Learning Villages

A Response to Rapid Rural Transformation (Second Version)

INRULED

contents

1. Introduction

"If Learning involves all of one's life, in the sense of both time-span and diversity, and all of society, including its social and economic as well as its educational resources, then we must go even further than the necessary overhaul of 'educational systems' until we reach the stage of a learning society".

Learning to Be: Faure et al., 1972: xxxiii

Most government institutions, NGOs and other stakeholders seem to be implementing a top-down approach in their national development strategies and as such poverty persists in most rural communities in the developing countries of the Asia-Pacific and Sub-Saharan Africa regions. As such policies implemented by these various stakeholders are ineffective and have made overall poverty alleviation rather fragmented and uncoordinated and much short of dynamism is required to achieve desired results. In other words, non-participation of local authorities and communities means that community mobilisation and participation is not being viewed as both a goal of development which requires that national resources and opportunities be equitably distributed, and as a way of facilitating and energising the development effort by means of popular involvement in developmental decision making. Lack of empowerment amongst rural people leads to their vulnerability and thus most development projects tend to benefit the benefactors rather than the beneficiaries. In light of this, sustainable development is not achieved because non-participation of local people means that rural development is not self-sustaining. Therefore, local rural people play an important role in rural development because they understand their situation and problems better than the governments, aid agencies and other stakeholders. One of the biggest problems or upsets in most developing countries' rural communities is poverty which has detrimental effects on the socio-
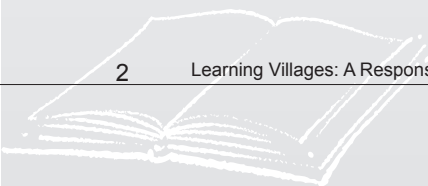
economic lives of local people. Participation and involvement of local people at grassroots level is important in curbing this phenomenon. It is within this context that the notions of learning village/rural learning comunities becomes critical.

Accounting for more than 60 per cent of the total population of the developing countries, rural areas are rich in their ecological and cultural diversity. However, the size and complexity of rural populations in these countries make it difficult to generalize about their problems or assets, though some common characteristics exist (See Table 1). For much of their existence, rural communities have relied on the wealth of natural resources found in the landscape. But in the 20th Century, great changes-technological, political and economic-have brought a profound transformation to agriculture and other renewable resource industries and to the rural communities' dependence on them.

Table 1: Problems in Rural Development

People-Related Problems	•Traditional way of thinking.
	•Poor understanding.
	•Low level of education to understand developmental efforts and new technology.
	•Deprived psychology and scientific orientation.
	•Lack of confidence.
	•Poor awareness.
	•Low level of education.
	•Existence of unfelt needs.
	•Personal ego.
Agriculture-Related Problems	•Lack of knowledge, skills and attitudes.
	•Unavailability of inputs.
	•Poor marketing facility.
	•Insufficient extension staff andw services.
	•Multidimensional tasks to extension personnel.
	•Small size of land holding.
	•Fragmentation of land.
	•Unwillingness to work and stay in rural areas.

Infrastructural-Related Problems	Poor infrastructure facilities like: •Water. •Electricity. •Transport. •Educational institutions. •Communication •Health •Employment •Storage facility, etc.
Economic Problems	•Unfavourable economic condition to adopt high cost technology. •High costs of inputs. •Under-privileged rural industries.
Leadership-Related problems	•Leadership among the hands of inactive and incompetent people. •Self-interest of leaders. •Biased political will.
Administrative Problems	•Political interference. •Lack of motivation and interest. •Ineffective utilisation of funds. •Absence of programme monitoring and delays in their implementation.

While such changes have yielded social benefits, they have also carried with them a cost. Today, we see small and medium-sized farms struggle in an increasingly concentrated global economy. Similarly, forest communities grapple with a change in natural resource management priorities and mounting environmental concerns. A "digital divide" threatens to exclude some rural communities from the benefits of the new information economy. Some rural communities face a drain of population, while others, particularly those with high scenic or recreational value, struggle with burgeoning populations placing new demands on ecosystems and traditional ways of life.

Despite these challenges, there is still plenty of cause for optimism. Resilience and self-determination are two traits that characterize many rural communities. For rural people, the rapid pace of change brings with it not only challenges but opportunities as well. In some ways, sustainable development aims to manage change that is inevitable, and to

do it in ways that are economically sound, environmentally responsible and socially equitable. The most successful communities strive to build on local assets and abilities while adopting and adapting new ideas and technologies to the local context.

Change in rural societies is necessary and even indispensable for sustainable development not only of the emerging economies but also of the world more generally. Our planet will be a better place if the rural areas revitalize not only with a focus on human development and social justice but also in recognizing and securing their rightful place as key contributors to national and global economic development and environmental sustainability. We have to make every effort to transform the tradional villages and rural communities into learning villages so as to enable them harness the benefits of mdern technologies in both their farm and non-farm activities.

This Technical Note on "Learning Village and Rural Learning Community for Sustainable Rural Transformation" suggests a logical framework and examines the provision of, and participation in, community learning in rural areas. While developing the framework, the note considers the difficulties faced by adults in rural areas who wish to participate in learning, and how that participation can be enabled and improved. The Note goes beyond the availability of community learning funded by different international donors for rural development to encompass the availability of other public, private and voluntarily offered provision. Much of the Note is directly relevant to the recent policy declarations and announcements of the national governments of the developing countries, and in particular the contribution that community learning can make to the overall three priorities of rural transformation and development, rural engagement, and improvement in quality of life of rural people.
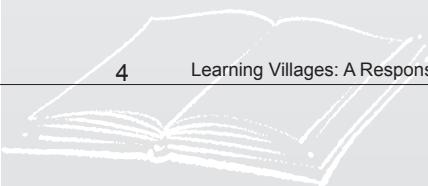
2. Salient Features of Rural Community

Rural transformation should not be seen in isolation. It is impacted and impacts several features of a given rural community. We have also to recognise the truism that rural transformation is strongly interlocked with lifelong learning, i.e., a learning society which recognises the actual process of learning as an activity which is not confined to the specific place; regards education and learning as a key contributor to the development of individuals as well as society. It is within this context that we have to visaulise the important characteristics of rural community. These are briefly outlined underneath.

2.1 The Social Homogeneity

A rural community is basically homogeneous. The social life is simple and easy-going. Unity and uniformity in social life are largely visible. Similarity in the ways of thinking, behaving, dressing, action and living is normal. We also find agreement or consensus among people with regards to habits, opinions, morals, customs, values, religious beliefs, dress, etc.

2.2 Dominance of Primary Relations

A village community is often viewed and regarded as primary group. Hence the rural community is characterised by the primary relations. There exist face-to-face relations among people. Every person knows every other and hence everyone is interested in the welfare of all.

The village community is relatively small in size. The members frequently meet and maintain regular contacts. The relationships are informal, personal and inclusive. Community spirit prevails over individual interests. People are free and frank in their expressions. A sense of belonging to the community holds them together.

2.3 Informal Social Control

Social control, that is, the control of social behaviour of people is relatively simpler and less problematic. Predominance of face-to-face relationship has made the task of regulating relations a simple one. Customs, traditions, group standards and morals are themselves effective as social pressures.

Any kind of social disobedience is easily noticed and the disobedient is put to gossip and slander. Formal means of social control such as law, legislation, police, court, etc. are not resorted to in normal situations to maintain the social order.

2.4 Occupations

The rural community is marked agriculture as its predominant occupation. Agriculture is associated with different crafts like pottery, basket-making, spinning, weaving, carpentry, smothery, brick-making, shoe-making, tanning, tanning hides, washing clothes, barbering, building houses and repairing, oil grinding, toy-making, etc.

