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12 theses for working on Skill Development in Rural Areas SDRA

Working paper

A synthesis of insights from 2 years of exchange of ideas and experience among practitioners and program personnel of SDC-funded efforts and guests.

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This paper is a milestone of an ongoing journey of exchange of ideas and experiences. In the last 2 years practitioners and program personnel of programs funded by the Swiss Development Cooperation and some guests have exchanged over an internet platform how to tackle the challenges of skill development in rural areas. These exchanges culminated in a workshop in Switzerland, where the „state-of-the-art“ was explored and discussed. Avenues for future explorations were also identified. This paper therefore is to be regarded as a milestone that shows how far the discussion has come, and the direction in which future work will have to proceed.

Demarcation

The debate which underlies this paper has been going in many directions and touched on a broad range of issues. However, the focus was always brought back to the challenge of allowing people living in rural areas to learn the skills they need to earn a decent living in today's fast moving world. The focus was further on skills mainly for income generation and less on basic skills or communal skills. We concentrated on issues of SDRA that are specific to rural areas and rural development. Of course any development effort always needs a good policy environment. Our discussions did not dwell on general policy issues regarding rural development and education, but rather focussed on operational guidelines for programs and projects with an SDRA agenda.

This paper presents the results of the COP on SDRA and does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever of the SDC, Employment and Income Division.

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I. Overview of the theses

A. SDRA and the larger issues

1. Globalization and SDRA

Globalization impacts rural livelihoods in many ways. An important development is the rise in income opportunities other than from farming. Effective good skills are one way of dealing with globalization. It will depend on their skills whether rural men and women will suffer from globalization or benefit from it. SDRA must therefore enable them to actively develop their ideas and take the initiative in order to deal with the changes in their livelihoods brought about by globalization.

2. SDRA and Migration

Migration is more of a chance for a rural area, rather than a problem. Every rural youth is a potential migrant. Migration gives the chance to learn new skills, new connections, get new ideas. Migration has the potential to enhance technical, economic and social innovation in rural areas. Remittances from migrated people are often the most important factor in many rural economies.

3. Equality between women and men

Unequal participation in decision-making between women and men and between generations are amongst the structural causes of social and political instability that generates poverty. No context is free of gender relations. Therefore, a gender aware analysis at micro- and meso-levels is mandatory while planning and implementing SDRA.

B. Concepts and Definitions

4. Which skills and competencies?

People in rural areas are forced to undertake a mix of several economic activities for which they need to master various skills. So far we have concentrated on exploring production skills, organizational skills and financial/managerial skills. However, basic skills and communal skills are just as important in rural areas. They must be taken care of differently than what we discuss here.

A typical phenomenon of the rural economy is the inelasticity of the local markets: High demand for goods and services, with high prices, but low volume of transactions due to thinly spread demand --> when the small local volume of demand is covered, the price drops almost to zero. Local markets are therefore often too small for making a living with specialized products or services. This explains why rural people need to be good in several skills for producing a range of goods and services, as opposed to concentrating too much on one skill.

This importance of a spread of synergetic skills is the main difference between urban and rural skill development. It explains why livelihood coalitions with their internal synergies spread over various skills and contacts are crucial for economic survival in rural areas.

5. *SDRA and rural livelihood coalitions*

SDRA must address "livelihood coalitions" taking their needs and demands into consideration. Trainings to individuals must add value and create synergies within the livelihood coalitions and allow the livelihood coalitions to profitably interact with formalized structures (such as municipalities, companies, etc).

C. Operational ideas, logistics

6. *How to deliver skills development*

Successful SDRA programmes combine the (often contradicting) challenges of:

- providing usefully diverse trainings...
- in a modular way..
- to a significant number of people..
- who live spread out in rural areas..
- in a cost efficient way.

This is most successfully achieved by combining trainings in a central location with preparatory and follow-up efforts out in the villages through mobile training units.

7. *"Department store" as an analogy*

Think of a department store, where all sorts of skill development can be bought in various shops, and where the training offers and their costs are transparently shown. So trainees can pick and choose and combine as they see useful and relevant for themselves. „Department store“ is therefore an analogy for a local/regional network of providers of education and skills development. This allows the training providers to flexibly organize and coordinate solutions for the issues and priorities defined for the economic development of their area.

8. *Mobile Units for reaching the villages*

Successful SDRA programs also have strong elements that take place in the villages. Mobile units are an appropriate form of organizing decentralized training with highly skilled trainers.

9. *Communication channels for SDRA*

Modern communicational technology is spreading through rural areas much faster than predicted (local radio, mobile phones, internet). It is as yet poorly understood how this can be harnessed for the SDRA-effort. Achieving competence here is all the more important as distance is one of the key features of „rurality“.

D. Managing SDRA programs

10. How to sustain delivery of skill development in rural areas

Sustained delivery of SDRA depends on:

- Continuous analysis of the present and possible future realities of trainees and training providers.
- good interaction between formal institutions and the informal structures and social networks
- operating a resource base
- ensuring a broad ownership in the demand and supply
- ensuring broad and diverse funding that reflects public and private interests
- investing with a long time horizon.

11. Launch, steer and develop SDRA Programmes

SDRA programmes and projects are more successful when they are planned flexibly with a long term commitment, start with identified needs, fit into the decentralization processes, bring local stakeholders together in mutual learning networks, and finally use qualitative criteria for monitoring their success.

12. Capacity and Organisation Development

Successful SDRA programmes

- accept a long term partnership with stakeholders of mutual learning
- strengthen individuals and organizations to pro-actively cope with changes
- focus on learning techniques for hard and soft skills
- combine training of teachers with an Organisation Development component
- build and strengthen networks of learners and organizations
- focus on face to face exchange events and some additional distance learning using effective communication channels
- link rural and urban learning initiatives
- encourage inbuilt capitalisation of experiences for improvement of programmes
- use synergies and promote alliances among different SDRA stakeholders for an attractive and broad training offer of SDRA
- link to existing challenges
- influence the policy discussions bottom-up through concrete SDRA-successes in the rural areas.

Further questions/issues

Integration of basic skills, income earning skills and communal skills.

How to integrate basic skill trainings and communal skill trainings in the delivery of trainings directly aimed at income generation?

ICTs for SDRA

How can mobile phones, rural internet, interactive CDs and DVDs, etc.. be combined with local radio and TV for more effective skill development in remote areas?

SDRA in transition countries

What are the specific changes that have to be made in our recommendations so far in order to improve their usefulness for our efforts in transition countries?

Explore the concept of „Livelihood Coalition“

What are the most practical methods for us to identify, assess and address Livelihood Coalitions as the background of each trainee, in order to design his or her training to be most effective?

SDRA for interacting with urban centers?

Which skills need to be explored and trained in rural areas so that rural people can profitably interact with what is going on in the large towns and cities?

Sustainable funding of SDRA

How to identify and define the public interests, special group interests, and private commercial interests in SDRA in any given area, and combine them for a robust and sustained financial base for SDRA?

