Six years have passed since the adoption of the Hamburg Declaration and the Agenda for the Future at the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) in Hamburg in 1997. To what extent have commitments made through these two important documents been translated into reality? What are the new emerging issues in adult education? How can the Hamburg Declaration and Agenda for the Future be articulated more closely with the Dakar Framework for Action and the Millennium Development Goals? What new recommendations and suggestions should be made in regard to future directions in adult learning? These are the main issues to be addressed at the upcoming CONFINTEA V Midterm Review Conference that will bring together in Bangkok more than 300 participants involved in adult education in many countries throughout the world.

The official opening of this international conference will take place at the IMPACT Arena in Bangkok on 8 September 2003, along with the inaugural ceremony of the Asia-Pacific regional launch of the UN Literacy Decade and the celebration of International Literacy Day (ILD). The highlight of this day will be a major presentation on literacy and adult learning. The next three days of the conference – to be held at the UN Conference Centre – will focus on thematic presentations, regional reviews, policy dialogue and plans of action.

The conference -- organised jointly by UIE, UNESCO Bangkok and the Department of Non-Formal Education of the Royal Thai Government -- will be preceded by two days of pre-conference workshops at the Royal Princess Hotel. At the end of these two days, the participants will prepare a written report that captures the essence of the results obtained by countries, sub-regions, regions and NGOs. This report will in turn provide the main input for plenary presentations during the review conference to be held during 9-11 September. The pre-conference workshops on 6-7 September will address the following topics:

>>To be continued on next page

The Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All, APPEAL, is a regional co-operative programme designed to promote literacy, primary education, and continuing education as integrated components of basic education.
Three Countries Integrate NFE into National EFA Plans

Laos

APPEAL provided technical and financial support to the Department of Non-Formal Education (NFE) to organize a national workshop to review NFE and propose strategies to strengthen it. Forty-five participants attended the workshop. Most of them were directors of provincial education offices, directors of NFE departments at the provincial level, directors of district education and facilitators of community learning centres (CLCs). Deputy-Directors of the Ministry of Education and the Department of Information Technology also attended.

After reviewing the overall situation and strategies of NFE, workshop participants suggested strategies for improving NFE in Laos with reference to their own experiences and to recommendations by Dr. Suvit Pichayasathita, a Thai consultant.

The following strategies have been developed within the framework of the national plan for NFE, which is divided into three main components:

**Expansion of access to basic education**

NFE programme providers need to clearly identify target groups, such as farmers, women and ethnic minorities, and address their education and training needs. The delivery of NFE services can best promote access if organisation and administration are decentralised to the local level and if literacy and continuing education are provided through CLCs. Instructors should focus on interactive and practical methods of teaching-learning that are innovative and responsive to the needs of target groups. In addition, administrators should organise skills and vocational training for disadvantaged groups, integrate poverty alleviation activities into literacy and continuing education, and strengthen continuing education for the expansion of literacy programmes, especially equivalency programmes.

**Improvement of quality and relevance**

In order to achieve this goal, NFE programme providers need to build the capacity of NFE personnel at all levels. In particular, they need to improve the quality of NFE facilitators by helping them raise their levels of education (most of them have completed only primary school). They also need to develop more responsive and flexible NFE curricula and effective materials, especially local curricula more relevant to the needs and situation of each area and target group. Finally, an NFE supervisory unit should be set up for monitoring programmes and activities (at present, these are under the supervision of district education officers who are mainly in charge of formal schools).

**Administration and management**

In this area, administrators need to improve the formulation of policy and strategies for NFE through clear policies and specific actions, setting realistic targets to be achieved within an agreed time frame, and giving due consideration to the available domestic and external funding. They also need to improve NFE structures by recruiting more and better qualified staff and establishing closer links with the Ministry of Education to which provincial governors report progress in implementing educational activities, including those of NFE. The Department of NFE should also cooperate closely with the governors who control the entire budget for their provinces, including funds for NFE. Finally, information systems for storing data need to be upgraded at all levels, especially locally. An improved information dissemination system would be useful for increasing public awareness and improving the delivery of services.