In contrast with the urban society there is less division of labour and specialisation in rural community. Even opportunities for specialisation are also limited. Neither the villager is equipped with sufficient qualification to pursue varied tasks.

On the contrary, the villager at times performs the role of an all rounder. He is often called a jack-of-all-trades, but master of none. Women assist their men folk in various agricultural tasks.

2.5 Importance of Family

The rural community is built around the institution of family. The rural family is very cohesive. It lives together as a unit, eats together and works together.
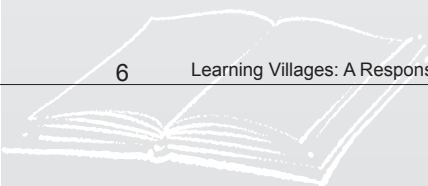
The family circle provides the greatest part of the economic and social needs of its members. People are traditional and conservative. People are bound by family customs and traditions. Rural women are very much dependent on their men folk.

They are very much sentimental. They require the support of institutions like marriage and family for a living. Most of the time, the rural women engage them-selves in indoor activities, but often they work in fields.

In rural life, the family is the smallest unit and not the individual. Individual interests are subordinated to the family interests. Status of the individual is mostly derived from his family. Property is considered as a possession of the family itself.

Individual accepts the authority of the family in almost all fields. Marriage, religion, occupation, mode of living, etc. are all influenced by the tradition of the family. Generally, there is less individual question and rebellion in a family.

Further, the rural family is mostly a joint family. Size of the family is normally big. Agricultural operation requires a large number of people. The rural joint family meets the need for large labour force.

2.6 Role of Neighbourhood

'Neighbourhood' is a community in miniature. It is similar to a community, but it is a smaller area in which relationships tend to be primary, or more or less intimate.

The neighbourhood is a part of the village, town or city, in which live a number of families among whom close relationships exist. A neighbourhood has been defined as-an area in which the residents are personally well acquainted with each other and are in the habit of visiting one another, of exchanging articles and services and, in general of doing things together.

In a village, neighbourhood is of great importance. Neighbours share the joys and sorrows together. They have the spirit of comradeship. There is not enough of individuality and speed in the life of the village to disregard the feelings, interests and expectations of the neighbours. They participate in all common ceremonies, functions and festivals. They assist one another in important matters.

2.7 Faith in Religion

The rural people are mostly religious in their outlook. They have deep faith in religion, in God. They have awe and reverence and, more than that fear of God. Their main occupation-agriculture-mainly depends on the mercy of Nature.

The rural men believe that the omens of Nature-God relations will have to be pleased by various means to help them in agricultural operations. The deep faith in religion and God has minimised their mental tension and disturbance.

2.8 Conservatism and Dogmatism

The rural people are primarily conservative, traditional and dogmatic in their approach. Their social attitudes and behaviour patterns are largely dictated by traditions. They do not accept policies, plans, programmes, principles, projects, doctrines, etc. that the majority does not accept and approve. They are basically sceptical in their attitude.

2.9 Rural Community and Social Change

The villagers are generally simpletons. They cling firmly to their beliefs, traditions and age-old doctrines and practices. They do not bypass the village and community custom. Their behaviour is natural and not artificial. They are far away from the superficial manners and artificial gestures.
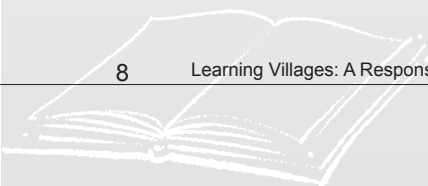
They live a peaceful life. They are free from mental tensions and conflicts. They dislike conflicts and quarrels. They are sincere, hardworking and hospitable. But their problem is that they cannot readily accept the urban people and their way of life.

They are not ready for sudden change. They are for status quo. They are in a way far away from the rapidly changing urban civilised world. There is gap between the urban and the rural way of life. Of course, nowadays they are awakening steadily to the need of the modern world. They are also modifying their behaviour patterns slowly and gradually.

The rapidly advancement in ICT, globalization and modernisation have brought far-reaching results to the rural community. Rapid improvements in the fields of transport and communication, progress in the fields of science and technology, introduction of uniform system of education, implementation of various community welfare programmes and projects, opening of small factories and industries in rural areas, provision of modern civilised facilities like radio, electricity, telephone, television, post and telegraph, mobile phones, newspapers, introduction of various domestic electrical appliances, increasing political consciousness of the people, the liberation of women, etc., have all contributed to some radical changes in the rural life.

It is within this broad sociological frame of rural communities that the framework of learning villages and rural learning communy has to be viewed and developed. The local needs and participation of rural people in addressing the above socio-economic features is necessary, one reason being that they know their situation and problems better than governments, aid agencies and other stakeholders. Rural people need to be empowered, in terms of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes through learning oppurtunities and the social development work organised and carries out by their own communities in order to fulfill their immediate and long-term needs.

3. Learning Society and the Learning Community-The Concepts

The idea of the learning society has featured strongly in recent pronouncements around adult and lifelong learning. But what actually is the learning society? How have notions of the learning society developed.

Notions of the learning society gained considerable currency in policy debates in a number of countries since the publication of the seminal work of UNESCO in 1972-"Learning to Be". The visionary document looks the 'learning society' beyond formal educational environments and locates learning as a quality not just of individuals but also as an element of systems (social/situational orientation to learning). It gives an important and influential statement of the contribution that lifelong learning can make to human development. It argues that lifelong education should be 'the maste concept for educational policies in the years to come for both developed and developing countries' (p. 182). The first part of the document looks to the current state of education, part two looks at possible futures, and part three examines how a learning society might be achieved. The latter includes chapters in the role and function of educational strategies, elements for contemporary strategies, and roads to solidarity.

Since then, the notion of the learning society has subsequently been wrapped up with the emergence of so called 'post-industrial' societies and linked to other notions such as lifelong learning and 'the learning organization' (see, in particular, the seminal work or Argyris and Schon 1978). It is an extra-ordinarily elastic term that provides politicians and policymakers with something that can seem profound, but on close inspection is largely vacuous. All societies need to be charactized by learning or else they will die. One of Schon's great innovations
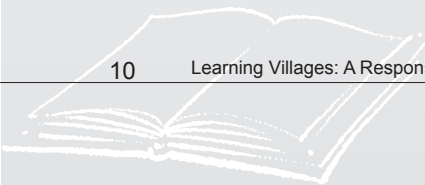
was to explore the extent to which companies, social movements and governments were learning systems-and how those systems could be enhanced.

Torsten Husén, for instance, argued that it would be necessary for states to become "learning societies"-where knowledge and information lay at the heart of their activities. The organizing principles of Husén's vision of a relevant educational system include:

Education is going to be a lifelong process.

Education will not have any fixed points of entry and 'cut-off' exits. It will become a more continuous process within formal education and in its role within other functions of life.

Education will take on a more informal character as it becomes accessible to more and more individuals. In addition to 'learning centers', facilities will be provided for learning at home and at the workplace, for example by the provision of computer terminals.

Formal education will become more meaningful and relevant in its application.

"To an ever-increasing extent, the education system will become dependent on large supporting organizations or supporting systems… to produce teaching aids, systems of information processing and multi-media instructional materials" (Husén: 1974).

Husén's vision was based 'upon projections from current trends in communications technology and the likely consequences of these for knowledge, information and production' (Griffin and Brownhill: 2001). Significantly, these predictions have largely come true.