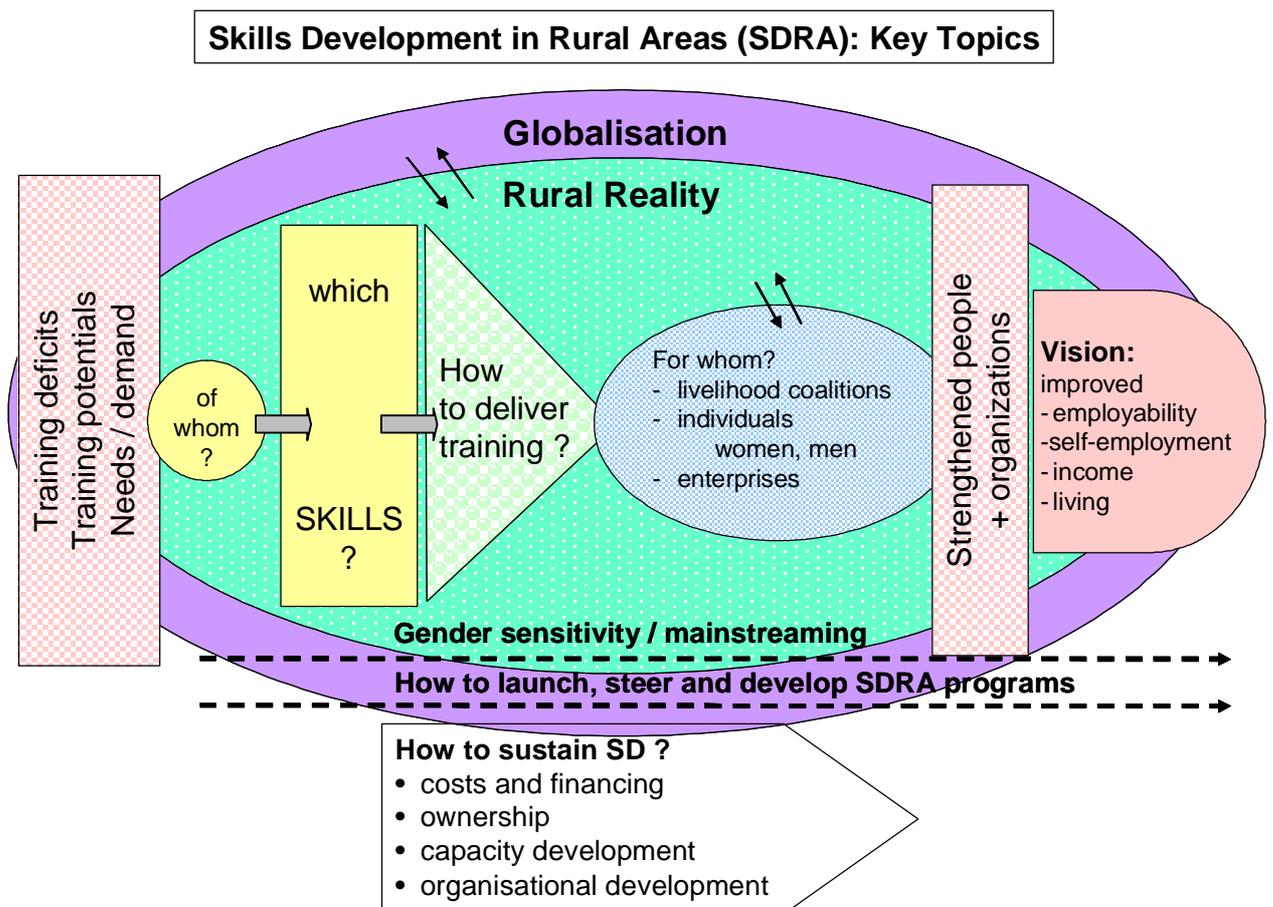


Fig 1: Overview of all conceptual interactions in a SDRA-effort

In order to make use of this potential for rural areas SDRA must:

- Address migrants as members of rural livelihood coalitions.
- Provide learning links between migrants and their people back home, allowing them to together explore ventures in their home villages that exploit the specific potentials of their situation.
- Provide skills that are useful when migrating, i.e. vocational skills that go beyond simple primary education. This enhances the income that can flow back to the villages.
- Utilize the skills of migrants as much as possible for designing and conducting skill development in villages. Migrants can also be good coaches, if communication is assured. Care must be taken to enhance learning also for the community and not only for family members of the migrants.
- Make a strong push for entrepreneurial skills, in order to use more of the sent back money for launching sustainable businesses in rural areas. Use IT-platforms to enhance exchange and learning about such ventures amongst migrants and between migrants and people back home. Nurture a discussion between them about visions for a promising future in the village.

○ **How can SDRA interact in a complementary way with trainings in urban and periurban areas? An issue worth exploring further.**

3. Equality between women and men

Unequal participation in decision-making between women and men and between generations are amongst the structural causes of social and political instability that generates poverty. No context is free of gender relations. Therefore, a gender aware analysis at micro- and meso-levels is mandatory while planning and implementing SDRA.

Mainstreaming gender (conceptual considerations)

Mainstreaming gender is a strategy to achieve gender equality. It means recognising that women and men often have different needs and priorities, face different constraints, have different aspirations and contribute to development in different ways. It requires the participation of women as well as men throughout the planning cycle and the systematic integration of their respective priorities and needs in terms of skill development and training. Working with gender as a transversal theme implies that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men respectively. It sometimes shows that it is not sufficient to address disparities and that specific programmes of women's empowerment are needed to positively influence equality between women and men.

Some definitions

Gender

Gender is a socially constructed definition of women and men. It is not the same as sex (biological characteristics of women and men) and it is not the same as women. Gender is determined by the conception of tasks, functions and roles attributed to women and men in society and in public and private life.

Gender relations

To identify gender relations is to look at the attribution and organisation of roles, responsibilities, resources and values attached to women and men in order to assess the differences and inequalities between them and to map out their specific interests, opportunities, constraints and needs in development.

Gender relations...

are context-specific : they vary between and within countries (e.g. rural/urban regions), but also between households;

are not static: even in traditional cultures, gender relations change as a result of economic, legal, political or environmental conditions

interact with other social relationships: age, class, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and physical/mental ability influence women's and men's activities, as well as their status, opportunities and constraints in life

are power relationships: institutions in private (e.g. the family, marriage) and public sphere (e.g. religion, school, labour market) reflect and maintain gender relations. Therefore, attempts to change them to improve gender equality are often perceived as threats to traditions and culture.

Gender equality

Gender equality is the equal access to and control of socially valued goods, opportunities, resources, and rewards by women and men. The aim is not that women and men become the same, but that their opportunities and life chances become and remain equal.

Source: Gender in practice. A tool-kit for SDC and its partners, SDC, 2003. Available in English, Spanish, Russian, French and Italian

Specific actions for gender equality (operational considerations)

Planned on the basis of a gender analysis, some specific actions have been identified in order to better integrate the gender dimension in skill development projects in rural areas:

Mobility and access

The points to which people can travel and the social settings of meetings they can attend are highly gender sensitive in many cultures. Gender sensitive skill development in rural areas will therefore arrange for trainings to move to the people, as opposed to people having to move to the trainings. This also allows men and women to accommodate family obligations with trainings, and allows them – especially women - to accommodate social taboos against travel and staying over night away from home. In most rural cultures this approach favours a more equal access of women to trainings. As gender relationships are power relationships as well, we have therefore to be aware in our practice not to reinforce the control of women's mobility by men in basing our activities on stereotyped and engendered as-

sumptions. It's also important to cross-cut several women and men groups with different aspirations and possibilities according to their different positions in the social system with regard to bargaining power.

