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**TITLE: *EDUCATION, SOCIETY AND DEVELOPMENT:
SOME CRITICAL ISSUES***

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between education and development cannot be debated without linking the structure of educational systems to the economic and social character of societies. That link between education and development is a two-way process. Educational systems, for the most part, reflect the socio-economic structures of the societies in which they function; whether egalitarian or inegalitarian. There is also the tendency for educational systems to perpetuate, reinforce and even reproduce those economic and social structures. Paradoxically, educational reforms can significantly induce corresponding social and economic reforms in the societies.

There are many components of the development question, but for the purpose of this paper, the focus will be on the human resources, inequality and poverty, migration, and rural development, to examine the principal forces behind them, and ways they influence or are influenced by educational systems. This examination, though not comprehensive, will seek to demonstrate the relationship between education and each of these critical areas.

EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

*Human resources...constitute the ultimate basis for wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production; human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations, and carry forward national development.*¹

Most educational planners, serious commentators and economists would argue that major educational reforms within small developing States are now urgently needed; and that the determination and pace of a nation's social and economic development are contingent on its human resources and not its capital or its materials resources.

According to Frederick H. Harbison, "A country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else."² In that regard, the formal education system has therefore been viewed as the principal institutional mechanism for developing knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and aspirations, and that will enable individuals to

¹ Frederick H. Harbison, *Human Resources as the Wealth of Nations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

² Frederick H. Harbison, 1973

function effectively as agents of change in societies. It is the belief that the greater the emphasis and increase of these outcomes the more rapid the development. This reality has led many countries especially small developing countries to commit to the rapid quantitative expansion of educational opportunities thereby increasing the enrolments at all levels of the school system. It is this quest for educational expansion that led Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Countries to aspire to achieve universal primary and secondary education by 2007, and at least 25% of secondary school graduates enrolled in tertiary level institutions by 2008.

In all societies, education occupies the time and attention of a high proportion of the population. The commitment to quantitatively expand educational opportunities has resulted in the second or greatest share of governments' recurrent expenditure spent on education. For example, Barbados' allocation in 2005/2006 was 16.4%; St. Lucia was 21%, Jamaica, 18% and Belize 24%.

However, cognizance should be taken of the fact that expanding formal education will not automatically translate to the spread of learning or improved living conditions of poor families. The acquisition of certificates, diplomas and degrees should not always be associated with improved ability to undertake productive work. It can be argued that education oriented almost exclusively towards preparing students for the work force, particularly for modern sector jobs, can significantly distort their aspirations.

The reality is, in spite of years of expanding educational opportunities and millions of dollars of educational expenditure, the circumstances of the lower class in Caribbean societies have not significantly improved. Poverty is on the rise in both rural and urban communities, unemployment and underemployment are reaching staggering proportions with many educated youth, in particular secondary and post-secondary graduates, joining the ranks of the "educated unemployed"; and the economic disparities between the rich and poor are widening. As a consequence, all the major stakeholders and partners are beginning to seriously challenge the purpose and goals of formal education and the exaggerated claims, results and character of the development process itself.

However, it would be unwise to blame all the problems of society on the failures of the formal educational system; but at the same time the claims made to highlight the positive outcomes of the expansion of educational opportunities cannot be overlooked. We must therefore closely examine the fundamental basis of the economics and processes of education and its relationship to the economics of development. In so doing, we must understand the principal motivation for education in small developing countries as a desire to improve the socio-economics status, and the economic processes through which such aspirations are either realized or frustrated.

EDUCATION, INEQUALITIES AND POVERTY

*"The destruction of the poor is their poverty".
(Proverbs)*

Children who grow up in conditions of poverty, family stress and violence are at high risk of ill health, developmental delay and maladaptive behaviour.³

Poverty can be defined in terms of the insufficiency of income giving rise to deterioration in life circumstances by the inability to secure the basic necessities essential for life (Oxford Dictionary, 1995). Townsend (1993) indicated that the correlation of ability and education can influence poverty⁴ In other words, intelligent families are less likely to have low income and be subject to the effects of socio-economic deprivation.

Children in poverty live in circumstances dominated by a certain hopelessness in which the sense that things are inexorably running down, weighs constantly on every decision and inhibits many positive responses.⁵ They live in physically unsatisfactory conditions, overcrowded and unsanitary, lacking amenities or generally in a state of disrepair.⁶

The debate can then begin on the premise that poor students have less chance of completing any given cycle of education than more affluent students.

