APPEAL Bulletin

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.

APPEAL and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) are jointly organizing the International Symposium on Non-Formal Education to Promote EFA and Lifelong Learning. This symposium will take place in Tokyo on 13-14 October 2004. Its overall objective is to strengthen and support EFA efforts to be undertaken during the current United Nations Literacy Decade.

The symposium will reaffirm that non-formal education (NFE) should play an important role for achieving EFA in coordination with formal schooling. Applying flexible and needs based programmes in combination with other development activities, NFE can meet the needs of people in disadvantaged situations — needs that cannot be satisfied by the formal school system alone. In addition, due to the rapid changes in society brought about by the global economy and developments in technology, education must be expanded to become a lifelong process involving both formal and non-formal means of learning, as well as informal learning.

JICA has been steadily expanding and strengthening its cooperation in the field of basic education. Although the agency has not initiated very many NFE projects, NFE has been integrated into JICA’s various development cooperation projects and programmes for promoting human-centered development within overall national development activities. To build on past experiences and reaffirm its commitment, JICA has recently developed strategies for cooperation in the field of NFE.

The symposium will consist of two main activities. The first is a public forum for deliberating upon an overall vision of NFE, reviewing past experiences and exploring future possibilities. The second is a forum of experts who will discuss issues and future strategies in four areas, including the role of NFE in lifelong learning, health and HIV/AIDS, income generation for rural development, and environmental education for sustainable development.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, on 15-16 October 2004, APPEAL plans to organize a consultation meeting with ARTC (APPEAL Resource and Training Consortium) members to review regional programmes in NFE and to plan future activities for APPEAL in light of the symposium outcomes.

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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.
EFA/NFE Strategies for South Asian Countries

During 2004 and 2005, APPEAL, in cooperation with UNESCO New Delhi, is carrying out a project called Ensuring the Integration of Literacy and Continuing Education in EFA Programmes: Policy Dialogue among South Asian Countries. The participating countries are Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan.

The project aims to ensure that literacy and continuing education will become an integral part of the national EFA action plans and strategies under the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) in the countries of the sub-region. Specifically, the project has two components. The first one is to examine current NFE strategies and practices under the national EFA action plans in the participating countries. The second component focuses on the identification of specific activities for ensuring that NFE remains the sustaining force for achieving EFA goals and promoting the UNLD.

Project activities have been planned in coordination with the inter-regional project on Strengthening National Literacy and NFE Policies, which is implemented by UNESCO Headquarters in Paris and the UNESCO Institute of Education (UIE) in Hamburg. A research framework to review national EFA plans was developed during the international planning meeting held in Paris in July 2004.

Participating countries are currently undertaking research activities under the coordination of the Asian-South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) in cooperation with APPEAL and UNESCO New Delhi. The research will be completed during 2004 and ASPBAE will synthesize the findings in time for a regional seminar to be held in Dhaka in early 2005.
Progress During the United Nations Literacy Decade

The United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD), launched in 2003, has significant meaning for countries in the Asia-Pacific region in view of the large number of illiterate youths and adults as well as out-of-school children. Moreover, it is estimated that two-thirds of the world’s illiterate population live in this region.

UNESCO Bangkok, the coordinating agency of the Thematic Working Group (TWG) for EFA in the region, is also promoting the UNLD in cooperation with EFA partners such as governments, UN agencies, NGOs and others involved in development.

In response to international initiatives related to the UNLD resource persons’ team led by UNESCO Headquarters, APPEAL has established a regional resource team for Asia and the Pacific to assist countries in the region in promoting literacy activities such as research, training and materials development.

During 2004 and 2005, this regional resource team consists of the following invited institutions and networks: the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), the Christian Blind Mission (CBM), the Asian-South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE), the Dhaka Ahsania Mission, Bangladesh, (representing the APPEAL Resource and Training Consortium [ARTC]) and the Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) (representing the Literacy Resource Centre network [LRC]). The membership of this team will be reviewed every two years.