The Department of NFE will prioritize these measures and develop short and long-term plans along with an overall work plan for implementation. The new NFE strategies will be integrated into the national EFA plan.
Cambodia

In mid-2003 the Royal Government of Cambodia prepared a national plan that outlines the policies and strategies for achieving the goals of EFA by 2015. Although the plan provided overall directions for reaching EFA, concrete action plans required elaboration, including a timetable and budgeting by each sub-sector.

UNESCO Phnom Penh has assisted the Department of Non-formal Education (DNFE), Ministry of Education, to develop detailed action plans for NFE and has also arranged the services of a consultant. To assist in this process, in June 2003 APPEAL provided technical assistance in the form of a Programme Specialist in Literacy. At the end of June the DNFE prepared draft action plans based on a series of discussions and consultations with other departments of the ministry, UNESCO, NGOs and donors, as well as other ministries.

The draft plans cover the following main areas of NFE activities in the country up to 2015:

1. Adult functional literacy
2. Primary and lower secondary equivalency education
3. Short-term income generating skills
4. Adult post-literacy

5. Family education for early childhood development
6. Community-based learning centres
7. Capacity building for effective management

As in most other countries, the action plans for Cambodia are not fixed in stone but subject to review and modification each year to enable effective implementation in the years following.

Myanmar

NFE is one of the four main emphases of the National EFA Plan in Myanmar. The others are 1) access to and quality of basic education, 2) early childhood care and education (ECCE) and 3) education management, including a computerised information management system.

Under the goal of literacy and continuing education through NFE, administrators hope to complete the establishment of basic literacy programmes in all states by 2005. They will also expand the number of CLCs throughout the country and continue training NFE grassroots personnel. Finally, they will concentrate on the development of different types of programmes. These include literacy and post-literacy programmes with learner-oriented teaching strategies, income generating programmes and equivalency programmes at primary and lower secondary levels.

□ APPEAL Launches New Project to Help Ministries of Education in Asia to Become More Gender Responsive

As a follow-up to activities conducted last year to strengthen the capacity of Ministries of Education in formulating gender responsive EFA plans, APPEAL, with the support of Nordic EFA donors, is launching a second phase involving more in-depth consultation and training to implement national EFA plans and policies. Nine countries have been selected to participate: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Pakistan, Thailand and Vietnam.

The nine countries will receive missions by international gender consultants, who will assist in analysing existing local institutions involved in gender mainstreaming and, when necessary, suggest ways and means to improve their operations. As a follow-up to last year’s activities under the Gender In Education Network in Asia (GENIA) (see below), there will be additional support for national networking and coordination. Although country specialists in gender equality will
initially be involved in capacity building activities, the project, in line with a mainstreaming approach, aims to
target a larger group of functionaries coming from various offices in the Ministries and Departments of
Education.

In October, country gender specialists and EFA coordinators will meet in Bangkok for more in-depth
training and a regional networking exercise.

GENIA in Action

South Asian gender specialists met in Islamabad
on 29 May 2003 prior to the ministerial meeting on
EFA to discuss strategies for closing the gender
gap in education. The participants made a series of
recommendations to the ministers, who included in
the Islamabad Declaration the following points related
to gender:

- Ensure that Goal 5 of the Dakar Framework of Action
  is explicitly addressed in all EFA plans and state
  explicitly when and how the goals for 2005 will be
  achieved.
- Develop and implement affirmative action
  programmes with regard to gender.
- Sensitize partners and stakeholders on gender
  issues and build their capacity for gender analysis
  and gender mainstreaming at all levels in all sectors,
  particularly in the Ministries of Education, to ensure
  implementation of the goals and strategies.
- Encourage the media to promote broad-based
discussions on gender issues and positive role
models to counter gender stereotyping.
- Recognize and appreciate the role of NGOs in
  promoting gender equality at all levels and extend
  full support including resources to their work.
- Promote adult literacy in general and for women
  in particular, in the context of the United Nations
  Literacy Decade (2003-2012) and in the spirit of the
  Dakar Framework of Action.
- Develop and implement gender-sensitive
  programming that addresses the learning needs of
  girls and women as a priority target group.