For many decades the primary objective of development has been to maximize the aggregate rates of output growth. Worldwide studies on the economics of education have predominantly focused on the relationship between education, labour productivity and output growth. As a consequence of that emphasis, the impact of education on the alleviation and or elimination of poverty and equal income distributions are often neglected.

Equality of opportunity is a fundamental aim of education. Conversely, the critical importance of formal education cannot be questioned. However, its structure, content, effects, impact, key strengths and weaknesses should really come under great scrutiny. It has become increasingly obvious that equalization of opportunity is impossible to achieve as, with the passage of time, societies have become more stratified, the status quo

³ M.M. Joseph, Risk and Resilience in Adolescence and Young Adulthood: A Cross-Sectional Study of *Educationally Resilient Children in St. Lucia*. Doctoral Thesis (Unpublished). 1995

⁴ P. Townsend, *The International Analysis of Poverty*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993.

⁵ K. Coates and R. Silburn, *Poverty: The Forgotten Englishman*. Nottingham: Russell Press Ltd., 1983.

⁶ D. Pilling, *Escape from Disadvantage*. London: The Falmer Press, 1990.

maintained, and persistent poverty has become a development, educational, social and economic problem. Research has revealed that intergenerational transmission of inadequate social functioning perpetuates the inequalities which characterise both traditional and industrial societies. Nonetheless, a close examination of education systems in small developing States will confirm the assumption that they too perpetuate inequalities, keep people disadvantaged and reinforce the status quo.

Children of poor families are easily identified in the classroom and usually begin school at an academic disadvantage. Studies on the impact of poverty on education indicate all too persuasively that poverty children often receive a disproportionate number of negative messages leveled at their ability to perform and at their personality and character. These messages begin from the early grades and often persist throughout the children's school career. Under these conditions, poor students view themselves as being helpless in academic settings thereby making educational success virtually impossible. What is needed in the classroom are positive experiences that can mitigate the stress associated with the children's home and familial environment. To accomplish this, teachers can set standards, give incentives, praise, provide effective feedback, be a role model of exemplary behaviour, assign positions of trust and responsibility to children, and *provide these children with order in a world gone mad.*⁷

Teachers are aware that the single most powerful predictor of academic performance is a student's socioeconomic background, as growing up in poverty does not adequately prepare children for what they will encounter in the classroom environment. The indicators of poverty are easily perceived as potential failure; an assumption that inevitably contributes to the difficulties poverty children face in school.⁸ At this point, it is difficult to know what percentage of poor children endure negative experiences because there is a lack of sufficient information; however it is safe to conclude that it is widespread, but not universal.

At the start of first grade the verbal skills of poverty students may not be well developed and the reading-readiness skills not as good as their classmates. They will continue to be disproportionately represented in tertiary level institutions and universities. It follows that large income inequalities will always be reinforced because levels of earned income, in the main, are clearly dependent on years of completed schooling.

One can therefore conclude that if the poor are denied access to higher-level educational opportunities because of financial constraints and other reasons, the education systems are inherently inegalitarian and actually perpetuate and increase inequality in developing countries.

⁷ W. Jones. *Helping Families in Distress*. Independent Schools, 23-25. Spring, 1986.

⁸ M.M. Joseph, 1995.

The advent of universal primary and secondary education made it possible for children from poor families to attend school at that level. However, the stigma of poverty is still a powerful force in classrooms and can manipulate the behaviour of teachers, many of whom have middle class values, in ways that educators do not realize. It can create barriers in the teacher-child relationship, alter a teacher's behaviour toward the child, lower the teacher's expectations for that child, and during that process can actually initiate the self-fulfilling prophecy of failure.

So despite the existence of free schooling, (also in an endeavour to achieve the Education For All (EFA) Goals), poverty children, especially those who live in rural communities are seldom able to go beyond secondary education. Importantly, one needs to look beyond actually school attendance to the effects of:

- Opportunity costs
- Relevance of curriculum offered
- Teaching methodologies
- Teacher-student interaction patterns
- Teacher effectiveness
- Classroom environment and socialization processes
- Academic performance of students
- School characteristics, and
- Public confidence in education

Notably, the relatively poor performance of poverty children may have nothing to do with their cognitive abilities. On the contrary, it merely amplifies and reflects their disadvantaged economic circumstances. When this reality is truly understood, then the euphoria that accompanied the quantitative educational expansion will soon give way to skepticism and anxiety.