The resource team members will consult and develop concrete action plans for the UNLD in October 2004 during the ARTC consultation meeting to be held in Tokyo and EFA Coordinators’ Meeting to be held in Bangkok.

To inform the countries of the region about UNLD initiatives and the activities of the regional resource team, APPEAL is currently preparing a promotional kit on the UNLD, which will be ready by the end of 2004.
How Are Some Asian Countries Addressing the Learning Needs of Rural People?

The workshop on Addressing the Learning Needs of Rural People, held in May 2004 in Bangkok, is the Education for Rural People Flagship’s most recent effort in Asia to promote action towards improving educational opportunities for people in the countryside.

The workshop brought together two participants from each of the nine participating countries (representing each country’s agriculture and education ministries) and twenty other participants representing international organizations, NGOs and academia. The workshop was organized jointly by FAO (SDRE, Rome, and the Bangkok Regional Office) and UNESCO (IIEP and the Bangkok Office) with the support of Italian Development Cooperation (DGCS).

Panel presentations were based on the following themes:

1) promoting access to learning with special focus on school feeding programmes and community participation in education;
2) promoting quality and relevance with focus especially on the role of basic education in achieving food security and sustainable development;
3) promoting equity with focus on reducing gender disparities and responding to the learning needs of ethnic minorities;
4) linkages between schools and agricultural services with examples such as Integrated Pest Management projects in Vietnam and Thailand; and
5) the potential of ICT for reaching rural learners with special focus on the use of information and communication technology targeting rural youth.

Workshop participants reached a number of important conclusions. First, rural people are not homogeneous, and there is no single agenda for rural education that is universal to all countries and communities.

Nevertheless, urgent action is required to meet the learning needs of rural people, to reduce their poverty and to improve their quality of life. Programmes and activities need to take the unique quality of rural life into account, and explicitly focus on the specific needs of rural people, including those related to skills development. Programmes should incorporate a holistic approach to rural development that goes beyond the narrow boundaries of traditional agricultural education and places greater emphasis on effective ways to reach the previously unreached. The rural population should participate in the process of policy formulation, as well as in the design, implementation, monitoring and accountability of programmes related to education for rural people (ERP).

In addition, ministries, agencies and departments in different sectors should work together to share information and resources, reducing unnecessary competition and duplication of effort. More effective cooperation means that Ministry of Education staff must become more aware of the important role of education in rural development. Turning to more specific measures, programmes should promote the use of appropriate technologies, as well as develop indicators to assess the rural-urban divide in education and to evaluate the impact of their own activities. Finally, programme quality can be improved by supporting participatory curriculum development and teacher training in response to rural development requirements.

The workshop had three objectives:

- To review the situation in each country related to addressing the learning needs of rural people
- To facilitate knowledge sharing among planners and partners of rural development and EFA action plans
- To explore ways of promoting partnerships (including inter-sectoral cooperation) at all levels to address the concerns of rural people within the framework of poverty reduction, food security and rural development strategies as well as EFA strategies.

These objectives were addressed through country reports, thematic panel discussions and focused working groups.
The country reports helped not only to take stock of concerns and problems, but also to discover and share some promising practices for helping rural people meet their learning needs. Here are some key observations from these reports:

- All countries address, at various levels, ERP issues in their EFA plans.
- Cooperation between Ministries of Education and Agriculture is improving.
- Community participation in education for rural development planning is crucial.
- Rural poverty remains a key issue in spite of economic growth in many countries.
- Rural-urban disparities are still significant, with the reports citing inequities in the provision of social services and good teachers, as well as basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity and water.

- Food security considerations remain serious.
- Ethnic minorities and underserved groups need special attention.
- Quality rural education requires greater spending for more new schools, better transportation, boarding facilities, supplementary feeding programmes, scholarships and subsidies, localized curricula, and financial incentives for teachers. Yet the country reports confirm that investments in rural education do make a difference.

Notwithstanding the overall added costs to ERP in some instances, workshop participants agreed that rural schools can have a comparative advantage because of teaching and learning that is more context-specific, community involvement in the learning process, and innovative practices, such as multi-grade teaching, often made necessary by limited resources.

### Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

### Hanoi Capacity-Building Workshop on ECCE Prepares the Way for Better Service Delivery

Following the study Early Childhood Care and Education in Southeast Asia – Working for Access, Quality and Inclusion in Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam (now available under the ECCE section of the APPEAL website), a workshop was held in Hanoi, Vietnam, during 19-21 May 2004 to address pertinent issues. This workshop was jointly organised by UNESCO Hanoi in collaboration with the Early Childhood Care and Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) with support from APPEAL. There were 45 participants from the MoET (representing the ministry’s ECCE department and six provincial and district offices, national teacher training colleges and research institutes), UNICEF, Save the Children UK, USA and Japan, and Enfant et Développement.

The focus of the workshop was to share experiences and raise issues for further development related to service delivery mechanisms that could improve 1) the quality of ECCE programmes, and 2) access for vulnerable and marginalised children. The following points are a summary of the significant insights and corresponding recommendations that emerged from the workshop, and indicate future directions for concerted action.
1. There exists a service delivery system for education and health at all levels from the village up to the province. This network of basic social services is generally accessible to and used by people who live in rural areas. Thus, this same network should be maximized as well as strengthened to provide the basic ECCE services (health; nutrition; parent education; childcare and early education through kindergarten; and other community-based education services and activities). In order to ensure greater participation by children and parents, especially those who are most disadvantaged, there is a need to implement effective communication strategies to inform them about the importance of these basic ECCE services, and to encourage families to seek them out. Parents should also have the opportunity to work for changes in the service delivery process. They should be kept informed of changes in the process, and encouraged to provide feedback to strengthen the programmes.

2. In the more functional service delivery systems, the active participation of parents and community members is demonstrated by their regular use of the services, contribution of financial and material resources, and help with maintaining or upgrading the facilities. There are certain essential features or elements that motivate parents and children to participate in these programmes. First, these programmes must clearly demonstrate their effectiveness in terms of how children benefit from their participation or from the use of specific services. Second, parents are made aware of these services through effective publicity or information dissemination. Third, the service providers are able to offer services of good or sufficient quality. This implies that in order to mobilize active participation, it is necessary to ensure optimum levels of quality for the ECCE programmes so that positive outcomes for children and parents are clearly demonstrated. Thus, the factors that contribute to improving quality (such as appropriate staff training) must also be present and prioritized so that service providers and supervisors can effectively implement these programmes, and conduct activities or provide services in a way so that children can truly benefit.

3. When ECCE programmes and services are truly functional and responsive to children and their caregivers, they serve an important additional purpose: as a context for socialization and interaction among adults and other family members. This interaction can be truly rewarding for parents and other caregivers. Beyond their contributions or the benefits they gain in terms of time, material, financial and other resources, this particular aspect is what most effectively helps a community to recognize the benefits of ECCE for their children. It also becomes a critical factor for achieving the kind of improved and sustained coordination between local (village) political leaders and the people in the community. Thus, national and local administrative agencies, as well as all those who work directly with children and parents, should be aware of this important ECCE programme socialization function.

4. At present, the financial and material resources for ECCE programmes are provided through combined sources from: the national-level budget, contributions from NGOs and communities, and organizations such as farmers, youth or women's unions. There is a need to modify the current levels of financial investment, especially in terms of public education expenditure. Investments in ECCE must be increased to achieve a balance in comparison with other levels of education, namely primary or tertiary. Workshop participants also suggested that international development agencies should increase their support for capacity-building and training. However, there should be more serious thought given to the kinds of training programmes and activities that will be supported or financed to ensure that content, approaches and materials will all be truly effective. Among the perceived weaknesses is the lack of attention paid to understanding child development and how best to support children's growth and early learning. The focus has until now been on the content of the curriculum, rather than about understanding children as developing human beings and learners. For training, as well as concerns related to health and nutrition, improved coordination among international donors is also necessary. Mobilization of resources and fund-raising below the national level, including local communities, must be intensified.