For Huges and Tight (1998), the learning society can be approached as an aspiration and as a description. It is seen as something that is required

if states and regions are to remain competitive within an increasingly globalized economy. It may be sought after as a means of improving individual and communal wellbeing.

Edwards (1997) has provided us with a helpful mapping of the territory. He identifies three key strands in discourses around the notion of a learning society in which there is a shift from a focus on the provision of learning opportunities to one on learning. The first is portrayed as a product of modernism, the third as exhibiting a typically post-modern orientation. The second strand, with its emphasis on markets, economic imperatives and individual achievement, he argues, currently dominates. The three strands of his concept are: (i) the learning society is an educated society; (ii) a learning society is a learning market; and (iii) a learning society is one in which learners adopt learning approach to life.

According to Edwards 'a learning society is one in which learners adopt learning approach to life, drawing on a wide range of resources to enable them to support their lifestyle practices'. This supports lifelong learning as a condition of individuals in the contemporary period to which policy needs to respond.

Edwards looks at some of the key discourses that he claims have come to govern the education and training of adults. He looks at the context for such changes and their contested nature. The focus is on how the idea of a learning society has developed in recent years. The usual trip through post-modern thinking is followed by an analysis of the ways in which specific discourses of change have been constructed to provide the basis for a growing interest in lifelong learning and a learning society. Edwards also argues that there has been a shift in discourses from a focus on inputs, on adult education and provision toward one on outputs, on learning and the learner. This shift is linked to supporting access and flexibility. A further chapter examines 'adult educators' as reflective practitioners and as workers with vocation-and how they are being constructed as 'enterprising workers'. The book finishes with a return to the notion of the learning society.
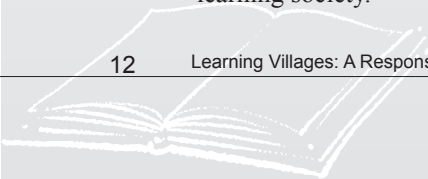
In its simplest form, Community Learning and Development (CLD) is learning and social development work with individuals and groups in their communities using a range of formal and informal methods. It is about empowering people and enabling them to tackle the real issues and influence the factors that affect their lives. It is concerned with providing people with the skills and information they need to participate in community life, as well as promoting personal development through learning.

Community Learning and Development is aimed at both personal and community development. It involves learning to deal with personal, family, work and social issues. CLD can result in improved confidence and skills, it can assist in better health and wellbeing, especially mental health, and it can contribute to active, inclusive and safe communities. It can deliver change.

In recent debates organised by UNESCO, it interlocks strongly lifelong leraning with learning society. UNESCO asserts that a learning society recognises the actual process of learning as an activity which is not confined to a specific place; regards education and learning as a key contributor to the development of individuals as well as society. Education as lifelong learning leading to a learning society contributes to economic prosperity, social justice, social chesion and sustainable development. It values individual's existing knowledge, previous experience and her/his immediate and long-term leraning needs. It promotes learning at all levels and types of education and in different settings (formal, non-formal and informal) throughout a person's lifetime as well as a culture of learning. It mobilises available resources in every sector and builds partnerships with major stakeholders to move hand in hand towards common goals (INRULED: 2014).

The commitment of UNESCO to lifelong learning and the leading role it plays in the building of learning societies is reflected and documented in several policies, frameworks and projects across decades. Two seminal

reports on lifelong learning by UNESCO-Faure Report (1972) and Delore's Report (1996)-articulate the fundamental principles of lifelong learning. The United Nations Decade for Sustainable Development (2004-2014), which UNESCO coordinates, has stressed the importance of lifelong learning as a key to the twenty-first Century. The Belém Framework for Action (UNESCO: 2010), the outcome document of the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in 2009, reaffirms the role of lifelong learning in addressing the global educational issues and development challenges. In the UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2021 (UNESCO: 2014), one of the strategic objectives is to "foster high quality and inclusive lifelong learning for all". At the Global Education for All (EFA) Meeting held in Oman in May 2014, the EFA Steering Committee, based on the agreement among the Member States, has called for a renewed overarching target, that is "to ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2010".

In 2013, UNESCO organised the International Conference on Learning Cities, which focused on "Lifelong Learning for All: Inclusion Prosperity and Sustainability in Cities". The working document of this conference on the development of learning cities is conceived as another attempt to translate the aspirations of learning societies into reality. It provides a list of key features and matrices, being (i) the wider benefits of building a learning society; (ii) the major building blocks of a learning city; and (iii) the fundamental conditions for building a learning city. Such a framework makes it possible to support in a meaningful way the development of lifelong learning (for all) in many of the world's cities; and to facilitate international comparative analysis and experince sharing and mutual learning among member cities (UNESCO-UIL: 2013).

Our rural community (society) and all of its institutions are in continuous processes of transformations. Within this context, we have to make rural people understand, guide, influence and manage these transformations. We must make the capacity for undertaking them integral to ourselves and to
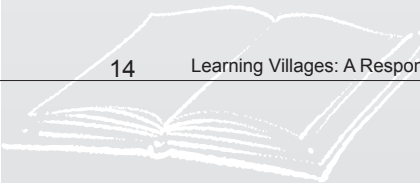
our rural development instituions. We must, in other words, become adept at learning. We must become able not only to transform our institutions, in response to changing situations and requirements; we must invent and develop institutions which are 'learning systems', that is to say, systems capable of bringing about their own continuing transformation.

There is a need for greater clarity in defining the meaning of the learning society, and for establishing criteria which allow some rather than all usages to be interpreted as legitimated. The notion of the learning society may have some theoretical and analytical potential-but it does require considerable work if that potential is be realized. We have to examine the demographic, technical, economic and cultural changes that have led to an interest in a 'learning society'.

It is necessary to deepen our theorization of the relationship between education and economic life; to appreciate developments in our theorization of learning; and to draw upon understandings of human beings as active, and cooperative agents if the notion of the learning society is to move beyond the level of rhetoric (or even myth). It may well be that the idea of learning networks or webs may be a more appropriate and convivial way forward.

It is, therefore, vital to facilitate and support a holistic and innovative approach to education for development that has a strong focus on people's empowerment. This approach should be "modernising" and "adapting" so as to accommodate the changing circumstances and needs of rural dwellers. A more strategic and inclusive approach is required recognising spatial contexts, giving priority to a partnership-based and multi-stakeholder design and implenetation framework. This framework will then reinforce the increase in multi-sectoral, place-based strategies that identify and better exploit the development potential of rural areas and their people (INRULED: 2014).

4. Moving from Rural Education to Learning Villages

The concept of "Learning Villages (LV) and Rural Learning Communities" (LV) refers to a village where learning and social development work is organized and carried out by individuals and groups in their communities using a range of formal and informal methods. It is about empowering rural people and enabling them to tackle the real issues and influence the factors that affect their lives. It is concerned with providing rural people with the skills and information they need to participate in community life, as well as promoting personal development through learning.

The concept can result in improved confidence and skills, it can assist in better health and wellbeing, especially mental health, and it can contribute to active, inclusive and safe communities. It can deliver change. Thus,

A Learning Village (LV) is a rural community where every rural resident, regardless of age, sex, race, religion and social status, has a villingness and an opportunity to be continuously empowered through knowledge acquisition, skills development and values and attitudes cultivation, as per each learner's immediate and long-term learning needs (INRULED: 2014).