Communication

A new kind of setting and new channels of communication can help a population to experiment new ways of learning. In rural contexts "physical encounters" (meetings and training sessions) still are more important and effective than distance-communication. But the exchange of experiences among learning groups can be promoted (visits, joint meetings etc.). This linking can include new communication channels, which may turn out to favour a more gender-balanced exchange over long distances. The methodology of "Linking Local Learners" may come into play here. We nevertheless have to keep in mind that a huge disparity is observed in terms of access to tools like computers for women and men.

Diversity of contents, methods and framework conditions

Dealing with gender in the planning, implementation and evaluation of training programmes means reflecting on content, work forms and methods, language and communication, framework conditions and gender competence of trainers. Some entry points could be:

- a diversity of methods (modular type, mobile unit, Radio and e-learning, distance communication etc) with a higher chance to reach more and varied people also among women (age, social class, etc);
- to train women trainers and use them for training both women and men;
- to combine technical and entrepreneurial skills with life skills taking both the responsibilities as mothers and income earners into consideration;
- to ensure the support of women trainees by their families, as this is crucial for a successful termination of a training sequence by women;
- to attempt to increase the esteem women have of women trainees, as this increases the self-esteem of the trainees.
- to ensure that women trainees with children have the facilities available for taking care of the children during the trainings

See also: Gender and Training. Mainstreaming gender equality and the planning, realisation and evaluation of training programmes, SDC, 2005

B. Concepts and Definitions

4. Which skills and competencies?

- F** People in rural areas are forced to undertake a mix of several economic activities for which they need to master various skills.
- F** So far we have concentrated on production skills, organizational skills and financial/managerial skills. However, basic skills and communal skills are just as important in rural areas. They must be taken care of differently than what we discuss here.
- F** A typical phenomenon of the rural economy is the inelasticity of the local markets: High demand for goods and services, with high prices, but low volume of transactions due to thinly spread demand --> when the small local volume of demand is covered, the price drops almost to zero. Local markets are therefore often too small for making a living with specialised products or services.
- F** This explains why rural people need to be good in several skills for producing a range of goods and services, as opposed to concentrating too much on one skill.
- F** This importance of a spread of synergetic skills is the main difference between urban and rural skill development.
- F** It explains why livelihood coalitions with their internal synergies spread over various skills and contacts are crucial for economic survival in rural areas.

What is “skill development”?

We define a skill as: The capability to actually do something and effect a concrete change. Knowledge may be an important component to achieve that, but it is only a component along with practice and experience.

Skill development therefore means: All the efforts that allow somebody to learn to do something better than before, or do something new that s/he has not done before, and which results in concrete change in their livelihoods.

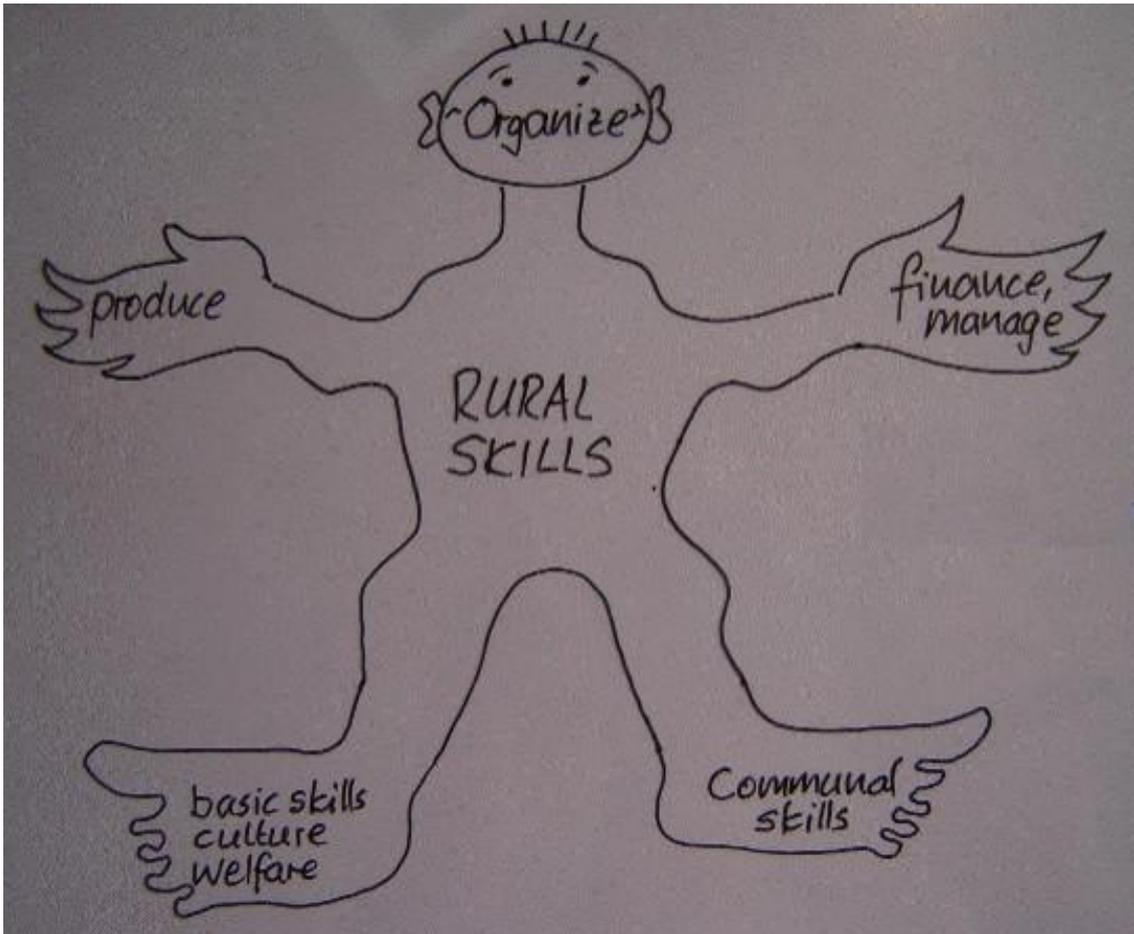


Fig. 3: The foundations on which to stand and walk are the basic skills and communal skills. The skills of production and financing/management allow to work and create an income. And all is governed by the communicational skills for organizing.

Sets of rural skills

These sets of skills are important in rural areas:

A) Basic skills, culture, welfare

1. Basic life-skills, such as in nutrition, child-care, health-care, cultural skills, literacy, numeracy, etc.

B) Production skills

2. Skills in producing something useful (a product or a service) and directly making money out of what one produces.
3. Skills in adding value to rural products (marketing chains...)