5. The gains from recent experiences in successfully launching media campaigns on integrated ECCE must be maximized in order to expand and sustain such communication and social advocacy activities. At this crucial juncture, sustained effective information and education efforts must be a priority, along with advocacy from specific target groups who can be mobilized to support and promote access to quality ECCE programmes. There should always be attention to families and communities in regards to developing and implementing the information, education and communication components of these programmes. It is they who are in the best position to provide the best possible quality of care that young children need for optimum growth, well-being and development.

6. There is a need to improve the coordination of various child-focused services at all levels, especially at the local level where implementation is crucial. This is particularly important in coordinating the various complementary programmes and approaches of
Inclusive Education

In the Asia-Pacific region there have been many efforts to promote inclusive education, resulting in numerous practical experiences to be shared with others. In order to learn from each other and to commemorate the ten years that have passed since the Salamanca World Conference in 1994, the Regional Workshop on Inclusive Education will take place in Bangkok on 19-21 October 2004 under the theme Getting All Children into School and Helping Them Learn.

APPEAL is the main organizer, together with UNESCO Paris, within the partnership initiative of the EFA flagship, The Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion.

The purpose of the workshop is to share the experiences of inclusive practices in the Member States with a view to identifying more effective strategies and actions to promote inclusive education within the framework of EFA. Government representatives from more than 20 countries in Asia are expected along with NGOs, bilateral donors, UN agencies, academics and practitioners in the field of education.

APPEAL provided technical support at the two recent workshops held concurrently in Bandung, Indonesia – one at the national level and the other at the provincial level – organized with the support of Braillo Norway and UNESCO. The concept of inclusive education is gaining wide support, particularly in western Java, where pilot projects have shown encouraging results. The national workshop, attended by high-level national and provincial education officials, resulted in the adoption of a declaration calling for support for inclusive education throughout the country. Participants also committed themselves to formulate and implement provincial plans of action that will encourage the application of inclusive practices in institutions of learning.

For further information, please contact Annelene Ror at a.ror@unescobkk.org.

More information on the October workshop is available online at www.unescobkk.org, or you may contact Ms Tarli Young at: t.young@unescobkk.org
Seminar on Education and Human Rights

During 28-30 July 2004, APPEAL hosted a seminar in Bangkok on the subject of Developing a Rights-based Approach to Education Programming. The overall objective of the seminar was to explore and clarify the meaning of rights-based education programming within the framework of EFA. The participants included high-level decision-makers and EFA coordinators from the respective Ministries of Education in Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam.

The seminar provided the participants with tools and methods to assist them in improving their national education systems and more efficiently implementing their EFA national action plans. Resource persons from UNICEF, UNESCO Bangkok and UNESCO Paris presented and discussed the following topics: the key elements in a human rights-based approach, the Manual on Rights-based Education, the relationship between the right to education and human rights education, and the importance of rights and participation.

Professor Alan Smith, UNESCO Chair at the University of Ulster, Northern Ireland, facilitated the group work sessions in which the country teams applied, as a trial exercise, three planning matrices to their respective national contexts. The three topics were 1) the right to free and compulsory education, 2) equality and inclusive education, and 3) the right to quality education in content and process. Before each session, country team members heard an introduction to each topic.

The seminar concluded with a reporting and feedback session, during which the participants presented their findings. They also expressed their satisfaction with the seminar, in general, and their interest in learning more about how to apply a rights-based approach to education programming issues in their respective countries. All noted the need for national follow-up, such as training sessions and workshops, to raise awareness and build capacity to use the planning guidelines. Furthermore, the true effectiveness of the resource materials would depend on their translation into national languages. APPEAL plans to support all of these follow-up activities.