The hard work of gender specialists at the national
and regional levels has helped to produce a practical
gender toolkit. This resource includes a series of
examples on how to make the curriculum and
textbooks gender responsive, along with tools for
assessing the gender responsiveness of schools and
advice on making EFA planning and implementation
more gender responsive. Posters to explain key
concepts such as gender equity, gender equality and
gender mainstreaming are also included. The gender
toolkit can be downloaded from www.unescobkk.org
or a hard copy ordered via e-mail from: k.intiranee@
unescobkk.org.

News from the APPEAL Resource and Training Consortium (ARTC)

ARTC members participate in EFA planning

Two ARTC members have become directly involved in
EFA national planning in their respective countries.

The Director-General of the Directorate of Out-Of-
School Education, Youth and Sports, Indonesia, is
serving as EFA Coordinator for that country. Moreover,
the Director of the National Observatory of Kazakhstan,
ARTC member for Central Asia, has become the
President of the Association of EFA in Kazakhstan.

New member of ARTC

We welcome a new member of ARTC. BUNYAD,
based in Lahore, Pakistan, has just joined the
Consortium after being recommended by the Federal
Minister of Education. BUNYAD is an NGO that is
implementing a community learning centre (CLC)
project supported by UNESCO Bangkok.
Community Learning Centres (CLCs) News

- So far, 21 countries are participating in the CLC project supported by UNESCO Bangkok: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.
- Project representatives from all 21 participating countries will meet again, together with staff from donor agencies and other interested NGOs, in November or December of this year to review CLC implementation and strategies. They will share ideas and discuss planning for the future institutionalization of CLCs and involvement in activities related to gender equality, poverty alleviation, information and communication technology, HIV/AIDS and health education. They will also consider using CLCs as vehicles for literacy programmes directed at ethnic minorities. Experiences will be shared with representatives from Africa, another region participating in the meeting.

Consultative Group Meets to Review Early Childhood Care and Development

Participants from all over the world convened for the annual general meeting of the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CGECCD) in Washington, DC, during 19-22 May 2003. The Consultative Group was established 20 years ago, in May 1983, and is a diverse consortium of agencies, donors, NGOs and foundations that has links with regionally based Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) networks. These networks comprise individuals and organisations involved in programming, research, policy advocacy, monitoring and evaluation for young children (0-8) at risk in developing countries. UNESCO has been involved since the beginning, and was represented at the meeting by four participants, including APPEAL’s expert on Early Childhood Care and Education.

The annual meeting was hosted by the Pan American Health Organisation, with half a day at the World Bank. The agenda included regional updates and discussions about focus and strategy. There was a strong consensus among participants that the Consultative Group consortium should be doing more to address the “governance issue” of the first goal of the EFA Dakar Framework for Action: “Expanding and improving early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.” The aim of the Consultative Group is to make the influence and impact of ECCD efforts on achieving Education for All goals more clearly understood and articulated amongst all relevant and interested parties. To facilitate this aim, participants agreed to establish a Working Group that would focus on:

- Building/improving the knowledge base for ECCD and its use in policy and programming by gathering, synthesising, extracting lessons, translating and disseminating information about key areas and processes
- Advocating by:
  - identifying targets of opportunity, i.e., organisations, events and processes in order to influence agendas and modes of work
  - identifying general processes to raise consciousness and promote new activities in ECCD