In these changed circumstances, there is in this Region, a growing frustrated group of educated unemployed young people. The upward scaling of credentials in relation to jobs caused by the increased influx of educated secondary and post-secondary graduates into job markets that are already saturated will be accelerated. When this happens, the incongruencies and imbalances between the world of work and the world of education will be clearly demonstrated. This could result in depression, suicide, personal pain, criminal activities, drug trafficking and political agitation.

It follows that in the Caribbean as long as access to jobs is based almost exclusively on educational credentials irrespective of the relationship between years of schooling and job performance; and as long as the socio-economic status of families determines who proceeds to higher education and then to highly paid job, then education systems will continue to reproduce the inequalities they were theoretically designed to fight.

However it would be incorrect to assume that the adverse circumstances in which poor children are reared can diminish their chances of a positive life at a later developmental stage, because researchers have found many children reared in poverty, who were successful in escaping the confines of their parents' low socio-economic status,⁹ and achieve academic and economic success.

Thus, *without trying to become therapists, teachers and schools can help children from families in distress by showing that they care about them.*¹⁰ Teachers are frequently the first to identify stress in children, are frequently the most significant people in children's lives and are the most indispensable factor in education.¹¹ Therefore teachers' reactions to children's problems, the quality of teaching and teaching time are key determinants of students' educational achievement.

Schools can therefore make a difference. If we can decide what needs to be done then we will have to identify the things that we have to do to make schools work. If we want schools to work, then we will have to decide what it is we want to accomplish. The school must be a mediating institution, and like a nation, must unify and guide. Therefore all the major stakeholders: educators, teachers, students, policy makers, planners and parents must unite and agree on the goals, purpose, and processes of education.

⁹ N. Garmezy. *Resiliency and vulnerability to adverse developmental outcomes associated with poverty.* Journal of American Behavioral Scientist, Vol. 34, No. 4, pp. 416-430. New York: Sage Publications, Inc., 1991

¹⁰ W. Jones, 1986.

¹¹ D.A. Allen & V.P. Green. *Helping children cope with stress.* Journal of Early Child Development and Care, 37, 1-11. 1988.

EDUCATION AND MIGRATION

*"And there has been no more rewarding experience for us than to see the awakening and blossoming of resilience in children whose prognosis looked bleak and empty after trauma"¹²
(McGeady, 1994: 3)*

INTERNAL MIGRATION

In the past two decades, thousands of families moved to new locations either within their own country or in another country. The main root cause of internal and international migration is economic pressures. Internally, a high percentage of migrants are pushed from a rural area or small town by unemployment and poverty and pulled by the perceived opportunities in urban areas or big cities for a better life. Consequently the size and complexity of the socioeconomic composition of these cities are constantly changing.

All these movements have had and will continue to have serious and far-reaching implications for education. Whenever families decide to uproot themselves and migrate to another location that is new and unfamiliar with a different social, economic and cultural environment, all their members, children and adults alike, are instantly confronted with the challenges of new learning needs. They all have to learn to adapt to their new multicultural surroundings with new schools, different types of employment, and a brand new way of life.

Life can be exceedingly harsh and damaging, and the experience can be very traumatic. For example, rural dwellers who migrate to overcrowded cities as squatters and settlers must learn how to survive in an environment that is different from what they are accustomed to. In their rural setting simple oral communication and informational materials were often sufficient for them to get through their daily routine. However, in the urban setting, literacy becomes an essential element of their daily life. To meet their priority needs, a great deal of relevant education will be required not through schools alone, but through a wide range of non-formal educational activities.

¹² Sr. M.R. McGeady. Child Resilience. In ICCB (ed.), Children Worldwide: The Family and Child Resilience. Vol. 21, No.1, 3. 1994.

Existing empirical evidence reveals that there is a powerful relationship between education and migration. Indeed, education is seen as an important factor influencing rural to urban migration. Studies of migration in diverse countries have clearly stated that there is a relationship between the educational achievement of individuals and their propensity to migrate from rural to urban communities. Obviously, the probabilities of obtaining modern sector jobs in urban areas will be greater among individuals with higher education than those with lower levels of education.

The widespread phenomenon of rapid expansion of secondary and tertiary school places from the standpoint of real resource needs has serious implications for rural-urban migration and urban unemployment especially among the more educated. According to Robert McNamara, former President of the World Bank,

“The cities are filling up and urban unemployment steadily grows...the marginal men, the wretched strugglers for survival on the fringes of farms and city, may already number ...by 1990 two billion. Can we imagine any human order surviving with so gross a mass of misery piling up at its base?”