For more information about the seminar, please contact Mr Olof Sandkull at: o.sandkull@unescobkk.org

Gender Equality in Basic Education and Lifelong Learning

GENIA Meetings Record Progress and Plan Future Activities

In Asia, gender equity and equality in education vary considerably from country to country. UNESCO Bangkok, through its Gender in Education Network in Asia (GENIA), and in cooperation with local representatives or Gender Focal Points (GFPs) and individual institutions, has been striving to promote gender equity and equality in education through research, training and advocacy. Two meetings this year highlight examples of the network’s accomplishments to date and plans for the future.

UNESCO Bangkok organized a sub-regional meeting of Southeast Asian GFPs in Chiang Mai, Thailand, which was held from 15 to 16 July 2004. The meeting was attended by GFPs from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam, as well as UNESCO GFPs from the Almaty, Hanoi and Phnom Penh field offices.

This meeting had two objectives:

- To share experiences from gender training programmes conducted for provincial and local level education officers and other stakeholders in the four Mekong Valley countries, with a view to identifying more effective training methods
- To discuss gender mainstreaming activities, expected outcomes, challenges and future plans
During the meeting, participants discussed the impact of GENIA activities that lead to a better understanding of gender issues within education ministries, the adoption of policies that are gender-responsive, the use of the Gender Toolkit in schools, and the involvement of GFPS in the EFA planning process. In addition, there was considerable opportunity for sharing experiences among the participants. Each country was able to report progress in the area of gender equality.

In Cambodia, officials have developed a five-year gender strategy with the support of UNICEF. In addition, the Gender Secretariat held a workshop on the development of gender indicators. Finally, education officials have launched a re-entry programme targeting out-of-school children, the majority of whom are girls.

In Lao PDR, there is now a GFP network comprising different ministries and organizations. Training workshops have been held at the provincial level, with plans to identify trainers in these provinces to conduct future training.

Thailand has contributed government funds towards gender equality/gender mainstreaming activities. Each ministry has been asked to appoint a GFP to take part in gender training and other activities. At the provincial level, action plans were developed for both formal and non-formal education sectors.

Vietnam is planning to conduct gender training for educators at the grassroots level through the development of mobile training teams. The Gender Toolkit has been translated into the national language, and there is a plan to promote this resource throughout the country.

The meeting resulted in a draft action plan of future activities for each country, an overview of the impact of project activities in each country, and an agreement on technical assistance needs.

The second meeting, to be held in the Republic of Korea in September, will focus on research in the area of gender equity and equality. For decades, there has been considerable research conducted on various aspects of education, including gender and girls’ education. However, research findings have not always made their way into policy. GENIA, in cooperation with GFPS and institutions, has been trying to analyze the impact of gender in education research results and to identify effective mechanisms to ensure that research areas are appropriately defined, research findings disseminated, and research results recognized and used by policy makers.

Within the framework of GENIA, and in collaboration with the Korean Women’s Development Institute (KWDI), UNESCO Bangkok will organize a regional GENIA meeting to be held in Seoul from 20 to 22 September 2004. The overall focus of the meeting is to share views, ideas and experiences, and to discuss how to ensure that research findings are reflected in policies related to gender in education.

There are three specific objectives:

- To share how countries identify research areas and how they ensure quality of research and proper use of research findings for advocacy
- To assist countries in identifying research needs and overcoming obstacles to the optimal production and use of research
- To assist GFPS in undertaking qualitative research on gender in education

The participants of the workshop will include GFPS in Ministries of Education from nine Asia countries, namely Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Thailand and Vietnam. Joining them will be GFPS from UNESCO Headquarters and field offices in Hanoi and Katmandu.
Promoting Gender Equality in Community Learning Centres (CLCs)

In 2001, UNESCO Bangkok undertook a study in sixteen countries of the region on the capacity of CLC programmes to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. Results showed that CLCs have been effective in involving women as learners and in responding to their practical needs. The content of the courses offered, however, did not address their strategic needs for equal participation with men in all areas of society, in order to promote critical awareness and empowerment. Few women are represented in community decision-making bodies, such as the CLC committee, and women tend to take part in gender-stereotyped activities that provide little income. These shortcomings indicate the need for systematic gender analysis in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of CLC activities and programmes.