Thus, a rural learning community should comprise a broad range of learning that brings together adults, often of different ages and backgrounds, to pursue an interest, address a need, acquire a new skill, become healthier or learn how to support their children. This kind of learning, usually unaccredited, should be an important part of the wider learning continuum. It can be undertaken for its own sake or as a step towards other learning/training. It should cover structured adult education courses taught by professionally qualified teachers, independent study online and self-organised study groups. Some learning shall be in very short episodes and some shall take place over a term, a year, or longer. It
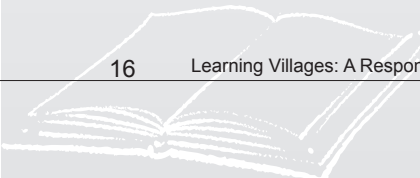
may happen in personal or work time and be delivered by providers in the public, voluntary or private sectors, or organised by people for themselves through the many groups, clubs and societies where people get together to learn.

All sorts of individuals and organisations shall be actively involved in helping to make informal learning happen. Some people may be paid but many others shall offer their services as volunteers. Some organisations may be funded by the taxpayer and many may not. Lots of local voluntary organisations and community networks shall come forward to deliver and support the informal learning found in libraries, museums, community centres, union learning centres, universities, extended schools, children's centres, colleges and workplaces.

Rural community learning programmes such as these are already in place in Brazil, China, India and South Africa. These learning village programmes already lead to qualifications or some other form of accreditation. All programmes have been structured to enable people to make measurable progress. Different methods are used to meet individuals and communities learning needs. These methods range from classes and courses to less formal methods of acquiring personal skills and becoming involved in social action. Key features are that community learning and development have been tailored to what suits people best, and that programmes and activities are developed in dialogue with communities and participants.

In Education and Training for Rural Transformation: Skills, Jobs, Food and Green Future to Combat Poverty (INRULED 2012), noted that while rural areas of the developing countries face a different set of concerns and issues than metropolitan areas, "these rural, sub-urban, and urban areas are mutually dependent; and much information and analysis is needed regarding their connections, such as those between food production, food dependence, and ecosystem management." The report looked to a variety of new development strategies, "ones that appreciate the fragility and vulnerability of rural economies and social structures."

Regardless of their diversity, the report argued that rural areas are all affected by major changes. But these changes also imply seeking new solutions adapted to each area. The key purpose of a rural learning community is the sustainable development of rural areas, with emphasis on innovative actions that may serve as a model and be transferred. This particularly implies taking into account the internal opportunities and constraints linked to factors caused by the history of each area and the external opportunities and constraints deriving from the opening of local economies.

These opportunities and constraints can be analysed in 8 key points, which in some aspects, may support one another:

- *Mobilisation of the local population and social cohesion.*

- *Area's culture and identity.*

- *Activities and jobs.*

- *The area's image.*

- *Migrations and social and vocational integration.*

- *The environment, management of spaces and natural resources.*

- *Technological developments.*

- *Competitiveness and access to markets.*

Around these eight key points, local development actors can identify and analyse the specific challenges confronting their community (greater community participation, promotion of the community's identity, diversification and adaptation of activities and services, enhancement of natural heritage, etc.) and the innovation needs which stem from this.

However, this cannot happen unless the rural people are empowered, in terms of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, through learning opportunities and social development work organised and carried out by their own communities in order to fulfil their immediate and long-term
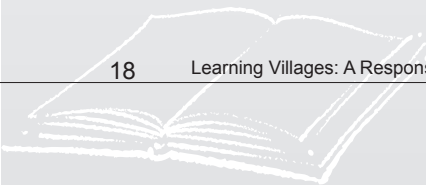
needs. It is within this context that the notion of Learning Villages (LV) and Rural Learning Communities (RLC) becomes critical.

The key aim of Learning Villages (LV) and Rural Learning Communities (RLC) is to highlight the efforts rural communities should undertake in pursuit of sustainability. Given the breadth of issues and concerns facing the rural areas of the developing countries, the topical scope and its underlying premise should be broad, ranging from sustainable agriculture and renewable resource use to alternative economic development strategies and rural telecommunications. The aim should not be to articulate one vision of rural sustainability but rather it should offer an overview of some of the successful approaches, as well as the tools and resources available to assist rural people pursue their own course of sustainable development.

Thus, the following drivers, among others, need to be considered for Community Learning:

Purpose of Government-Supported Community Learning

• *Maximise access to community learning for adults, bringing new opportunities and improving lives, whatever people's circumstances.*

• *Promote social renewal by bringing local communities together to experience the joy of learning and the pride that comes with achievement.*

• *Maximise the impact of community learning on the social and economic wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.*

Objectives

Focus public funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate, including in rural areas and people on low incomes with low skills.

Collect fee income from people who can afford to pay and use where possible to extend provision to those who cannot.

Widen participation and transform people's destinies by supporting progression relevant to personal circumstances, for example:

- *Improved confidence and willingness to engage in learning.*

- *Acquisition of skills preparing people for training, employment or self-employment.*

- *Improved digital, financial literacy and/or communication skills.*

- *Parents/carers better equipped to support and encourage their children's learning.*

- *Improved/maintained health and/or social well-being.*

Develop stronger communities, with more self-sufficient, connected and proactive citizens, leading to:

- *Increased volunteering, civic engagement and social integration.*

- *Reduced costs on welfare, health and anti-social behaviour.*

- *Increased online learning and self-organised learning.*

- *The lives of our most troubled families being turned around.*

Commission, deliver and support learning in ways that contribute directly to these objectives, including:

- *Bringing together people from all backgrounds, cultures and income groups, including people who can/cannot afford to pay.*

- *Using effective local partnerships to bring together key providers and relevant local agencies and services.*

- *Devolving planning and accountability to neighbourhood/parish level, with local people involved in decisions about the learning offer.*

- *Involving volunteers and Voluntary and Community Sector groups, shifting long term, 'blocked' classes into learning clubs, growing self-organised learning groups, and encouraging employers to support informal learning in the workplace.*
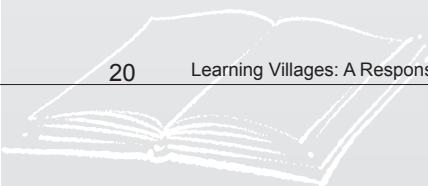
• Supporting the wide use of online information and learning resources.

• Minimising overheads, bureaucracy and administration.

Finally, Rural Proofing requires policy-makers to consider the rural impacts of their policies and programmes and, where necessary, to make adjustments to achieve equally effective and successful outcomes for individuals, communities and businesses in rural areas. Rural Proofing does not require exactly the same outcome or the provision of exactly the same level of service in rural as in urban locations. This would not be practical in many cases, as the costs would be prohibitive, and in any case rural communities do not necessarily expect this. They do, however, rightly expect that all Government policies and programmes should be sufficiently flexible to apply fairly in their areas and to deliver quality services that meet their everyday needs.

5. A Vision for Rural Learning Community

The vision shall be for everyone in the rural community, but in particular for those living in more disadvantaged communities, to have access to CLD opportunities that allow them to gain the knowledge and skills, both individually and collectively, to fulfil their potential, and to have the capacity to participate meaningfully in community life.

A number of basic principles should underpin the approach. The approach should aim to ensure that:

- *Opportunities to learn are available to people regardless of their age, ability, race, gender, sexuality, faith, health, location, and financial or educational circumstances.*

- *There is access to affordable learning opportunities, particularly in our more disadvantaged communities.*

- *Learning gives people the selfconfidence and motivation to continue learning for the purposes of personal development or playing an active role in the community.*

- *People are involved in deciding what they want to learn and how they want to learn.*

- *Opportunities to learn are available throughout people's lives and build on whatever education n and experience they already have.*

- *There is a planned approach to the range and relevance of community-based activities to facilitate learner progression between the different providers.*

- *There is access, within communities, to high quality, impartial advice and guidance on the range and suitability of learning opportunities available.*
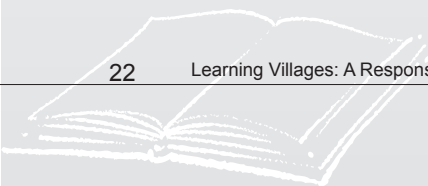
• *Appropriate support arrangements, including childcare, are in place for those who need these to access learning.*

For achieving these broad objectives, a cohesive partnership approach to delivery in order to maximise resources and skills should be developed.