C) Organizational skills

4. Skills in communicating within the established environment and with new communicational partners, skills in using communicational equipment to access and distribute information, and skills to use that information for own benefit.
5. Skills in organizing informal cooperation within and among livelihood coalitions

D) Financial skills, managerial skills

6. Skills in making financial transactions, even over large distances
7. Skills in financial management of private investments

8. Skills in managing formalized cooperative efforts (all sizes from 5-member women's credit-group to large multi-village collaborations). Skills in the financial management of shared investments.

E) Communal skills

9. Skills in communal decision making to organize and manage the public interest at the local level, particularly the management of common-property resources (Natural Resource Management, forests, grazing, water resources, transport facilities, etc.).
10. "Political" skills of negotiating common interests among various stakeholders, and forming and mandating the common institutions to take care of those common interests.

5. SDRA and rural livelihood coalitions

SDRA must address "livelihood coalitions" taking their needs and demands into consideration. Trainings to individuals must add value and create synergies within the livelihood coalitions and allow the livelihood coalitions to profitably interact with formalized structures (such as municipalities, companies, etc).

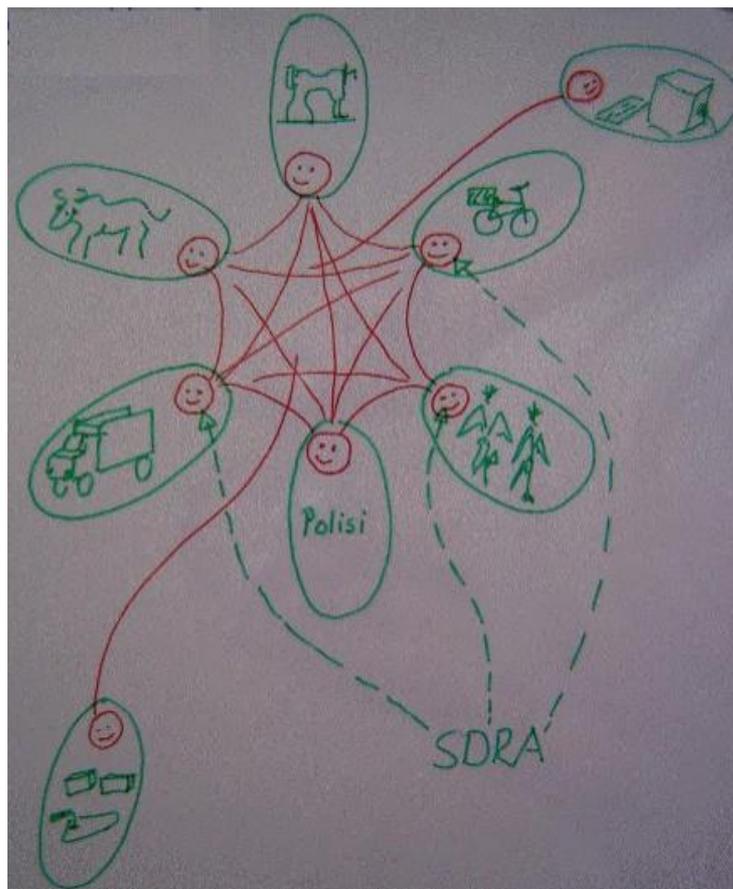


Fig. 4: Rural individuals with various professional activities are linked in a network of exchange called a „livelihood coalition“. This also includes people who are working and often also living elsewhere (migrants). SDRA must understand this network of exchange when addressing the training needs of an individual.

Beneficiaries of SDRA can be categorized as: Individuals, Livelihood Coalitions and Formal Enterprises. Livelihood coalitions (see box for definition) have not been recognized so far, but they provide a good insight into the needs and potentials of individuals for learning new skills. LCs give us an opportunity to concretely grasp the complexity of SDRA that we are facing. The challenges we will face in dealing with LCs are:

- a) Designing training programs in a way that each trainee will be able to increase the skill-synergisms in his/her LC, given the fact that each LC has its unique set of skills.
- b) LCs are a base from which development of skills has to be conceived, a base on which the trainees can build in order to make maximum use of trainings. LCs are not an end in themselves. It will not be possible to develop programs for training whole LCs. Training addresses individual members of LCs. And yet these members live within the synergies of their LCs. The challenge is how best to deal with this fact.
- c) We will need to be careful about communal skills. LCs are concerned with themselves, but need to negotiate with other LCs the public interests they commonly share, and cooperate with each other in order to safeguard them. There is some tension here between LCs and the local public interest, and trainings will have to take this into account. Conceptual lines into "good local governance" seem to be a need. Leadership skills for dealing with issues of corruption, gender, formalization or informalization become important.
- d) Nowadays LCs can spread over large distances. Modern communication allows rural people to almost daily exchange information and arrange financial transactions even over intercontinental distances. Such LCs therefore are no longer just rural, and neither are they just local.

The Concept of Livelihood Coalition

- A livelihood coalition is a group of related people, neighbours and friends, who cooperate with each other for increasing their combined chances for income and employment and for reducing/spreading the risks of new and diverse activities for their survival and growth. The members of a LC informally exchange services and goods internally. They may also combine efforts and resources for common projects.
- LCs are informal. LCs are mostly based in family networks, and usually encompass further individuals or groups who are in close commercial or personal relationships.
- One person can at the same time be in several LCs, often connecting between them.
- The success of LCs depends primarily on efficient use of synergisms among the skills of the people within the LC. The success of a LC also depends on how well it can use its particular set of synergistic skills to apply leverage in the general economy/society.

Ø The concept of Livelihood Coalition should be researched further and its practical applicability explored and improved

C. Operational ideas, logistics

6. How to deliver skills development

Successful SDRAs programmes combine the (often contradicting) challenges of:

- providing usefully diverse trainings...
- in a modular way...
- to a significant number of people...
- who live spread out in rural areas...
- in a cost efficient way.

This is most successfully achieved by combining trainings in a central location with preparatory and follow-up efforts out in the villages through mobile training units.