With funds from the Japanese government, APPEAL has launched a new project entitled Gender Mainstreaming of CLC Activities and Capacity Building of CLC Personnel, with the overall aim of enabling CLCs to play a role in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment. This initiative is being piloted in three countries – Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam. As a first step, the countries are carrying out a comprehensive needs assessment at selected CLCs to gain a better understanding of the distinctive needs of women, girls, men and boys, and to evaluate the gender responsiveness of CLC facilities, personnel, materials and programmes. The assessment process is designed to be participatory, with information mainly to be gathered through interviews and focus group discussions. Investigators will seek the input of both CLC participants and non-participants, looking at the perceived benefits of existing programmes, suggested changes, and the barriers people face when taking part in CLC activities. Assessment instruments also include gender lenses and observation tools.

When the assessments are completed, the results will be analyzed and result in a set of recommendations for future activities to mainstream gender in CLC activities, and to promote women’s empowerment. Using these recommendations, staff will design training workshops to suit the situation in each community. The set of assessment tools, refined after pilot testing, can then serve as a practical mechanism at the community level for seeking input and for ensuring that CLC programmes and activities better meet the practical and strategic needs of women and girls, as well as of men and boys.

Mother Tongue/Bilingual Education

Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy for Ethnic Minorities: Country Experiences in Pilot Projects Shared at Regional Workshop

About 6,000 - 7,000 languages are spoken in the world today. However, over 90 per cent of the world’s population speak only about 300 widespread or majority languages. More than half of the remaining 5,700 languages are endangered, and 61 per cent of these minority languages are found in the Asia-Pacific region. In obtaining access to quality basic education, ethnic and linguistic minority people often face disadvantages that result in high illiteracy rates and a poor quality of life, not to mention threats to the very survival of their language and culture. UNESCO has a strong commitment to support mother tongue instruction and bilingual/multilingual education to improve the quality of education, especially for disadvantaged groups, and to promote cultural and linguistic diversity in all societies. UNESCO Bangkok has supported the Member States in undertaking action research on using the mother tongue/bilingual approach in pilot literacy projects for ethnic minority communities.

The Regional Workshop on Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy Programmes for Ethnic Minorities took place in Kunming, China, from 17 to 22 May 2004, in order to share experiences and develop the capacity of non-formal education personnel working in the area of literacy for minority communities. Twenty participants from both NGOs and governments in nine Asian countries, namely Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, joined the workshop. Five countries (Bangladesh, China, India, the Philippines and Thailand) have already developed literacy programmes.
curricula and materials for ethnic minorities using the mother tongue/bilingual approach in their pilot projects. These countries shared their experiences with the other four countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal and Vietnam) that will begin pilot projects in the near future.

In addition to sharing country experiences and the inputs from resource persons with extensive knowledge and experience in literacy education for minority communities, the participants had an opportunity to visit two ethnic minority villages – Ban Li Village and Haozhiba Village, Lancan County, Yunnan Province. During these field visits, they observed bilingual literacy classes and village homes.

UNESCO Bangkok’s new Manual for Developing Literacy and Adult Education Programmes in Minority Language Communities was also used in each session during the workshop to provide the participants with useful information on specific topics such as community mobilization, the identification of learning needs, the development of minority language writing systems, the development of curriculum and materials, the training of facilitators, programme evaluation and programme sustainability. The manual is available for free download at UNESCO Bangkok’s e-books website (http://www.unescobkk.org/ips/ebooks/).

The participants said that they learnt most from the sharing of best practices and country experiences. They also found very useful the sessions on materials development, community mobilization and the training of facilitators, as well as the hands-on exercise on framework development for programme planning. Many participants expressed the need to learn more about the development of writing systems, facilitator training, programme evaluation and sustainability, and strategies for government policy. The next regional workshop is planned for late 2005 to share country experiences from the second phase of the projects, and further strengthen the capacities of NFE personnel to promote mother tongue/bilingual literacy for minority communities.