Also during the meeting the World Bank presented a costing model for ECCD and the Consultative Group’s Working Group on HIV/AIDS launched its HIV/AIDS and Young Children advocacy package. A special focus of the meeting was the impact of HIV/AIDS on
APPEAL has recently completed a study on early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes, policies and practices in Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines. The study aimed to take a closer look at current ECCE programmes in these three countries with special attention to the application of relevant knowledge about child development to curriculum and programme planning. Specifically, the study attempted to determine 1) the extent to which a holistic view of child development is translated into learner-centred curricula that encourage active learning through play; and 2) how care providers respond to children’s health and nutritional needs. The study also looked at the curriculum content and practices in ECCE programmes in relation to gender issues and inclusion of children experiencing marginalisation and/or exclusion. In addition to the country reports, a synthesis of “best practices” from the point of view of various ECCE stakeholders celebrates both small yet innovative steps and effective, giant steps that governments, the civil society, communities and families are making in trying to provide all young children with a “fair start” through ECCE programmes.

All three countries have good examples of cutting-edge, innovative practices applied in both public and non-profit, private or civil society ECCE programmes including those targeting marginalised children at risk of being excluded. There are interesting examples of high quality programmes intended for children of poor urban and rural communities and of indigenous and tribal communities. These programmes provide culturally relevant and innovative learning experiences for the children despite very limited resources. The quality is at par with the quality of model public school kindergartens and private schools.

The primary challenge for all three countries now is to expand access and to improve or sustain quality. The replication of these “best practices” is a critical part of improving quality. Now that more people in these three Southeast Asian countries recognise the importance of ECCE, it is both necessary and timely that concerted efforts are made to promote the principles of quality in ECCE, which include child-friendly learning and developmentally appropriate programming and practices that benefit all children. In doing so, they will be able to ensure that ECCE programmes will yield the expected results. For in ECCE, quality does matter. It is not a question of just ensuring and expanding access. Rather it is a question of whether the young children are provided with the quality of care, teaching and learning experiences that will contribute to their development and learning. For if they are not – more harm than good will result.

In a pluralistic society it is impossible to unilaterally impose only one particular approach to ECCE.
APPEAL promotes those practices that serve the best interest of those young learners in their own social contexts and that help them make the most of their active learning capacity while accommodating their diverse needs. However, “best practices” should be promoted as bottom-up strategies rather than as a policy that mandates everyone to adopt certain approaches and methods.

Thailand and Vietnam have both shown that a lot can be done if the Government makes a full commitment to ECCE. There are examples from the three countries that show how ECCE has been a catalyst for community development and for education reform.

Those interested in obtaining the country reports or the synthesis paper of “best practices” in ECCE in Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines should contact Annelene Ror, focal point of ECCE, APPEAL, UNESCO, Bangkok; e-mail: a.ror@unescobkk.org

Inclusive Education:

Promoting inclusive education in Bangladesh

Inclusive education in Bangladesh has been strengthened through activities supported by the Japanese Funds-in-Trust within the framework of the APPEAL regional project on “Capacity Building and Resource Development of Basic Education Focusing on Combating Marginalisation and Exclusion.” These activities include assessing the situation in the country and organising a national seminar (to be held during 23-25 September 2003) at which the findings of the study will be shared and discussed. Finally, support has also been provided to translate UNESCO resource materials on inclusive education into Bengali and adapt them for use in teacher training colleges.

Workshop on helping vulnerable groups in Cambodia

In May 2003, a UNESCO funded workshop to build the national capacity of education management staff took place in Siem Reap, Cambodia. Its organisers were the Disability Action Council (DAC) and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The workshop, which focused on helping vulnerable groups, began by outlining the goals of inclusive education in relation to everyone’s right to an education. This was followed by discussions of different kinds of barriers and presentations of activities taking place in the country. The workshop also included study visits to organisations and a school working to bring children with disabilities into the regular classroom setting. Other activities demonstrated participatory and active learning through interactive lectures and small group
discussions. During the four days, the participants -- about 70 NGO representatives and education administrators at the district and provincial levels -- deliberated on different aspects of inclusive education and special needs related to the Cambodian context.