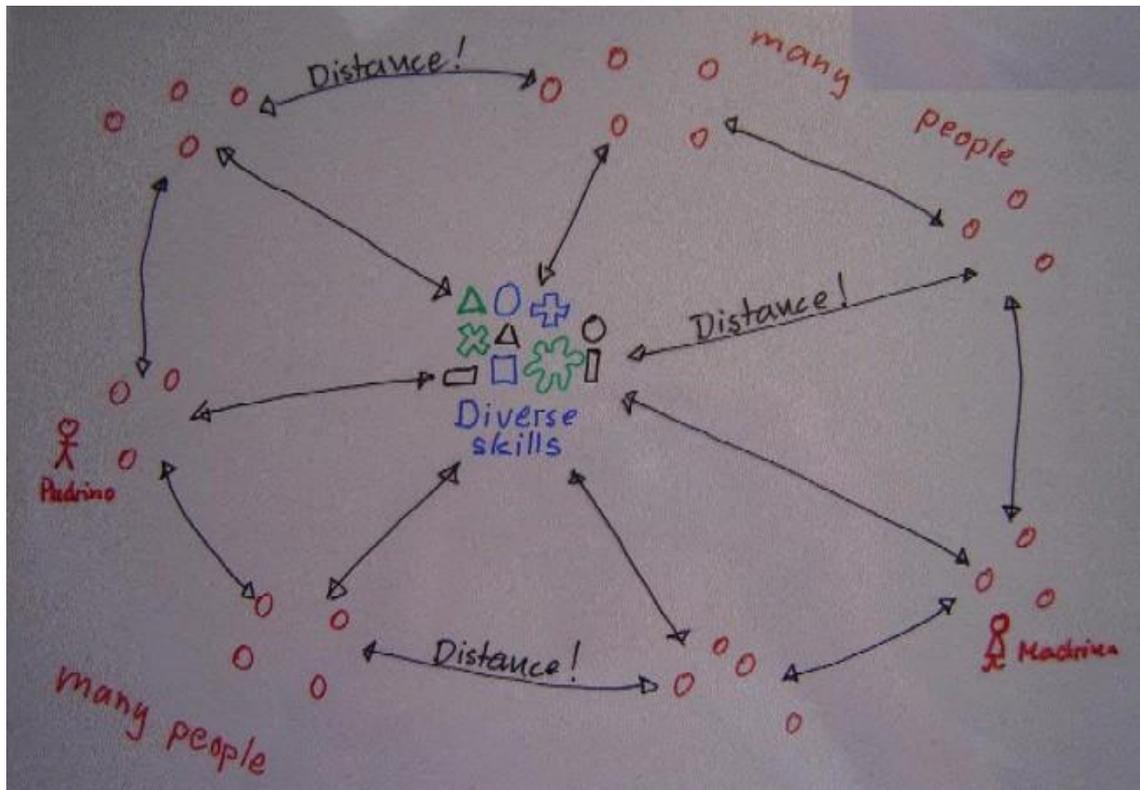


Fig. 5: Rural people are spread out over large areas. Distance is the main logistical challenge that needs to be met. A center can cater to this spread out clientele by maintaining a usefully diverse mix of training content and staying in contact with learners through mobile training units.

How? Some operational ideas:

Operational and institutional flexibility

Stay flexible in organizing and/or institutionalizing SDRA in any given area. There is no fixed way how to organize SDRA, each situation needs a different mix that uses locally already existing structures (training centers, rural extension services or their remnants, embedded services with local companies, traders, staff of various programs and projects, etc.). Include existing organizations, programs and institutions and make them fit with new elements to finally end up with a new and modern SDRA-program for each location or situation. Regional networking then needs to be assured among existing and new efforts.

Training and Coaching by local coaches

Trainees are coached and mentored by experienced local people in the preparations to the trainings, and after the trainings during follow-up implementation phases. The role of these coaches is to coach trainees during practical implementation of what they learn in the trainings.

In Latin America such coaches are called *madrinas / padrinos*. They are persons who are professionally fit at a master's level and act as a coach / tutor / mentor for a junior professional.

Step by step with simple logistics

Start small, then gradually grow with increasing operational experience, and finally end up with a substantial impact on the numbers of new rural people joining the productive population. The challenge is how to introduce this as simply as possible, grow fast enough to pick up the challenge of reaching many people, and still remain within the available financial framework.

E-learning modules, CD-ROMs, village level computers

There is a strong case to be made for investing in electronic media for enhancing SDRA learning at the village level. Such media could help a lot to cope with the problem of distance for accessing information. E-connectivity therefore becomes a strategy to overcome the dilemma of rurality.

Regular trade fairs

Regular local/regional trade fairs are useful for bringing together the various actors in a value-adding chain. Such trade fairs will allow companies and NGOs or public institutions to observe and then to assess which skills need to be introduced or developed further for increasing the added value in the chains. Such trade fairs will be interesting as a source of information for observing the impact of trainings and for identifying new types of trainees, and new topics or strategies for SDRA in that particular area.

Modular approach

A modular training approach (see box) can react in a flexible way to the training needs of rural people and their diverse situations. Modular here is meant in a generic way, as opposed to "standardized". The single modules may be standardized, but their mix is tailor-made to suit the requirements of the trainees, just like standard bricks can be combined in different ways to make highly diverse houses specifically suited for the inhabitants.

The structure of a modular approach is:

Modules:

These are basic units, building blocks (bricks in the "brick-house"-metaphor). They are standalone units, i.e. when you have gone through a module you have a specific skill that you can profitably apply. Modules can then be combined with various other modules in useful sequences, resulting in higher skills.

Trainings:

These are a sequence of modules that achieve a set of skills that are very frequently needed in many situations.

Curricula:

These are tailor made combinations of various trainings and modules that allow a family or a Livelihood Coalition to learn the skills in order to exploit their particular niche of products and contacts. A curriculum is a description of a complete learning process, including aims, contents, learning concepts, etc.

7. "Department store" as an analogy

Think of a department store, where all sorts of skill development can be bought in various shops, and where the training offers and their costs are transparently shown. So trainees can pick and choose and combine as they see useful and relevant for themselves. „Department store“ is therefore an analogy for a local/regional network of providers of education and skills development. This allows the training providers to flexibly organize and coordinate solutions for the issues and priorities defined for the economic development of their area.

The department store itself, or rather the network that it represents, may be operated by a supra-organization (local government, etc.), that provides the infrastructure for making the trainings accessible to those who need them, that ensures quality control of the provided trainings, and provides funding (through stipends or vouchers) to eligible trainees who cannot afford to pay for the trainings they need.

What is the structure of such a SDRA-"department store"? "Shops" in the store will offer:

- trainings for technical skills
- trainings for financial skills
- trainings for marketing skills
- trainings for basic skills (languages, literacy, numeracy,...)
- trainings for management skills
- analytical services, ie. for analysing the synergies of a Learning Coalition or the network of connections of a person in order to identify their particular "niche" ---> exploit specific synergies
- consulting services to potential clients for exploring and tailor-making curricula to fit their individual needs (based on the various available skill-trainings in the department store). This is need-assessment together with the trainees.
- stipends to those who are eligible for training, but cannot afford to pay the providers of the training. Stipends provide buying power to those who are eligible. Trainees therefore all pay cost-covering prices directly to the training providers for all the above services.

Such a department store will be virtual in most cases. We are not talking of a large building with all these training providers and services based in it. Such department stores will operate as a network among many service providers physically based in various places. But

they will all share a platform that is owned and operated by a supra-organization which controls the quality of the offered services.

Presently existing rural training centres can evolve into such “department stores”.

Department Store

A department store is a sales building with individual independent traders selling their products at own risks and responsibilities. Within a department store there is not one big organisation with its various departments, but independent units that grow or disappear according to the market demand. The traders who operate a shop in the department store have to follow certain rules that are defined by the owner of the department store (e.g. opening times, information policy, common standards regarding hygiene, tidiness, etc.).

A department store is taken as an analogy for a network of training providers in a local or regional area. The building is the network. Trainees have access to the offers in the network and can pick and choose and combine their trainings to fit their specific requirements.