Components of the Framework to Promote, Facilitate and Sustain Rural Learning Communities and Learning Villages

The framework presented underneath provides a vision for building rural learning communities and learning villages. It comprises five main areas of focus. These areas are:

1. *Community capacity building/engaging with communities;*

2. *Promoting achievement through learning for adults;*

3. *Encouraging achievement through learning for young people;*

4. *Ensuring learner support and progression; and*

5. *Developing the partnership.*

The planned action for each strategic priority has been shown in the following logical framework (Table 2) of rural learning communities and learning villages.
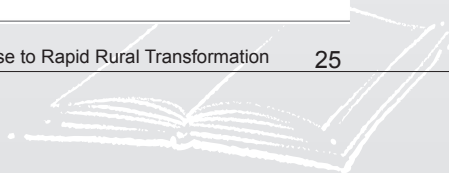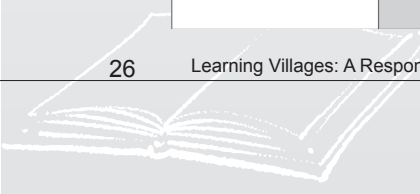
Table 2

Logical Framework for Developing Learning Communities and Learning Villages

Strategic Priority	National Outcomes	Local Outcomes	Action Plan
1. Community capacity building/Engaging with communities	• Realisation of full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for all rural people. • Improvement in the quality of life in the most deprived communities. • Emergence of strong, resilient and supportive rural communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.	• National recognition for the self sufficient and inclusive communities in the area. • Decrease in the proportion of individuals living in poverty. • An improved approach to engagement and consultation with actively involved residents and communities influencing the decision-making process of the village council. • Development of communities with the confidence and capability to tackle the things that matter to them, in particular strong, resilient communities in the Village Council's regeneration areas. • Integration of migrant workers and other ethnic minority groups into local communities. • Effective, well-developed partnerships – community planning, community councils, shared services, joined up of ethnic communities to integrate successfully in their delivery. • Best quality of life for community members. • Fewer people in the community experiencing multiple deprivations. • Fewer disadvantaged people with disabilities.	**The Village Council shall:** •Contribute to the development of employability strategy for vulnerable people and its implementation. •Work with the community as equal partner using the national standards for community engagement. •Build on the success of innovative and successful projects, in particular to expand the use of action research as a capacity building tool. •Review progress in setting up Community Development Groups and work with their members to decide on the best option for their future operation. •Implement the Youth Engagement Strategy and embed it in actual practice. •Develop social enterprises that address local needs, particularly in regeneration areas. •Produce more community profiles and undertake needs assessment in conjunction with local people. •Provide all kinds of support for migrant workers and members successfully in their communities. •Develop volunteering opportunities for adults, and investigate ways of accrediting these experiences. •Continue to support voluntary organisations and community activities by developing programmes to support and develop their work and to assist those who run them.

|			
2. Promoting achievement through learning for adults.	• Realisation of full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for community members. • Better educated, more skilled and more successful, research and innovation. • Improved quality of life in the most deprived communities. • Improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk.	• People with appropriate skills to meet the future needs of the economy. • Improved attainment and achievement for all. • Decrease the proportion of individuals living in poverty.	• Continue to exploit and use literacies partnership to take forward much of this work. Those partners who are directly involved in the delivery of literacies learning shall work together to provide opportunities for learners to improve their skills and develop confidence. This work is expected to make a significant contribution to the employability strategy. • Deliver some workplace learning through the innovative projects. This must include several provisions. • Continue the community-based provision through the implementation of several strategic village and community development plans and links to the formal education in schools. • Develop the approach to the provision of accredited courses in Core Skills particularly in the regeneration areas or in areas of low educational attainment. • Endeavour to provide a wide range of community-based adult learning programmes to support health and wellbeing. • Take particular note of under-represented groups and also of the needs of older people. • Undertake to deliver relevant courses to individuals and groups, subject to financial viability. Community-based courses will be offered which shall be designed to increase participation in lifelong learning to support the key priorities of achievement through learning and achievement through improved community capacity as a result of learning. Provision shall be made in every area, but priority shall be accorded to the more disadvantaged communities as identified from time to time in the local community plans. • Continue to promote the use of ICT to support learning. In particular. Attempts shall be made to promote the use of ICT to support family learning and to increase the number of families who are web-enabled and to promote the development of ICT skills for low wage, low skilled individuals in employment. • Explore other opportunities for using ICT and promoting e-learning in an adult learning context. • Provide support to vulnerable parents. • Develop family learning.

Theme	Outcomes	Outcomes	Actions
			• Strengthen the role of all the organisations involved in the delivery of adult learning, in particular the voluntary sector ones, by seeking additional sources of funding. • Ensure that all learners and potential learners have access in their local community to impartial, high quality advice and guidance when needed. • Develop and implement a Community Guidance Strategy based on delivery of quality guidance services and effective referral to appropriate partner organisations.
3. Encouraging achievement through learning for young people.	• Better educated, more skilled youth and adults. • Research and innovation. • Successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. • Improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk.	• Improved attainment and achievement for all. • Educational establishments deliver high quality experiences for learners, which meet their needs and allow them to develop skills, and knowledge. • Successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.	• Continue to work on Youth Work and Youth Engagement strategies to deliver the four capacities of a Curriculum for Excellence. • Develop partnership with young people using the Dialogue Youth initiative to improve youth information. • Deliver citizenship education. • Develop our youth work partnerships in order to provide a range of high quality services for young people and increase participation. • Support active citizenship through youth forums, pupil councils and youth banks. • Develop award schemes such as Youth Achievement Awards. • Support and develop projects that target young people during the transitional periods of their lives child to young person and young person to adulthood. • Use more choices and more chances type of partnership to ensure that all young people are able to fulfil their potential by accessing appropriate learning, training and employment provision. Young people who are not yet "job ready" shall receive additional support through participation in training provision tailored to their needs and offering progression opportunities. • Develop partnership with schools to improve the outcomes for disengaged young people by offering support through youth work.

|		
4. Ensuring learner support and progression	• Realise full economic potential of community members with more and better employment opportunities for all. • People with appropriate skills to meet the future needs of the economy. • Improved attainment and achievement for all. • Educational establishments deliver high quality experiences for learners, which meet their needs and allow them to develop skills and knowledge.	• Work together to ensure that there is access to high quality, impartial advice and guidance at a community level. • Design our Community Learning and Development programmes so that there is easy progression to formal education for those learners who wish it. • Develop and deliver materials to facilitate progression between community-based provision and mainstream formal education provision. • Develop the approach to accreditation for community-based activities. • Raise awareness of progression routes. • Support learners' needs by removing barriers to learning whether health-related, financial, or social. • Develop a consistent approach to childcare. • Develop a system for information sharing and tracking learners' progress
5. Developing the partnership	• Develop high quality services efficient and responsive to local people's needs. • Community planning partners' services responsive to local people's needs	• Encourage all partners to contribute, at strategic and local community plan level. • Ensure response to the views and expressed needs of communities. • Carry out regular reviews of how the strategic partnership is operating, and what it is achieving, in the spirit of continuous improvement.
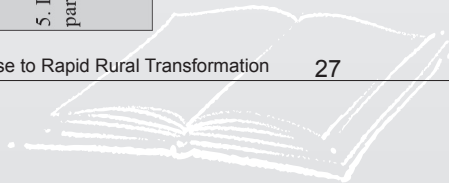
6. Indicators for Rural Learning Community/Learning Village

Building Learning Villages is crucial to achieving both the Education for All (EFA) Goals, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, ensuring universal primary education, promoting gender equity and ensuring environmental sustainability. In 1996, the World Food Summit stressed increased access to education for the rural people, as a key to achieving poverty eradication, food security, durable peace and sustainable development. The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, also emphasized the role of education to transform rural areas into learning villages and learning communities.