**Literacy and Non-formal Education Development in Afghanistan (the LAND AFGHAN Project)**

The Literacy Section of UNESCO Headquarters, UNESCO Kabul and APPEAL are currently implementing the LAND AFGHAN Project under the UNESCO Regular Programme and the Japanese Funds-in-Trust. The project planning meeting was held in Kabul in January 2003 by UNESCO in co-operation with other UN agencies as well as NGOs such as ACCU (Asia Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO) and NFUAJ.

The first training and planning workshop of the project was scheduled to occur in Thailand in May 2003. However, it was cancelled in response to the potential threat of SARS in the region. The workshop has been postponed to August 2003 in Teheran, hosted by the Literacy Movement Organization of Iran. In the meantime, three Afghan NFE personnel participated in a national CLC seminar held in Lahore, Pakistan, in April 2003.

Under this project, NFE resource materials of APPEAL and ACCU are currently being adapted by local education institutions. An NFE expert from the Dhaka Ahsania Mission, a Bangladesh NGO, will serve as a consultant for the project from August to November 2003 to assist in developing an overall NFE design, curriculum development, training of trainers and literacy materials development.

As the basis for NFE is developed through the above activities, community learning centres will be introduced -- first in Kabul, then in rural areas -- in order to strengthen the NFE mechanisms through promoting community participation and mobilising community resources.

**Experts in ICT for NFE Share Their Experiences**

APPEAL has launched a project to apply information and communication technology (ICT) in non-formal education (NFE) programmes. With the financial support of the Japanese Funds-in-Trust for ICT, the ICT-NFE project has two aims. One is to use the potential of ICT to explore the more effective delivery of existing resources and develop new resources to widen access to learning and improve its relevance and quality through community learning centres and other community-based mechanisms. The other is to explore the effective development and uses of ICT to empower individual learners as well as communities.

To further these aims, a meeting of experts was held in Lampang, Thailand, during 28 April-2 May 2003 to finalize details and action plans. Experts in the area of community empowerment through ICT -- two each from Indonesia, Lao PDR, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Uzbekistan -- attended the workshop. In addition, four resource persons working in ICT for NFE at the grassroots level were invited from India, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand to assist in providing technical input during workshop sessions.

Participants identified strategies and activities in the following three areas:

**Community empowerment through ICT:**
1) promoting community ownership through capacity building
2) ensuring context based needs assessment processes
3) developing appropriate infrastructures using locally available resources

**Resource development and use of existing resources through ICT:**
1) conducting studies of existing NFE resource materials
2) developing a content specific resource package for each community based on local needs
3) training personnel using community based innovative approaches
4) encouraging the use of local folk media
5) developing an NFE resource package for both online and offline use

**Sharing information and maintaining policy dialogues for ICT-NFE:**

1) developing a national NFE database
2) strengthening offline services targeting rural and remote areas
3) encouraging continuous, evidence based policy dialogues

During the meeting, participants had an opportunity to visit a local pilot project on community empowerment through ICT in Ban Samkah district, outside of Lampang city. They also observed a community radio programme at the national radio station.

Taking into account the recommendations resulting from this meeting, the participating countries are currently finalizing project action plans for the implementation of community empowerment activities at the grassroots level. In addition, APPEAL is developing an NFE resource package to coordinate the resource materials and disseminate them through ICT. The first phase activities under this project will be carried out from July 2003 to April 2004, the outcomes of which will be shared during the review meeting to be held in May 2004.

**A MANGO Grows in India: Strengthening the Monitoring of NFE Activities at the Grassroots Level**

From 2000 through 2003 APPEAL has been implementing a project on “Reforming Strategies for Non-formal Education in the Asia-Pacific” funded by the Japanese Funds-in-Trust. The aim of the project is to accelerate and monitor progress toward Education for All (EFA) by facilitating the collection and analysis of data related to non-formal education (NFE) at the community and district levels. The specific products resulting from the project, the MANGO (Map-based Analysis for NFE Goals and Outcomes) software and handbook, are being developed in co-operation with the Asia Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU).