This issue of migration is clearly becoming one of the most perplexing dilemmas of the development process. With the growth of urbanization has come the growth of slums, ghettos and shantytowns. Increasingly over the years, the emphasis has been on modernization and technological advancement, the impact of which has perpetuated the geographic imbalance in economic opportunities and contributed significantly to the movement of rural migrants to urban communities.

In the economic literature rural-urban migration was viewed favourably as a natural process, socially benefiting in which surplus labour from rural communities provided much needed labour for urban industrialized growth. However, in recent times the number of rural migrants exceeded urban job creation and also surpassed absorption capacity. The growth rate of urban job seekers has reached unprecedented levels with a high proportion of well educated young people seeking employment while depleting rural areas of valuable human resource.

Given the widespread dissatisfaction with the urban growth in the Caribbean and the major consequences of rapid urbanization, the critical issue that needs to be addressed is the degree to which national governments can critically evaluate various policy options, in an effort to formulate a development strategy that can definitely curtail the flow of rural to urban migration and consequently ameliorate the serious unemployment problems that continue to plague crowded urban communities. The possibility and desirability of reversing these trends can always be argued.

INTRA-REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

There is a problem of international migration of high-level educated and skilled manpower, the so called brain drain, from less developed countries to developed countries. Many thousands have been trained in their home country's educational institutions at considerable costs, only to contribute to the further the economic growth of already affluent nations.

The "brain drain" phenomenon not only impacts heavily on the rate and structure of economic growth in less developed countries, but also on the approach and processes of educational systems. Broadly construed, brain drain has not only reduced the supply of vital technical and professional people such as academics, doctors, engineers, architects and scientists from developing countries, but even more seriously, has caused those who do not migrate physically to developed countries, to migrate "intellectually" in terms of the orientation of their activities. This "internal" brain drain is much more serious than the external one.¹³

For example, in developing countries one will constantly find doctors specializing in cardiology, neurology and gynecology while preventive or alternative medicine is viewed as a second rate specialty. Architects are concerned with the design of modern public buildings while low cost housing, particularly in depressed communities, remains an area of remote concern... *Some academic economists teach and do research on totally irrelevant, sophisticated mathematical models of nonexistent competitive economies,*¹⁴ while the critical problems of poverty, unemployment and underemployment, rural development and education are considered less intellectually interesting.

It is difficult at this stage to quantify the effects of the combined brain drain and the outward looking orientation of professionals in terms of levels of poverty and rates of economic.¹⁵ However, universities and professional schools in developing countries have a vital role to play in developing a system of higher education that is suitable and appropriate, and will meet the specific needs of social, economic and rural development.

¹³ Phillip H. Coombs, Roy C. Prosser and Manzoor Ahmed, *New Path to Learning: For Rural Children and Youth*. Essex, Conn.: International Council for Educational Development, pp. 13-15. 1973.

¹⁴ Phillip H. Coombs, Roy C. Prosser and Manzoor Ahmed, 1973.

¹⁵ Phillip H. Coombs, Roy C. Prosser and Manzoor Ahmed, 1973.

Small national economies are most vulnerable to brain drain, especially in the critical sectors of education and health. For example, the 2006 Report of the United Nations Secretary General on International Migration and Development indicated that 50 and 80% of all highly educated citizens from several small countries in Africa and the Caribbean live abroad. The greatest losses over the past decades were experienced by Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and St. Lucia.¹⁶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data revealed that small islands such as Jamaica, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, Mauritius or Fiji, have more than 40% of their highly skilled populations abroad and sometimes as much as 80%.¹⁷

**Table 1: Highly skilled expatriates from selected non-OECD countries
Percentages of total expatriates**

<i>Highly-Skilled Aged</i>		<i>Highly-Skilled Aged</i>	
Cohen and Soto (2001) 15+		Barro and Lee (2000) 15+	
Guyana	83.0	Guyana	76.9
Jamaica	81.9	Jamaica	72.6
Haiti	78.5	Guineau-Bissau	70.3
Trinidad and Tobago	76.0	Haiti	68.0
Fiji	61.9	Trinidad and Tobago	66.1
Angola	53.7	Mozambique	52.3
Cyprus	53.3	Mauritius	50.1
Mauritius	53.2	Barbados	47.1
Mozambique	47.1	Fiji	42.9
Ghana	45.1	Gambia	42.3
United Rep. Of Tanzania	41.7	Congo	33.7
Uganda	36.4	Sierra Leone	32.4
Kenya	35.9	Ghana	31.2
Burundi	34.3	Kenya	27.8
Sierra Leone	33.3	Cyprus	26.0

15 non-OECD countries with the highest percentage of highly skilled 15+ expatriates in OECD countries Two different sources for the educational attainment of non-OECD countries¹⁸

¹⁶ Report of the UN Secretary General on *International Migration and Development* May 2006.

