

NN 40

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

This special issue covers many different dimensions of education in its relations with sustainability. Some aspects are concerned with sustained economic development. Which is obviously not the same as sustainable economic growth. Others interrogate the sustainability of external aid and its close connections with key concepts like local ownership and with aid dependency. Others again look at the small-scale innovative project or programme, and wonder if it can be justified in its own terms, and not only if it succeeds in being scaled up. In other words, are some things not still eminently valuable even if they can't be sustained in the short term by local resources?

This issue also marks a milestone, as there are now some 2000 individuals from aid agencies, research centres, universities, national governments, consultancies and from NGOs who have made a practice of checking items in NORRAG News as members. It is interesting to note the breakdown. Just over a third of the membership are from teachers in tertiary education, but there are some 11% from national governments, 11% from aid agencies, 11% from consultancies, and 13% from NGOs. It is noteworthy that we are also reaching the next generation, as a further 11% are research students. For some interesting detail on this diverse membership, look further at the article on the NORRAG Survey which no less than 20% of the membership participated in.

As our membership has risen dramatically over these last two years, we have begun to consider the value of organising a number of NORRAG events at the country level. The first of these NORRAG Cluster meetings took place in Switzerland in April this year. This is an appropriate first location for such an innovation, seeing there are 130 members of NORRAG based in Switzerland, and since Michel Carton's Institute (the former IUED) is located there, [now merged in a new institution focusing on development and international studies (IHEID)]. Switzerland is also appropriate as Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) has been supporting the secretariat for NORRAG in IUED/IHEID for many years. They have also been supporting NORRAG to be part of the secretariat along with the ILO and SDC for the organisation of the Working Group for International Cooperation in Skills Development. This Working Group has over the last 12 years produced an extremely valuable series of Working Papers called Debates in Skills Development (see www.norrag.org/wg). These are all freely accessible.

The next NORRAG Cluster meeting is being held in Santiago on 19th May 2008. In Europe the second cluster will be the meeting in The Netherlands in the autumn, organised by NUFFIC, The Hague.

Talking of freely accessible publications, it is worth noting that DFID which is the principal sponsor of NORRAG News has available, free, a large number of copies of many of the 72 volumes in its Researching the Issues. These 72 volumes stretch back to 1993, and the last of them, Education Exclusion and Inclusion, was published in September 2007. DFID will send these, at no cost, to those who would like to put in a goodly order. See the list of these DFID volumes since 2000 at the very end in this special issue.

This issue of NORRAG News contains a number of valuable contributions from members of the network who responded to the outline of the issue earlier in the year. In due course, we shall be sending round the network a detailed outline of NN41, but we should say right now that it will be concerned with the Politics of Partnership. We don't have a firm title yet, but it will be the challenge of the many different forms of partnership, including research partnerships.

Members of NORRAG may wish to note that the topics of sustainability and of partnership are just two dimensions of the EADI General Conference to be held in Geneva at the end of June (see: www.eadi.org/gc2008). This could be an interesting occasion to follow up some of the debates associated with this special issue of NORRAG News.

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Santiago, Chile
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