MANGO consists of 1) community database software and 2) a handbook on the participatory collection and analysis of NFE information. MANGO will help improve the skills of NFE personnel who need to monitor NFE activities at community and district levels. The unique features of MANGO include methods for collecting qualitative as well as quantitative data, participatory monitoring at the grassroots level rather than the mere collection of statistics, and improvements in the visual presentation of NFE data as an aid to advocacy.

As a crucial phase in MANGO development, in 2002 ACCU and the State Resource Centre for Adult Education, Indore, India (SRC Indore), initiated the AMEIS (Alternative Modes of Education Information System) Indore Pilot Project, in collaboration with the NFE-MIS programme of UNESCO Headquarters and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). This pilot project has been exploring the development of participatory monitoring systems for CECS (continuing education centres), the Indian version of community learning centres) in the district of Indore. The term “AME (Alternative Modes of Education)” is used to refer to NFE activities in a wider perspective in the Indian context.

As a part of the AMEIS Indore Pilot Project, the Expert Workshop for the Preparation of AMEIS Indore Pilot Guidelines was organised in collaboration with the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA). The workshop took place in New Delhi from 29 June to 5 July 2003, involving 14 experts from India, Bangladesh, ACCU and UNESCO offices (Headquarters, New Delhi, APPEAL). During the workshop, the participants 1) revised the Data Capture Formats (DCFs), making them simpler and more appropriate for practical use by CLC facilitators, 2) drafted guidelines for participatory information collection, and 3) discussed guidelines for participatory information analysis.

The DCFs were designed for the systematic collection of information at the grassroots level, covering the following ten types of NFE data:

1. Agencies providing or sponsoring NFE programmes
2. Information about community learning centres (CLCs)
3. Socio-economic information from villages
4. Education profile of the village population
5. EFA institutions (schools and other educational institutions)
6. Information on libraries
7. Courses planned at CLCs
8. Courses organised/implemented at CLCs
9. Information on CLC facilitators
10. Information on CLC learners/members
The guidelines for participatory information collection and analysis will be included in the MANGO handbook to help CLC facilitators understand the concepts and techniques of monitoring with participatory methods and tools. The guidelines will also enable them to effectively use the information collected through DCPS for their future planning of CLC activities. Through participatory information collection and analysis, CLC facilitators and NFE personnel at the local level will gain the skills and confidence to monitor and plan CLC/NFE activities and further increase a sense of ownership related to these activities and to community development in general. The draft guidelines prepared during the Expert Workshop are to be further elaborated and tested in the AMEIS Indore Pilot Project.

The outputs and results from the AMEIS Indore Pilot Project will be incorporated into the development of the MANGO software and handbook. The software, consisting of two components – GIS (Geographic Information System) and data management -- will be able to visually present comprehensive information about NFE activities by linking various forms of data such as maps, reports, graphs, photos and audio-visual files. The GIS component will consist of a prototype software that can be easily customized for local use. The MANGO data management component, as well as the accompanying handbook, will use Indore District and its experiences as the “model” for describing the locally specific needs of information collection and analysis.

Multilingual Education for Ethnic Minorities: The Theme of a Forthcoming Conference

Education for All means a quality education for everyone. Education in many countries of the world takes place in a variety of multicultural and multilingual contexts. UNESCO has a strong commitment to the inherent value of cultural diversity and the need to maintain it. The challenge is for education systems to adapt to these complex realities and provide quality education that takes into consideration learners’ needs as well as a variety of social, cultural and political demands.

Over the past few decades, those responsible for literacy classes and education programmes for ethnic minorities have developed strategies to strengthen the languages and cultures of these communities. These programmes respect and build on the local knowledge and experience that ethnic minority individuals possess.