As the majority of the world's poor, illiterate and undernourished live in rural areas, it is a major challenge to ensure their access to quality education. The lack of learning opportunities is both a cause and an effect of rural poverty. Hence, education and training strategies need to be integrated within all aspects of sustainable development of learning villages, through plans of action that are multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary. This means creating new partnerships between people working in agriculture and rural development, and people working in education.

To address this challenge UNESCO-INRULED prepared a Concept Note entitled "Learning Villages-Rural Learning Communities for Sustainable Rural Transformation" and launched in 2014 its flagship programme on "Promoting, Facilitating and Maintaining Rural Learning Communities and Learning Villages for Lifelong Learning".

It is within this framework, and to provide inspiration for the flagship initiative, that INRULED has been developing a set of Core Indicators
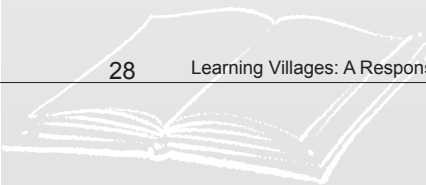
for setting out the principles and techniques used to develop tools specifically for planning, administering, managing, and monitoring the transformation of rural areas into learning villages. Thus, the proposed framework presented below focuses more particularly on the development of a coherent set of indicators to monitor national education strategies for rural people. Since the issues of access, equity, relevance and quality assume somewhat different forms in rural context, indicators specific to that context have been proposed.

6.1 Framework for Indicators

There can be numerous indicators defining and measuring rural areas and rural development within the context of a learning village as often used by international organizations as well as by national agencies. Thus, the selection of a particular set of indicators will depend on:

- *which definition of "rural" is actually chosen, which in turn is dependent on the specific policy issue under consideration, and*

- *data availability.*

The main purpose here is to provide a statistical framework to aid the identification and construction of a core set of indicators that will be useful to describe a "learning village". The framework provides a list of suggested areas of interest, with examples of indicators, based on considerations of operational feasibility.

However, each proposed indicator in the log frame has to be explained in terms of the following standards and criteria:

- *Definition.*
- *Purpose.*
- *Calculation method.*
- *Formula.*
- *Data required.*
- *Data source(s).*

- *Type of disaggregation.*

- *Interpretation.*

6.2 Statistical Requirements of a Rural Indicator

The following is a list of requirements for a good quality indicator:

- *Understandable: should be clear and brief, easy for users to read and understand;*

- *Transparent: inputs and the process of production should be clear. Users should know how it is produced, where the information comes from, how the information is processed and how it is calculated;*

- *Significant and relevant: should be informative to users;*

- *Analytical: should give a sufficient insight into the phenomena;*

- *Complete: should cover the whole population of statistical units or the whole geographical area;*

- *Reliable: should have little statistical error or noise;*

- *Comparable: there are different levels of comparability:*
    - *o Inside Comparability: should be possible to compare the same indicator for two sub-populations or areas;*
    - *o Outside Comparability: should be possible to compare the indicator with similar indicators from other sources (different data sources or different producers); and*
    - *o Inter-temporal Comparability: should be possible to review the indicator over time.*

To achieve comparability, it is necessary to have clear and consistant definitions and classification:

- *Coherent: should have the same reference period, accountancy criteria and mode of calculation as other information sources.*

6.3 Indicators

Since rural development is a complex and multidimensional concept, a single yardstick cannot describe rural conditions and trends. To cover the various perspectives, a whole set of indicators has to be found. Furthermore, the focus of analytical and policy interest in rural affairs changes over time.
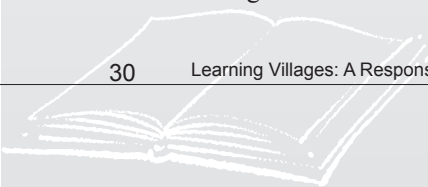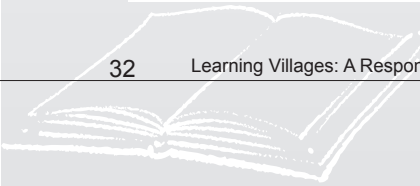
Table 3
A Logical Framework for Statistics and Indicators on Learning Villages
(Suggestive Guidelines)

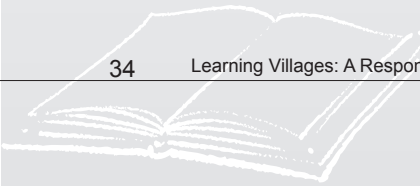| Category	Character/Rationale	Suggested Proxy Indicators
A. Basic Data A1: Population and Migration.	Overall demographic characteristics of the village in relation to the size of national population. Analysis of the economic determinants for migration for structural adjustment in agriculture.	**State-of-the-Art** • Total Population • Total Rural Population by Sex (Millions). • Rural Population as Percentage of Total Population. • Population Density. • Rural Population Density (Rural People/sq. km Arable Land). • Rural Population Structure (by Age and Sex). • Rural Population (% Distribution by Occupation and by Sex). • Rural Household Size. • Share of Children Growing up in Single Parent Households (%). • Share of the Population Living in Local Communities of Different Sizes • Rural Life Expectancy (Years). • Dependency Rate (by Gender): *(Population 0-14 + Population over 64)/(Population 15-64)*100.* • Social Weight of Young Population: *(Population 0-14)/(Population 15-64)*100.* • Rejuvenation Rate: *(Population Over 65)/(Population 0-14)*100.* • Substitution Rate: *(Population 15-24)/(Population 55-64)*100.* • Demographic Labour Market Index: *(Population 5-14)/(Population 55-64)*100.* • Net Migration: *(Total Net Change Minus Natural Balance where Natural Balance is calculated as Births minus Deaths).* • Scale and Character (Age-Structure, Class-Structure, etc.) of Inward Migration.