¹⁷ J. C. Dumont and Georges Lemaitre, *Counting Immigrants and Expatriates in OECD Countries: A New Perspective*. OECD, *Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, 2006

¹⁸ J. C. Dumont and Georges Lemaitre, 2006

Caribbean emigration to the United States over the last three decades (1971 – 1998) totaled 2.4 million.¹⁹ The 2001 census data from Canada indicated that the number of residents having a Caribbean background is estimated as 211,000 from Jamaica; 82,000 from Haiti; 60,000 as West Indians; 52,000 as Guyanese; and 50,000 as Trinidadians. The majority of the Caribbean countries have more than 50% of the labour force in the tertiary segment and more than 30% in the secondary education segment.²⁰ Clearly this movement of the most productive labour force (ages 20 – 45) will have a significant impact on economic and sustainable development.²¹

For many in the Caribbean Region the search for a better life often begins intra-regionally. *Based on available data from 2000, about 3 percent of the Caribbean population can be considered migrants. This varies generally from country to country, with the lowest percentage found in Jamaica and Guyana and the highest proportions reported in the Associated States such as Anguilla, Cayman Islands and the Dependencies.*²² According to Kassim, the majority of migrants originated from Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Member Countries and Suriname.

The recent trends in intra-regional migration will have implications for the free movement of skills and labour under the provisions of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). However, both intra-regional migration and the free movement of skills and labour will have implications for the education sector, because children of immigrant families will have to be integrated into society through education. The odds are weighted against these children right from the start; so the education systems will then face serious challenges if host countries are serious about helping migrants integrate into their societies. With migration likely to continue and probably increase with the implementation of the free movement, countries will have to respond more effectively to the socio-economic and cultural diversity in their student populations.

But what about the many in the rural areas who do not migrate and aspire for rural careers? How relevant and appropriate will an urban-biased education be for them? And how will the integrity of the agricultural sector and the values of rural living be maintained? These questions have engaged much discussion in recent years in conferences of the OECD, FAO and the Organisation of Education for Rural People, among others. One such conference was held in St. Lucia in May 2006.

¹⁹ K. Nurse, *Diaspora, Migration and Development in the Caribbean Focal*. Sept.2004.

²⁰ P. Mishra, *Emigration and Brain Drain: Evidence from the Caribbean*. IMF WP/06/25 January 2006.

²¹ K. Nurse, Sept 2004.

²² Cited in Halimina-Sa'adia Kassim, *Brief for CARICOM Delegates Attending the United Nations High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development*. New York, 14-15 Sept. 2006

EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

For many decades, the focus of the majority of priority projects has been on development and modernization of the urban sector, with little emphasis on the expansion of economic and social opportunities in rural areas. However, serious commentators will argue that for national development to become a reality in this region there needs to be a balance between rural and urban development. Approximately 70% of rural populations engaged directly or indirectly in agricultural activities, therefore agricultural development must always be included in any rural development programme. However, recent trends in migration, spotlight the need to critically view the issue of rural development more comprehensively.

Rural development should embrace the far-reaching transformations of health and educational institutions, social and economic structures and services. The goals for rural development should not be restricted to agricultural and economic growth, but emphasis must also be placed on the basic survival and priority learning needs, attainment of equitable distribution and the generation of benefits that will enhance the quality of life of rural people. Of critical importance are:

- The creation of productive employment opportunities both on and off plantations and farms;
- The equal distribution of rural income;
- Improvements in health and social services
- Nutrition
- Household improvements;
- Provision for recreational and sporting facilities;
- Provision for increased access to formal and informal education, with special attention paid to adult learners and the differently able;
- Development of curriculum and educational programmes with direct relevance to the needs and aspirations of rural people; and
- Ensuring that Education Systems reflect, for implementation, a broader perspective of rural development.