From 6 to 8 November 2003, there will be a Conference on Language Development, Language Revitalization and Multilingual Education at the Royal River Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand. Sponsored by Mahidol University-Salaya, SIL International and UNESCO, this conference will provide a forum for practitioners in language development, language revitalization and/or multilingual education programmes to interact with the individuals responsible for the development of programmes and education systems that affect the lives of ethnic minority individuals. A special hope is that members of the ethnic minority communities themselves will share their experiences and plans for strengthening and maintaining their languages and cultures.

The conference will consist of plenary presentations and case study reports focusing on the following general topics:

- The language situation in Asia — relationship between majority and minority languages
- Issues in language planning
- Issues in orthography development
- Language development and language revitalization efforts in the Asian context
- Education for multilingualism and multi-literacy in Asia
- Research findings on minority language education
- Ethnic minorities and community development
- Minority language development in the context of national development

The conference is issuing a call for papers. Individuals are invited to submit abstracts on case studies or reports related to the following topics:

- Conducting language surveys — experiences and results
- Developing and testing orthographies
- Implementing language development and language revitalization programmes
- Implementing multilingual education programmes in formal and non-formal education systems
- Developing literature in minority languages
- Linking local programmes to opportunities for ongoing education
• Developing networks and partnerships to promote sustainability

UNESCO Bangkok is supporting research on mother tongue/bilingual literacy programmes in five countries: Bangladesh, India, China, Philippines and Thailand. Under the sponsorship of UNESCO Bangkok, researchers from these countries will participate in and share their research findings during the conference. The focus will be on ethnic minorities and community development.

Education and Human Rights:

Progress towards applying a rights-based approach to education in the Asia-Pacific region

In April 2002 UNESCO Bangkok initiated a collaborative project with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Katarina Tomasevski. The purpose of the project is to advance and develop a tool for putting into practice and monitoring a rights-based approach to education. In the project’s first phase, a regional workshop, “Universalizing the Right to Education of Good Quality,” was organised in Manila in October 2002. It attracted government representatives from eight countries for presentations and discussions. As part of the preparation, government reports summarised opportunities to exercise the right to education and highlighted differences in the application of international human rights treaties within the framework of national EFA strategies.

Based on the recommendations from the workshop, the second phase of the project will be a regional study of the ways countries have tried to apply a rights-based approach to education. The study will identify and review examples and best practices in different countries of the Asia-Pacific region. It will analyse common factors and difficulties faced in applying a rights-based approach in different local contexts and in relation to the EFA process. The study will be initiated in September 2003.

The right to good quality education is acknowledged as being a fundamental human right and achieving it is one of the biggest challenges of our time. Education is considered to be both a goal in itself and a means for sustainable human development. A rights-based approach to education provides both the conceptual and practical tools for the realisation of Education for All through the development process. In the public policy realm this means that all rights related to the education sector must be considered when analysing a problem, setting priorities and allocating resources. This holistic approach differs from previous development models in that it attaches a more explicit normative and legal context to programmes, plans and policies. The approach focuses much more sharply on participation, empowerment and the needs of groups that have been marginalised and excluded from the benefits of development.

In order to strengthen the right to education and to achieve the goals of EFA, it is necessary to promote human rights and translate the concept of a rights-based approach to education into a workable framework with practical examples. This is an ongoing process as is the attainment of EFA. UNESCO Bangkok, in its efforts to play a proactive and supportive role in the region, can facilitate this process. Mr Olaf Sandkull at o.sandkull@unesco-bkk.org, an Associate Expert from Sweden specialising in human rights, has been recruited to the office recently to coordinate activities.

Recommended reading:
Education Denied: Costs and Remedies
by Katarina Tomasevski
ISBN 1-84277-251-1

The author is the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education. In the book, Tomasevski reviews the emerging commitment to universal education and the difficult history of trying to put this commitment into effect. She also points outs the discrimination and abuses of power this quest has involved and what needs to be done. Using plain, concrete examples, the author exposes how governments violate the right to education. She also highlights positive practices and potential. This book is really worthwhile reading for anyone interested in how and why so many children are excluded from education and what needs to be done in order to achieve Education for All.

