realistically consider the limitations of that approach.

### **[www.formatika.net](http://www.formatika.net)**

Formatika has been designed by professionals (educationalists, sociologists, economists, agronomists) whose shared goal is to make non-formal education for all an essential issue in development. Here you can download also the Rural Training Network Manual edited by Formatika and GTZ.

### **<http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php->**

### **[URL\\_ID=5854&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=5854&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)**

The new website for UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre acts as an international hub for a global network of institutions active in the area of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). It concentrates on providing technical backstopping to strengthen and upgrade TVET. The Centre is located in Bonn, Germany.

### **<http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php->**

### **[URL\\_ID=30233&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=30233&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)**

This platform aims at giving more visibility to non-formal education processes through ICTs. It includes an exchange forum, documents, pilot projects and news on non-formal education with special regard to ICT's.

**[www.skilldevrural.net](http://www.skilldevrural.net)**

This website provides an online debate hosted by the Swiss Development Cooperation “Employment and Income” Division. The aim of this debate is to launch a Community of Practice on Skills Development in Rural Areas (SDRA) among conventionalists and practitioners. To participate in the discussion you have to login with ID and password. Currently the topic “Gender in SDRA” is on the agenda.

**[http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/index\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/index_en.htm)**

The FAO and the UNESCO call for a collaborative action of member countries, United Nations agencies and civil society to join in the establishment of a new partnership on Education for Rural People (ERP). The main topics are the overcoming of the urban-rural education gap, awareness creation on the importance of education for rural populations and the fostering of the implementation of basic education plans.

**<http://www.id21.org/education/index.html>**

id21 is a research reporting service, offered by DFID that aims to be part of the process of putting international development policy. At this website you find free access to research on education and development. The source materials include peer-reviewed publications, conference and working papers and other 'grey' or pre-publication materials.

**<http://www1.worldbank.org/disted/home.html>**

The Global Distance Education Net (Global DistEdNet) is a knowledge guide to distance education designed to help clients of the World Bank and others interested in using distance education for human development. The Network consists of a core site located at the World Bank and regional sites in all parts of the world.

**[www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills)**

The ILO's “In Focus Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability (IFP/SKILLS)” assists individuals to become employable through training, skills development and education. It serves to enhance the mobility in the labour market and offer the potential for increased career choices. Through advocacy, knowledge development and services to ILO constituents, IFP/SKILLS promotes especially training strategies that support the integration of groups that may be disadvantaged in the labour market.

**<http://www.hsrb.ac.za/index.phtml>**

The Skills Development Strategy Initiative (SDSI) Support Programme aims at lifelong learning. It is a development programme of the South African-German Development Co-operation and executed by the GTZ and the Department of Labour. The focus in the formal economy is to assist the Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs) and education service providers in their functions and learnerships development. In the informal sector, emphasis is given to skills development for the unemployed, survivalist and entrepreneurs engaging in small and micro enterprises activities.

**<http://www.inter-reseaux.org/>**

Inter Réseaux is a platform for exchange of experiences in the rural development of developing countries, financed by the ministère français des Affaires étrangères (DGCID/ DCT/EPS). The latest debates on rural development as well as the bulletin Grain de sel, a newsletter and other documents are provided at this website.

**[www.vetnet.ch/](http://www.vetnet.ch/)**

These are the vocational education and training pages of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The site is focusing on experiences and good practises of Swiss vocational education and training projects and aims to become a rich platform of fruitful exchanges between the different actors of this process.

**<http://www.gtz.de/crystal/>**

Crystal is a service providing need-oriented teaching materials and textbooks as well as specialist literature and consulting for formal und non-formal vocational training, work-oriented training and further education projects and other areas of development cooperation. The materials are in German, English, French and Spanish language. Some texts in Arabic and Chinese are also included. The catalogue is continually updated with new entries.

**<http://www.crystal-elearning.net/>**

The Crystal eLearning website supports and initiates the cooperation between widely distributed TVET experts and originates from "Crystal" (see link above).

**<http://www.norrag.org/>**

NORRAG (Network for Policy Review Research and Advice on Education and Training) is a network of persons and associate members based in universities, research centres, development agencies and NGOs committed to improving interactions amongst research, policy, and practice in the "North"

as a means of supporting education and training in the "South". NORRAG is presently funded by SIDA, SDC and DFID and by its own members.

**<http://www.id21.org/>**

ID 21 is one of a family of knowledge services at IDS (Institute of Development Studies, UK).

The site offers free access to recent research on education and development. The source materials include peer-reviewed publications, conference and working papers and other 'grey' or pre-publication materials.

**[www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills)**

The International Labour Organisation (ILO)'s InFocus programmes on Skills, Knowledge and Employability (IFP/SKILLS) assist people to become employable by training, skills development and education. By representation of interests, development of knowledge and provision of services for ILO clients, IFP/SKILLS especially supports training strategies promoting the integration of groups who might be disadvantaged on the job market.

**[www.cefe.net](http://www.cefe.net)**

Competency based Economies Formation of Enterprises (CEFE) comprises various training instruments using an action-oriented approach and experiential learning methods to improve business management and personal competencies in connection with income generation. A virtual library with case studies, concept papers and other relevant information is also provided.

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