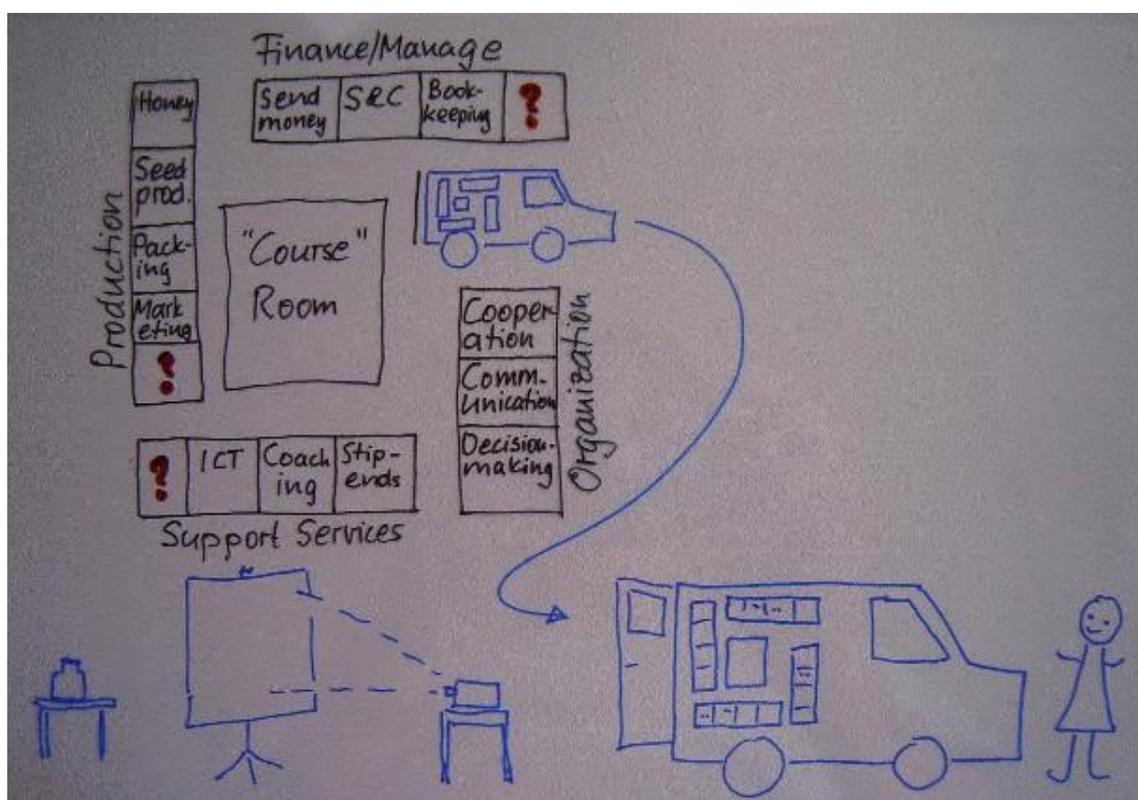


Fig. 6: The training center is like a „department store“ where various providers of trainings have their own independent operations, but linked together in the same environment of access. A „mobile unit“ is attached to such a center, that can be used or hired by the various training providers to operate out in the villages. Such a unit will in most cases be a vehicle with a skilled crew of trainers and with communicational equipment for trainings in the villages.

8. Mobile Units for reaching the villages

Successful SDRA programmes also have strong elements that take place in the villages. Mobile units are an appropriate form of organizing decentralised training with highly skilled trainers.

Most people in rural areas have to spend a lot of time for travelling to towns and back to their villages. Many people cannot afford to stay in town for a course. And attending regular short course modules in town is too much of a logistical problem, especially for women. Furthermore, many rural skills have to be learnt and practiced under the local conditions, and not in town. Therefore some trainings must happen in the village. A mobile training unit is a possible way to do this:

- A mobile unit is a vehicle with training equipment and information on board, and a highly skilled crew. It provides frequently demanded training units on the spot, and makes information accessible to villagers about the whole range of training offers that are available to villagers. The crew also advises villagers on best combinations of training modules for them, and makes the required connections for them.
- The mobile unit has all the information on board about all the available training offers in the "department store".
- The mobile unit provides regular trainings in the village. Experienced people in the village act as coaches (madrinas/padrinos) between visits of the mobile unit. The topics must vary over time, according to specific demands.
- A combination of distancecourse with in-village trainings and ensuing local coaching is a next level of organization for a mobile unit. Successful earlier trainees become suitable coaches for later trainees. These coaches can also have their own network and organize exchange visits of learners.
- Such a network of village coaches needs its own communication channels through newsletters, mail posts with training materials, etc.
- The mobile units are crewed with drivers/technicians and skilled staff who can conduct in-village trainings. They can also help villagers to identify the suitable combination of trainings for themselves. These mobile crews are also good in identifying interesting local knowledge, new training needs and chances each time they are in the villages. They use this information to design new modules for the "department store".
- The mobile units can also be used for other purposes, thereby becoming multifunctional. For instance as public information centers, for various public campaigns, they could also be rented by trading companies for identifying and taking up contact with interested providers of raw materials, they could even become mobile processing units for specific rural products. Such multi-functionality will spread the costs for such a mobile unit amongst other efforts and thereby reduce the cost of SDRA-trainings.

Existing rural training centers can evolve into department store type of training networks with modular training offers, and operate such mobile units.

Local government in remote areas may have a keen interest in the operation of such mobile units. It is therefore advisable to involve local government in their planning, operations and financing

9. Communication channels for SDRA

Modern communicational technology is spreading through rural areas much faster than predicted (local radio, mobile phones, internet). It is as yet poorly understood

how this can be harnessed for the SDRA-effort. Achieving competence here is all the more important as distance is one of the key features of „rurality“.

This opens intriguing opportunities for dealing with the challenge of distance, i.e. for distance-learning, „tandem“-learning (i.e. professional trainer together with local coach), and the operation of mobile units. Furthermore, the provision of ICT-services through commercially operated rural telecenters may open up new avenues for financial sustainability of SDRA-efforts.

○ Yet to be explored: ICTs for communication channels and SDRA.

D. Managing SDRAs programs

10. How to sustain delivery of skill development in rural areas

Sustained delivery of SDRAs depends on:

- Continuous analysis of the present and possible future realities of trainees and training providers.
- good interaction between formal institutions and the informal structures and social networks
- operating a resource base
- ensuring a broad ownership in the demand and supply
- ensuring broad and diverse funding that reflects public and private interests
- investing with a long time horizon.