How to order:
E-mail: sales@zedbooks.demon.co.uk
Homepage: www.zedbooks.co.uk

For more information about the conference, please see the conference website: www.ic.mahidol.ac.th/Conference.html or send an e-mail to language-dev-03@access.inet.co.th
UNLD Regional Launch Coming Up in September

UNESCO, as a coordinating agency of the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) and in consultation with the Thai Ministry of Education, is planning to launch the Decade in the Asia-Pacific region during an inaugural ceremony on 8 September 2003 at the IMPACT Arena, Muang Thong Thani, in Bangkok. This event will occur in conjunction with the International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) Review Meeting to be held at the UN Conference Centre (UNCC) on 9-11 September 2003.

The Ministry of Education, UIE and APPEAL are jointly developing the programme for the regional launch that includes activities related to the Thai National Literacy Day Celebrations. Tentatively, the programme will consist of:

- Inauguration with the presence of HRH Princess Sirindorn
- Official regional launch with speeches by Thai education ministers and other guests
- Roundtable discussions on gender and regional cooperation
- 2003 UNESCO International Literacy Prize Recognition Ceremony

In addition, exhibits related to literacy and adult education by the participating agencies will be arranged at IMPACT on 6-8 September and UNCC on 9-11 September.

To take advantage of these events, the 5th National EFA Coordinators’ Meeting of the Sub-Regional Forum (SRF) for EFA in Southeast Asia will be organized at the UNCC on 10-12 September 2003. The meeting will focus on progress in the sub-region regarding EFA plans in general, and literacy and continuing education in particular. The following Dakar EFA Goals will be the points of reference: Goal 3 (learning and life skills of young people and adults), Goal 4 (adult literacy, especially for women) and Goal 6 (improving the quality of education).

During the meeting, the participating countries will share current plans, strategies and actions covering the following aspects of EFA:

1. The progress of national EFA planning
2. The relevance of EFA flagship programmes to national EFA plans
3. Time-bound targets and strategies in the plans for achieving literacy and continuing education goals
4. Decentralisation goals, strategies and mechanisms
5. Cost estimates for implementing an EFA plan or its first phase
6. Indicators for measuring the achievement of goals and targets
7. Suggestions for effective inter-country activities and support from external agencies

APPEAL Activities [April 2003 – March 2004]

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<th>Organizer</th>
<th>Participating Countries</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Apr.</td>
<td>National Launch of UN Literacy Decade in Thailand</td>
<td>UNESCO Bangkok, Ministry of Education of Thailand</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Bangkok, Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Apr. – 2 May</td>
<td>The Expert Meeting on ICT for Non-Formal Education</td>
<td>UNESCO Bangkok</td>
<td>Indonesia, Lao PDR, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uzbekistan</td>
<td>Lampang, Thailand</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Sep.</td>
<td>Regional Launch of UN Literacy Decade in Asia-Pacific</td>
<td>UNESCO Bangkok, UNESCO HQ</td>
<td>Countries in Asia-Pacific</td>
<td>Bangkok, Thailand</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-11 Sep.</td>
<td>CONFINTEA V Review Meeting</td>
<td>UIE, UNESCO Bangkok</td>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Bangkok, Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
<td>CLC Review Meeting</td>
<td>UNESCO Bangkok</td>
<td>Countries in Asia-Pacific</td>
<td>Thailand (tentative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>ACCU-APPEAL NFE Planning Meeting</td>
<td>ACCU UNESCO Bangkok</td>
<td>Countries in Asia-Pacific</td>
<td>Tokyo, Japan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The basic mission of UNESCO is to: contribute to sustainable human development in a culture of peace, underpinned by tolerance, democracy and human rights, through programmes and projects in UNESCO’s fields of competence-education, the natural and social sciences, culture, and communication and information.