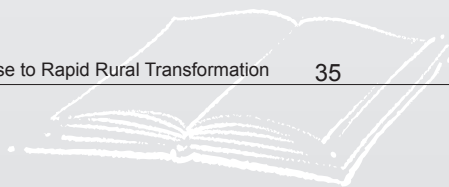|		
A2: Economic Structure and Performance *Labour Force and Labour Market Structure.* *Employment.* *Enterprise and Innovation.* *Sectoral Shares.* *Productivity.* *Investment.* *Multi-Functionality of Agriculture*	Ensuring and promoting efficient rural production and employment.	• Total Labour Force. • Unemployment Rate. • Self-Employment by Gender. • Labour Force Participation Rates by Sex. • Nature of Unemployment, by Age, Sex and Duration. • Sectoral Shares (Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Sector) in Employment and Production (e.g. Gross Value Added). • Share of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing in the Primary Sector. • Types of Investment (Public, Private and Others). • Percentage of Number and Area of Agricultural Holdings by Size Groups and Tenure. • Percentage of Heads of Rural Households Without Land. • Average Wage Rate of Agricultural Labourers. • Rate of Unemployment and Under-Employment. • Percentage of Landless Agricultural Labourers to the Population. Economically Active Population in Agriculture. **Tendency Over Time** • For each indicator given above: *Indicator at time t / indicator at time t 1.*

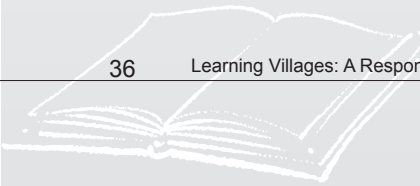|		
A. COMPONENTS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT **B 1: Natural Environment and Sustainability** *Topography and Climate.* *Land Use.* *Habitats and Species.* *Soils and Water:* *Air Quality.*	Quality of the countryside and the condition of the natural environment (natural resources and wildlife), as necessary requirements to reach a good quality of life and as an opportunity to enhance the economic conditions of the rural population.	**State-of-the-Art** • Share of Mountain Area (over 600 meters) in Total Land Area. • Percentage of Utilizable Agricultural Area (UAA) devoted to Organic Farming and its Evolution. • Vegetation Period (Growing Days per Year). • Share of Arable Land in Total Land. • Share of Endangered Species. • Per capita Drinking Water: *Cubic metres of Drinkable Water at time t /Population at timet.* • Per Capita CO2 Emission: *Tonnes of CO2 Emission at time t / Population at time t.* • Per Capita Energy Consumption: *KWh of Energy Consumption at time t / Population at time t.* • Biodiversity Index: *Number of Animals (Farmland Birds, Wild Beasts, Farm Animals) at time t / square kilometres of the Surface at time t.* • Landscape Index: *Square kilometres of Land lost from Agriculture and Forestry to Industrial, Housing, Road and other Uses at time t / square kilometres of the Surface at time t.* • Waste Recycling Index: *Per cent of waste that is recycled at time t.* **Tendency Over Time** For each indicator given above: Indicator at time t / indicator at time t 1.

		State-of-the-Art
B 2: Social Well-Being	Quality of social life and welfare. Good quality means good education and health; reduced risks and vulnerability of people.	• GDP Per Capita.
• *Income.*		• Disposable Personal Income.
• *Housing.*		• Income from other Non-Farming Enterprises.
• *Education*		• Percentage of Population in Households with Per Capita Income Below the Poverty Line.
• *Health.*		• Percentage of Children Aged 1-5 Years in Groups less than:
• *Nutrition.*		*80% weight-for-age.*
• *Safety.*		*90% height-for-age.*
		80% weight-for-height.
		• Percentage of Under-nourished Children.
		• Infection among Rural People.
		• Number of Persons per Room in the Household.
		• Percentage of Households having Flush Toilets, Piped Water and Electricity.
		• Percentage of the Population in Villages/Communities with at least one Health Auxiliary.
		• Percentage of Population living in Villages/Communities with Access to: Potable Water, Public Health Services and Primary Schools.
		• Per cent of population aged 15 – 24, who have completed a given level of Formal Schooling at time t.
		• Net Enrolment in Primary Education.
		• Per cent of Pupils reaching Grad IV of Primary Level of Education.
		• Share of population over age 25 with a completed Post-Secondary Education.
		• Per cent of Adult Population (15+ years old), who have attained National Literacy norms at time t.
		• Number of Deaths of Infants (under one year of age) per 1,000 Live Births at time t.
		• Number of Newspapers sold at time t / Population at time t.
		• Per cent of the Eligible Voters who voted in the last Election.
		• Green Area as a per cent of Total Area at time t.

| B3: Conditions for Economic Well-Being | Income and wealth of people. | **Tendency Over Time**
For each indicator given above:
Indicator at time t / indicator at time t 1.

State-of-the-Art
• Real Per Capita Income:
Real Income at time t / Population at time t.

Tendency
• Real Per Capita Income Growth:
Real Per Capita income at time t / Real Per Capita Income at time t-1.

Dispersion and Concentration
• Real Per Capita Income Inequality:
Normalised squared error from the Mean at time t.
Gini Index of Inequality at time t. |

| C: POTENTIAL OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT		
C1: Territory with Respect to Population	Territory available to the rural population to live, to cultivate (usable agricultural land) and to perform other economic activities.	**State-of-the-Art** • Per Capita Territory: Square kilometres of the Surface at time t / Population at time t (which is the inverse of the Population Density). • Per Capita AAU: Agricultural Area Utilised (AAU) (square kilometres) by Rural Population at time t / Rural Population at time t. • Rural Youth: Rural Population Under 14 Year at time t / Rural Population at time t. • Minority Rate: Minority Population Groups as per cent of Total Rural Population at time t.
C3: Communication	Ability of rural population to communicate and interact with the rest of the world.	**Tendency over time** •Rural Population Growth: Rural population at time t / rural population at time t-1. **State-of-the-Art** • Per Capita Stations: Number of Stations (Railway Stations, Ports and Airports) at time t / rural Population at time t. • Per Capita Telephones: Number of Telephones (Home, Mobile and Public) available at time t / Population at time t. **Tendency Over Time** • Per Capita Stations Rate of Growth: Number of stations at time t/ number of stations at time t-1. • Per Capita Telephones Rate of Growth: Number of Telephones at time t / Number of Telephones at time t-1.

	State-of-the-Art
D: MARKET AND INSTITUTIONS	• Food Price Index. • Membership in Organisations of Agricultural Producers. • Food Production Index.
E: NATURAL RESOURCES	• Forests. • Deforestation

Agriculture, together with forestry, involves the management of land resources in rural areas. It continues to shape the environmental quality of the countryside. Land use changes can have an important impact not only on ecological integrity but also on aesthetic, visual amenities. Environmental quality has become a key factor in any assessment of rural living conditions, as has education, health and safety. Income figures are still important criteria for measuring rural and regional disparities. However, alone they are not sufficient to explain why people stay or leave rural places.

Thus, rural indicators must cover the whole range of rural concerns and should improve the understanding of those factors which influence the design, implementation and impact of rural policies. As a first step, it is useful to distinguish between those subjects which are of general importance and which provide the necessary background for any rural assessment and other more specialized subjects for which a more detailed analysis is required.

It should be borne in mind that no single basic indicator could be accepted individually as a reasonable yardstick for an assessment of rural conditions and trends. Even comparatively narrow aspects of rural life, such as education and health, for instance, are not adequately reflected by such crude measures as the percentage of population with a completed post secondary education, or infant mortality. Nor can disparities in social wellbeing be measured simply in terms of income per capita. Not all of the indicators in the basic set are equally accessible.
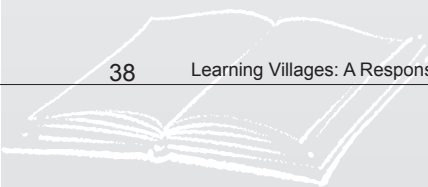
7. Recommendations for Policy and Planning

The proposed community learning/learning village framework as discussed above is undertaken to support policy development in relation to adult learning in rural communities and to ensure that the needs of current and potential adult learners in rural areas were properly considered. The methodology involved five strands of activity: provider and stakeholder; data evaluation; literature review; case study evidence; and profiles of villages.

The framework uses standard definitions of rurality, rural proofing and of community learning. It is based on the work of a number of Skills Funding Agencies. It examines the role of the voluntary sector, heritage agencies, environmental organisations, private individuals and community members in providing rural learning. It also examines the particular factors that distinguish rural learning.