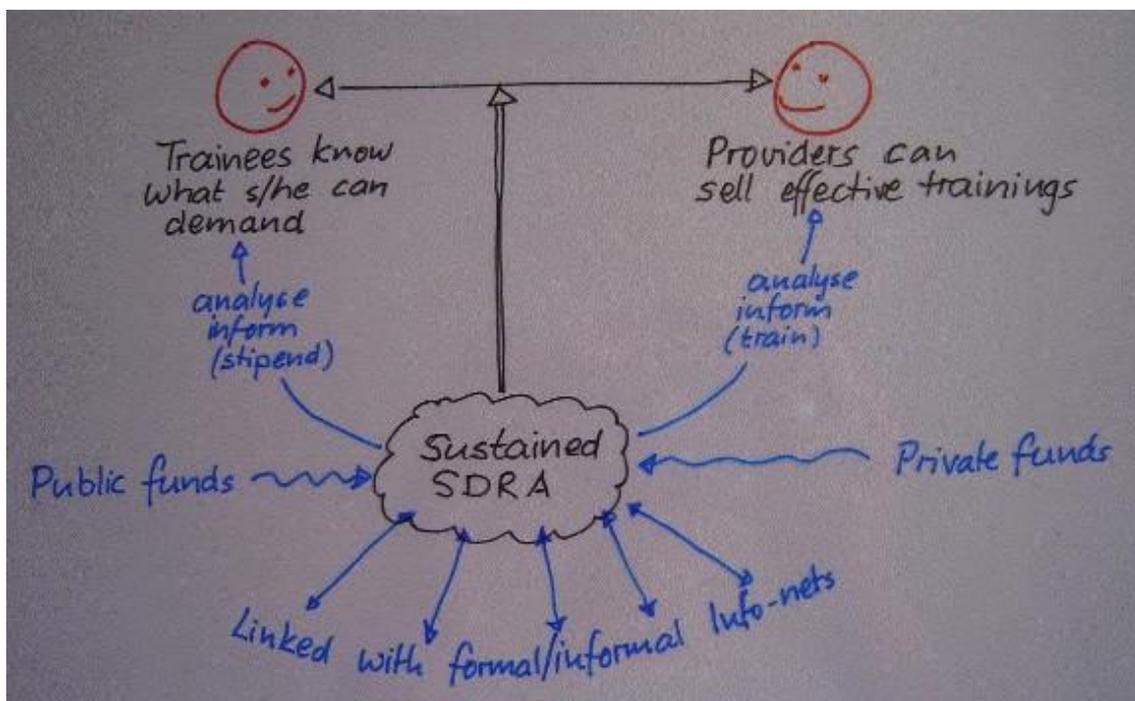


Fig. 7: Sustained SDRAs develops the capacity of training providers by analyzing trends, informing and training them. Sustained SDRAs also arranges for potential trainees to know what they can learn and be able to pay for it. Sustained SDRAs organizes for public and private funds to flow into these efforts, and maintains active links to information networks.

Continuous analysis of present and future realities

A sustained SDRAs effort requires an inbuilt program that promotes the analysis of existing bottlenecks and potentials and the exploration of future training offers through action research (R&D: Operational research & development). Such a program needs steady and longterm funding. The sources of sustained funding have to be developed alongside the actual implementation of SDRAs.

Good interaction with informal structures

A sustained SDRA effort continuously searches for informal social networks and develops means to exchange information between formal training institutions and such informal networks.

Operate a resource base for SDRA

A sustained SDRA effort includes some kind of centre that takes care of the action research, quality control, and the training of trainers. This centre also provides ...

- an overview of the various trainings and modules that are available from various organizations and companies, and makes them accessible;
- a coaching for learners who want to find out which set of modules suits them best;
- trainings directly to villages, if there is no other training provider available who offers widely useful and demanded trainings like book-keeping, or specialized trainings in particular villages.
- manages a learning network among the training providers (i.e. schools, companies, NGOs, etc.)

Ensure broad ownership in the demand and supply of SDRA

A sustained SDRA effort strengthens the emergence of a demand for SD-services:

Arrange for platforms where rural people, local government and other stakeholders can exchange experiences and ideas and define what they want to learn, and how they want to learn it.

Arrange for rural people to be able to buy the trainings that they want at full cost-covering prices from the training providers that they ultimately choose.

To strengthen the supply of relevant services, a sustained SDRA-effort must:

- Enhance synergies of a broad range of sources of training, i.e. public centres, NGOs and membership organizations, commercial companies with embedded services, etc..
- Provide resources so that training providers can develop and test modules and curricula that will be in demand
- Arrange for quality control and certification of training also for single modules (that add up to a higher certification). Open up pathways for further education.
- Support a network of coaches / mentors (madrinas / padrinos) that also manages peer-exchange among learners.
- Provide the training-providers also stipends/vouchers so that they can learn to become even better providers
- Arrange for a "department store", where all providers can showcase the modules and curricula that they offer to the rural people
- Ensure transparent information about all providers and all training offers available in the area.

To build a functioning market between supply and demand of services, a sustained SDRA-effort must:

- Arrange for a "department store" to function
- Organize regular events for exchange between government agencies, training providers, local public bodies, professional organizations and commercial companies. In these events important topics will be shared and debated, i.e. issues of content, policy, quality, logistics and regulations of a "department store", etc.

Ensure broad and diverse funding that reflects public and private interests in SDRA.

A sustained SDRA-effort clearly differentiates interests of Public/Private/Groups:

Local special interest groups (civil society), local public bodies, the commercial interests of companies with embedded services, and finally the private interests of the trainees themselves all need to be taken into account when designing the financing of SDRA-measures. A clear understanding of and differentiation between the interests of private, public and interest-groups is a precondition for negotiating sustainable funding.

Investments into SDRA are long-term affairs:

- Service providers - be they private or public - often need a sustained financial base to be in a position to offer training programmes in rural areas. Training programmes need a long term partnership for financing; financing of starting periods only is not sufficient and leads to an early end of a programme.
- Embedded service provision (in contract farming, franchised supply chains, etc) is preferred wherever this is commercially viable. Public-private partnerships are used to launch such efforts on a commercial basis.
- Financing also depends on national policies regarding rural development and education:
 - a) Commercial provision of trainings wherever possible, involving the public through public-private-partnerships wherever public interests need to be taken care of,
 - b) Financial autonomy of public training institutions, so that they have an incentive to be creative and cost-effective.

Ø **The interface between public institutions, and private interests for financing SDRA needs to be better researched through exploring typical case-situations.**

11. Launch, steer and develop SDRA Programmes

SDRA programmes and projects are more successful if the following principles are respected:

- Are planned and designed in a flexible way by starting small through pilots and grow according to success and local dynamics along a long term commitment of some 10 years and above.
- Are built in a participatory way on existing capacities and initiatives in rural areas.
- Start with clearly identified needs and demand, taking both farming and non farm activities of rural people into consideration.
- Link closely to ongoing decentralization processes and local (economic) development initiatives.
- Bring local stakeholders together.
- Develop and foster networks and mutual (peer) learning.
- Use qualitative criteria for monitoring and evaluation.

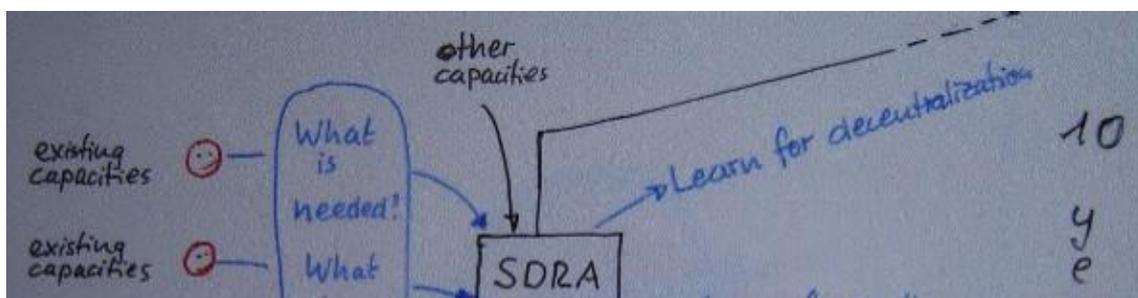


Fig. 8: Build on capacities and competence of local stakeholders and bring in whatever is missing. Then launch a small pilot that can grow. Aim for 10 years of continued learning at least.