Life Skills Learning through NFE

UNESCO APPEAL has launched a project called Redefining Literacy and Life Skills in the Asia-Pacific Context within the Framework of EFA and the UN Literacy Decade. This project, supported by the Japanese Funds-in-Trust for EFA, aims to review, discuss and redefine the key concepts of literacy and life skills to be suitable for the Asia-Pacific context. The outcomes of the project will help countries to implement literacy and continuing education activities within the framework of EFA and the United Nations Literacy Decade.

As the first step in this project, thirteen countries in the region have conducted country studies on Life Skills Learning (LSL) through Non-Formal Education (NFE). Taking into account the outcomes of these studies, APPEAL, the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) and the Ministry of National Education of Indonesia jointly organized the Regional Workshop on LSL through NFE held in Bali, Indonesia, from 16 to 19 December 2003.
The workshop was attended by around 30 participants from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

According to the country study reports prepared by the participating countries prior to the workshop, LSL activities have often been understood in terms of vocational and livelihood skills training to improve one’s economic situation. However, the workshop did not come up with a single definition of LSL because the notion and practices of LSL depend on the local context. Through the workshop activities, the participants obtained broader notions of LSL and concluded that the objective of LSL is to enhance human potentials for positive and adaptive behaviour in dealing with the needs, challenges and situations of everyday life, as well as for bringing change towards the improvement of the quality of life. The participants agreed that LSL through NFE should integrate the following three components: generic skills (problem solving, critical thinking, working in teams, networking, communicating, negotiating), contextual skills (livelihood skills, income generating skills, health skills, environmental skills, skills related to gender and family life) and literacy (reading, writing and numeracy). These three LSL components should not be attained in isolation, but need to be acquired simultaneously.

APPEAL invited the participating countries to submit proposals for follow-up national activities in order to put into practice the concept of LSL, and to demonstrate concrete experiences that demonstrate integration of the three LSL components. Currently, APPEAL is supporting Bhutan, India, Kazakhstan, the Philippines, Uzbekistan and Vietnam as they undertake national activities with close linkages to existing literacy and continuing education programmes, such as those at community learning centres (CLCs). The outcomes of these national activities will be shared during the second regional workshop in 2005.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for NFE

Regional Workshop on ICT for Community Empowerment through NFE

Acknowledging the potential offered by information and communication technology (ICT) to benefit poor communities, APPEAL has been supporting selected countries in the Asia-Pacific region as they undertake pilot projects in the application of ICT for the promotion of non-formal education to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life.

The Regional Workshop on ICT for Community Empowerment through CLCs, held in Vientiane, Lao PDR during 22-25 June 2004, provided an opportunity for countries already participating in this regional project funded by the Japanese government (Laos, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Uzbekistan) — as well as countries that are new to the project (India, Iran and the Philippines) — to review and learn from country experiences in the application of ICT for community empowerment. The participants identified innovative features and lessons learned, while also discussing difficulties and barriers to implementation, along with ways of overcoming them.

One objective of the workshop was to provide an opportunity to share country experiences in using ICT tools at community learning centres (CLCs) and developing the appropriate ICT content and methodologies for community empowerment. In addition, participants were to identify capacity-building needs and strategies for project personnel and community people, develop and improve implementation strategies, and formulate follow-up action plans and schedules for implementing the project in their respective countries.
The following key observations resulted from the workshop. First, ICT is often something completely new for disadvantaged communities, especially in rural areas. It is necessary for national-level coordinators to provide continuous support to facilitate and follow up after initial training. Wherever feasible, an ICT expert should be appointed locally to work closely with the community on a daily basis.

In some countries, communities have not yet become involved in the planning and implementation of ICT projects because local people consider them to be too technical.

Through orientation and training, some simple software may be developed and produced locally so that the CLCs do not always have to rely on outside experts for maintenance.

Finally, some software is too expensive to be purchased by local communities (for example, digital mapping). Partnerships and linkages with computer companies or other institutions in the private sector may be useful for mobilizing resources – especially with organizations that are aware of the importance of community development.