Consideration is given to the way provision should be planned, how policy addresses specific rural issues and how needs of rural communities are identified. There is a focus on how delivery is made and the challenges faced by providers in finding the resources to meet the needs of rural learners. Particular attention is given to how partners in rural provision work together and the areas where collaboration is most successful and most challenging.

The following recommendations are presented for consideration. Their principal aim is to improve the quantum and reach of community learning in rural areas.

Recommendation 1: Providers and partnership

More learning opportunities in rural communities can be achieved by partnership and collaboration. The role of the Rural Development Councils (Agencies) will be critical if these recommendations are to be adopted.

• *Rural providers and stakeholders should strive to identify one another and to understand their role in any of the models of planning, funding, delivery, review and governance of community learning. Any future models of Community Learning Centres could play a central role in this.*

• *The Rural Development Authority (Agency) should encourage publicly funded providers of community learning to consider issues of rurality in the planning and delivery of provision.*

• *The Authority should encourage fund providers to develop a public strategy for their work in rural areas which is geared to increasing the quantum of community learning, whether delivered by public, voluntary or private providers.*

• *The Authority should encourage large fund providers covering significant rural areas to adopt a mothership approach to community learning in rural areas, assisting organisations and individuals not publicly funded to be part of the wider landscape of provision, and offering them access, where feasible, to resources, training and publicity.*

• *Any future Community Learning Centres models covering rural areas should be encouraged by the Authority to build on previously successful partnerships and to ensure the inclusion of voluntary sector organisations and other interested parties.*

• *The Authority should encourage local providers to ensure that rural planning for skills is closely allied to planning for learning for community and personal development to maximise the use of common facilities, equipment and staff expertise.*

• *The Authority should encourage partnerships to assist in the work of development staff in rural areas, with particular consideration to the involvement of Rural Community Councils in the support and use of such staff.*
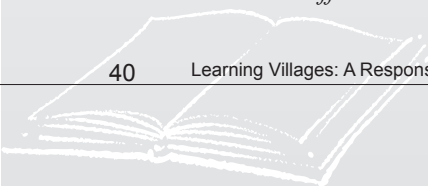
• In rural areas, the new Community Organisers could be encouraged by Locality (the agency responsible for the Community Organisers programme) to be learning champions, and to liaise with their Community Learning Centre to help facilitate partnership and to formulate rural planning and deliver.

Recommendation 2: Funding and focus

The available evidence revealed additional costs of rural delivery, the viability of low group

numbers, and the need for better ICT and for better mapping of rural provision.

• The allocation and distribution for community learning should consider rurality as one of its metrics.

• The providers of financial assistance to Authority should report on the quantum of community learning in rural areas with minimal reporting requirements (so that a penumbra of private provision can be included and mapped to a limited extent without the burden of full data collection).

• The Authority should have clear processes for the rural proofing of its public policies.

• The Authority should include rurality in its equality impact measures with corresponding data collection and reporting.

• Publicly fund providers should be encouraged by the Authority to address rural issues in their self-assessment.

• The Authority fund providers should be encouraged to cast a wide net for feedback on their planning and delivery of community learning with a view to extending partnership models of working.
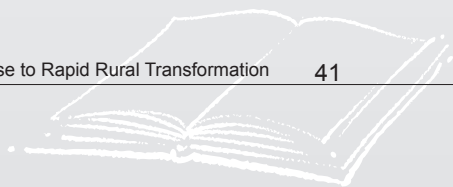
## Recommendation 3: Developing and supporting practice

New models of delivery are needed in addition to the traditional ones. Providers need to be supported to be more creative, not merely in their project work but in their mainstream delivery, and these recommendations are intended to help achieve these ambitions. The Village Development Authority might work together with the Community Learning Centre, Women Self-Help Groups and the Rural Youth Forums as appropriate on the following.

- *Commission development work on blended learning and ICT-based models of teaching and learning to support rural learning.*
- *Explore rural models of planning, community development and delivery of community learning (e.g. rural hub and spoke models of provision).*
- *Issue guidance for rural providers on what will be specifically expected of Community Learning Centres in rural or partly rural areas.*
- *Continue their collaboration on rural community learning and consider ways of extending this collaboration.*
- *Commission research on a template for action on how to work creatively in rural areas.*

Recommendations 4: Redistribution of funding

There is every possibility that any redistribution of community learning funding at a time of contraction and financial stringency could lead to a disproportionate knock-back on rural provision.

- *Any future redistribution of funding for community learning should consider rurality as one of its metrics.*
- *Rural sparsity should form part of any equality impact analysis of redistribution.*
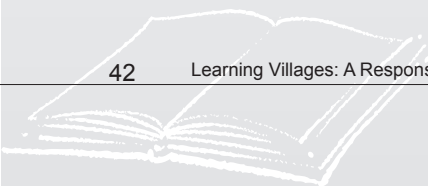
8. Concluding Remarks

Building rural learning community/learning villages requires developing stronger human and social capital. Human capital is embodied in individuals' skills and knowledge and can be created through educational opportunities. Social capital, embodied in relationships among people, includes the webs of information flow, social norms, expectations, obligations, sanctions, and trust that make it possible to achieve particular goals. Histories of social division across lines of class, culture, ethnicity, gender, or language in rural communities of the developing countries lead to fragmented relations and an inability to address school and community deficits. Building social capital requires encompassing all segments of the community by forming equal partnerships with representatives of government, education (including higher education), economic development agencies, extension, churches/heritage institutions, civic groups, foundations, public/private entities, local media, and families.

Many critical gaps exist in research on policy. Governmental policies needed to help facilitate change in one place can sometimes create barriers elsewhere. For example, rural areas are not eligible for many initiatives because they cannot meet "economies of scale" criteria or because they lack required partner institutions or infrastructure.

Research on policy bias should (i) explore reasons and solutions for uneven development and unequal educational opportunities, particularly focusing on race and tribal issues; (ii) compare government spending on rural programs with previous years and with urban/suburban monies; and (iii) investigate ways political inequalities influence learning and opportunities to learn in rural communities. Planners need studies of government devolution, demographic shifts, and ways to harness the underground economy, as well as policies that evaluate and fund dissemination of successful ideas.

It can be argued that a good education is the key that unlocks and expands the cultural tool kits of the have-nots, and thus gives them the potential to bring about lasting social change in their persistently poor communities. To realize the goal building rural learning communities/ learning villages in the developing country will require the collaboration of many players, including researchers from a variety of disciplines. The job will require new perspectives, tools, expertise, and research that build on assets and successfully (i) involve multiple institutions and social structures; (ii) communicate in the "local language"; (iii) partner equally with communities; (iv) include all constituencies, developing local leadership; (v) cope with the realities of globalization and take advantage of the potential of e-commerce; and (vi) create the sense of efficacy, empowerment, self-determination, and hope that is essential to developing vital rural communities.

Successfully translating empowerment into community action calls for a much larger role for applied and action research. Such research must be participatory, owned by those affected by it, and grounded in community priorities. To address the challenges facing distressed rural communities, research must be powerful enough to guide us beyond rhetoric and to systemic action.
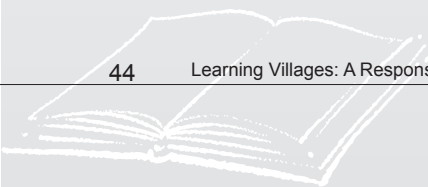
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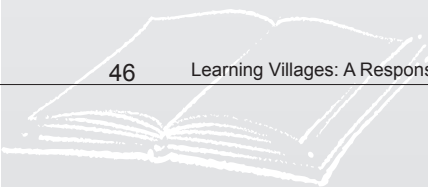
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