12. Capacity and Organisation Development

Successful SDRA programmes and its stakeholders ...

- accept a long term partnership of mutual learning.
- strengthen skills and competences of individuals and organizations enabling them through learning techniques to cope pro-actively with changes.
- emphasize on skills & competence acquisition and learning techniques for hard and soft skills.
- combine training of teachers and other personnel training with an Organisation Development component.
- build and strengthen networks of learners (e.g. within livelihood coalitions) and organizations (between training providers, programmes and other stakeholders).
- focus on face to face exchange events and some additional distance learning using effective communication channels (books, leaflets, SMS, internet, CDs, ...)
- link rural learning initiatives with those of urban areas (e.g. value chain approach).
- encourage inbuilt capitalisation of experiences for improvement of programmes, linking various levels
- use synergies and promote alliances among different SDRA stakeholders for an attractive and broad training offer of SDRA.
- wherever possible link to existing challenges, such as for instance improving value chains, and thereby focus the capacity building on these challenges.
- influence the policy discussions bottom-up through concrete SDRA-successes in the rural areas.

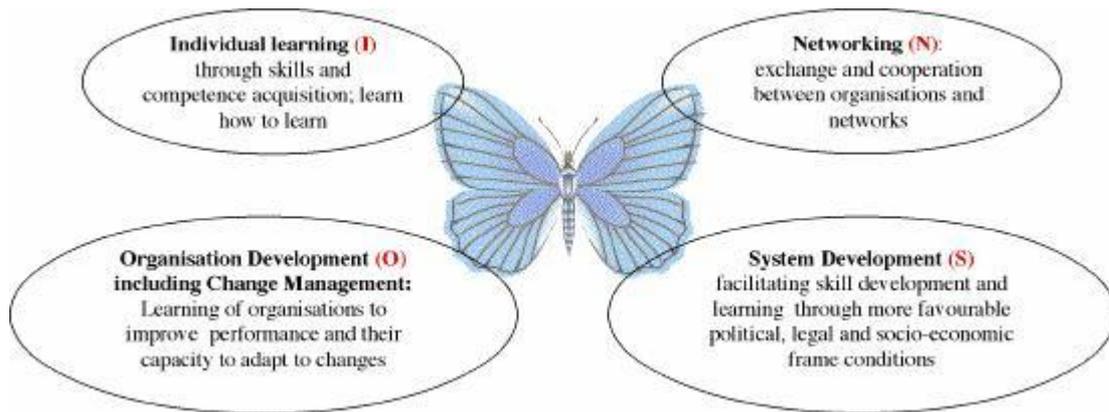


Fig 9: The Butterfly visualising the four dimensions of Capacity development

III. Further questions / issues

The following issues are worth exploring further in the framework of the emerging Community of Practice on SDRA:

Integration of basic skills, income earning skills and communal skills.

Our work so far has concentrated on income earning skills (production skills, organizational skills, financial/managerial skills) and consciously relegated basic skills and communal skills to a later assessment. This categorization of skills has proven to be useful for re-searching and conceiving training programs.

It has become clear however, that in the real world often the provision of productive or organizational trainings has to for instance take into account that the literacy and numeracy of trainees is insufficient. Or that trainings on marketing and quality control require good skills in communal decision making, etc. So when implementing training programs in the real situation, diverse combinations will have to be made.

The question to be explored further therefore is:

How to integrate basic skill trainings and communal skill trainings in the delivery of trainings directly aimed at income generation?

ICTs for SDRA

(ICT = Information & Communication Technologies)

Interactive electronic media that allow individualized communication are exploding across rural areas in speeds that have taken us (and the telecom industry) by surprise. This is particularly true for mobile phones, to a lesser extent to internet access and CDs. First indications appear to show that these new channels allow rural people to access information much farther and faster, triggering potentially deep changes in trade relationships, but also opening up a digital divide even among the rural population. Furthermore the mobile phone has become an important asset for many "livelihood coalitions" to organize their daily transactions across hitherto unprecedented distances. It is to be expected that the learning environment is also fundamentally affected. And we still have a very poor grasp on the potential impact of these media for the rural economy and SDRA.

The questions to be explored further therefore are:

- How can the individual media mobile phones, rural internet, interactive CDs and DVDs, etc.. be combined with the known mass media local radio and TV?
- How will these technologies affect the learning environment in rural areas?
- How can these technologies be harnessed for SDRA?
- What are the operational implications of using these technologies for remote rural areas?
- What are the ICT-skills that may need to be mastered?

SDRA in transition countries

Our deliberations so far appear to be only partly useful for situations in transition countries. These countries have a markedly different history of rural education and face specific challenges in reorganizing their rural economies.

The question to be explored further therefore is:

What are the specific changes that have to be made in our recommendations so far in order to improve their usefulness for our efforts in transition countries?

Explore the concept of “Livelihood Coalition”

In our explorations so far we almost by chance hit on this concept of Livelihood Coalition, and it seems to be a useful concept to grasp the needs and design specifications for SDRA trainings, as witnessed by several members on the platform who recognized LC-like structures in their work environment. However, we are not aware of any serious research into the inner workings of LCs, how fast their dynamics change, what the useful demarcations are (who is usefully considered as belonging in, who is out), whether there would be a useful typology of LCs, what are the most important external influencing factors, how specific their economic behavior is to local culture, etc. etc..

The questions to explore therefore are:

- (All the above questions appear to be something that should be picked up by social researchers).
- What are the most practical methods for us to identify, assess and address LCs as the background of each trainee, in order to design his or her training to be more effective?

SDRA for interacting with urban centers?

We realized that rural dynamics can no longer be separated from urban dynamics. Most rural people have close and fast contacts with relatives in town, or even with relatives working as migrant labor in other countries and continents, who send back a lot of money. Furthermore the marketing chains reach farther and wider than before, and communication is increasingly becoming faster. The connection between SDRA and what is going on in urban areas becomes an issue.

The question to explore therefore is:

Which skills need to be explored and trained in rural areas so that rural people can profitably interact with what is going on in the large towns and cities?

Sustainable funding of SDRA

We discussed a lot about the interface between the public interests taken care of by public institutions, and private commercial interests for financing SDRA. The players are all highly diverse, ie. the regulating state, local government, companies, individual farmers or their LCs, interest groups, foreign funded NGOs, traders, processors, etc.. However we still need to grasp much better the intricate interfaces among all these players for building a sound foundation for sustained funding of SDRA that endures after a Donor intervention is terminated.

The questions to explore therefore are:

- How to identify and define the public interests, special group interests, and private commercial interests in SDRA in any given area
- How to identify the most suitable actors to carry each of those interests
- How to negotiate among the actors on SDRA-outcomes to be achieved
- How to negotiate who needs to pay how much for a commonly envisaged particular outcome, in relation to his interests on that outcome.
- How to support actors who are too poorly organized or financially too poor to contribute their share to achieving the envisaged SDRA-outcome.