A close examination of the systems of education in the Region will reveal that the formal school structure is basically the same in both urban and rural areas. At the primary level, for example, the primary objective is to prepare children to pass the Common Entrance Examinations for entry into secondary schools; a system which is similar to that of developed countries. Consequently, the priority needs of students from rural communities are not given much attention, principally because the curriculum offered at that level has a strong urban bias. The same applies at the secondary level, where students are prepared for the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) O'Level Examinations and the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE). The Caribbean Examination Council has introduced a new Caribbean Examination: The Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence which will come into effect in June 2007. This further emphasizes the fact that the needs of the greatest proportion of students who live in rural areas may be given minimal attention.

The priority and learning needs of other groups in rural areas must also be considered: The many children and young people who are out of school and have many essential learning needs like the “three R’s”; the women who were not able to complete the primary cycle of education, the adults who are illiterate or barely functionally literate, and the small subsistence farmers who require training in improved agricultural practices, fertilizer use, crop protection and marketing. The organized educational programmes in both the formal and informal sectors must be structured to cater for the needs of these major groups. This will greatly contribute towards assisting rural dwellers to function more effectively in their environment and will also assist in improving the levels of agricultural productivity.

It is worth noting that the “three R’s” alone will not suffice in their quest for survival. Many of the other essential things they need to learn are beyond the scope of the schools. The following is a list of a number of “minimum essential learning needs” of children and young people growing up in rural communities; the list can be adapted as deemed necessary.

The list included the following:

1. *Positive attitudes*
2. *Functional literacy and innumeracy*
3. *A scientific outlook and an elementary understanding of the processes of nature*
4. *Functional knowledge and skills for raising a family and operating a household*
5. *Functional knowledge and skills for earning a living.*
6. *Functional knowledge and skills for civic participation*²³

The Report made two practical suggestions about meeting these minimum essential needs:

1. One has to be clear about their specific nature. However, it is important to note that in defining these needs within a particular community, operationally meaningful terms must be used to provide a clear and unambiguous guide to instruction and learning; and a practical basis for monitoring, evaluation and measuring achievement.
2. The second suggestion concerns the various ways of meeting these essential needs. Countries can be flexible in their choice and methods of pursuing the learning objectives of these needs. Depending on the particular circumstance, a variety of formal, non-formal and informal education can be used or combined. What is clear is that no one mode or institution of education... is capable by itself of meeting all these minimum essential learning needs.²⁴

²³ Phillip H. Coombs, Roy C. Prosser and Manzoor Ahmed

²⁴ Phillip H. Coombs, Roy C. Prosser and Manzoor Ahmed

One of the key action themes of the Education For All effort under the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development is the challenge of education to serve rural development. In fact, many of the EFA and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) require special attention to the challenges of rural populations. The problems of adult illiteracy, Gender inequality in education, inadequate teaching resources and instructional materials, unqualified and untrained teachers, school dropouts and absenteeism are disproportionately high in rural communities.

Putting a stop to urbanization and keeping rural people from migrating to urban areas cannot solve poverty and deprivation and their spillover into urban areas. Notwithstanding, a high percentage of the region's people live in rural areas and their situation requires increasing attention as a key element of national and regional and global actions aiming to advance the achievement of the MDG's.

It is important that at the national level Ministries of Education and Agriculture develop partnership and form alliances with the international community and the private sector to address the basic educational needs of the rural population. It is widely acknowledged that farmers with basic education are more likely to adopt new technologies, and become more productive because they are better equipped to make informed decisions for their lives and about the various dimensions of development. It is important for Member States to have specific plans of action that will complement their National Plan on Education For All and their rural development strategies.

CONCLUSION

There is a rapid increase in human learning needs and educational demands among the various sub-groups in societies of developing nations; but there is no reason to suppose that this acceleration of learning needs will subside. On the contrary, all indications from the research point to its continued growth far into the future; and this will have serious implications for the supply side of education.

Caribbean countries, confronted with the critical issues of migration, rural development, urbanization, and human resource development, will have to put the necessary infrastructure in place to keep pace in meeting these growing and changing needs, and also to reconsider their policy approaches to problems of the demand and supply of the educational equation. To invest heavily in the quantitative expansion of the formal systems of education with some modifications to curriculum content, structure of examinations and subject offerings in an endeavour to meet the demand, while retaining the same institutional labour market structures, will further exacerbate the problems of inequality and poverty, unemployment and underemployment, structural imbalances of rural-urban migration and imbalances in the rural - urban economic opportunities

It is often said that educational systems for the most part reflect and reproduce social and economic structures of societies where they operate, rather than change them. Therefore any strategic approach or policies designed to address these problems should consider reforming the educational system to make it more relevant for development needs and to increase its internal effectiveness and equity.

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