Equivalency Programmes for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning

UNESCO’s Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL), in line with the overall goal of the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) and EFA, and in collaboration with UNESCO country offices, is currently implementing a project entitled Equivalency Programmes for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning.

An equivalency programme under this project is a form of education that is operationally defined as an alternative to the existing system of formal schooling. However, this alternative is designed to be an equivalent to the formal system not only in terms of curriculum and certification, but also in characteristics such as policy support mechanisms, mode of delivery, staff training, and support activities such as monitoring, evaluation and the assessment of learning. The most important objective is to strengthen both systems of education by concentrating on Models of Equivalency Programmes in selected countries that emphasize good and effective practices.

In addition to strengthening formal and non-formal education as a part of the national EFA action plans, the project aims to promote lifelong learning through the development of equivalency programmes for out-of-school children, youth and adults. These programmes will enable them to access basic education and continuing education in order to improve their level of learning.
Activities

Indonesia, India, the Philippines and Thailand, countries that have successfully implemented equivalency programmes, are undertaking research on the effectiveness of these programmes. Researchers have been looking at national equivalency programmes; policy support mechanisms; target learners; curriculum and learning materials development; the capacity-building of personnel; delivery mechanisms; the teaching-learning process; and accreditation and certification. They are also interested in assessing the outcomes or impact of the programmes on the lifelong learning of individuals, particularly the disadvantaged, as well as on local communities and the country as a whole. The results of the research will be documented for sharing and dissemination throughout the region. Research should be completed by the end of October 2004.

In addition, in response to their requests, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal and Vietnam will be invited to join the regional workshop to be held at the end of this year. Those attending the workshop will have an opportunity to discuss equivalency programme models that reflect good practice, as described in the research studies from the above-mentioned four countries (Indonesia, India, the Philippines and Thailand). High-level NFE personnel, including policymakers, planners and curriculum developers, are expected to participate.

These four vanguard countries will use their experiences to assist other selected countries that want to replicate the models to develop or improve their own equivalency programmes. Experts from Indonesia, India, the Philippines and Thailand will help the countries (upon request) in the areas of policy support, curricula and materials, and learning assessment. Study visits to the four countries with model programmes may be arranged if necessary to ensure the effective operation of the project. Equivalency programmes can be implemented through community learning centres (CLCs), existing delivery mechanisms, or in community primary schools.

The implementation process will be documented for sharing. The participating countries will share their experiences during the project in order to learn from each other, help solve problems and plan for the future. National meetings will also be organized to share the results of the project with policy-makers and planners.
News from the APPEAL Resource and Training Consortium (ARTC)

Participation in the UNESCO-JICA International Symposium on NFE

Eight high-level officials from ARTC member institutions have been invited to participate in the UNESCO-JICA International Symposium on Non-Formal Education to Promote EFA and Lifelong Learning, to be held in Tokyo on 13-14 October 2004. They will play a key role as panel and roundtable speakers in sharing their innovative and successful experiences with literacy and continuing education programmes in their respective countries, as well as throughout the region.

Welcoming ARTC secondments to APPEAL

Starting February 2004, the following staffers from ARTC member institutions have been seconded to APPEAL’s Bangkok office:

1. Ms. Wilaipan Somtrakool from the Office of Non-Formal Education Commission, Thailand (February-April)
2. Mr. Leonard Tabaranza, Bureau of Non-Formal Education, Philippines (February-July)
3. Mr. Nafiz Khan, Dhaka Asania Mission, Bangladesh (August-November)

These individuals assist APPEAL in planning and implementing literacy and continuing education activities in the Asia-Pacific region. At the same time, ARTC seconded staff also learn about several regional projects supported by APPEAL and get to know more experts in the region who are involved in literacy and continuing education programmes.

If any ARTC member institutions are interested in seconding their staff to join APPEAL, please send their CVs to the APPEAL office at UNESCO Bangkok.

ARTC Meeting

The ARTC consultation meeting will convene in Tokyo immediately after the UNESCO-JICA Symposium, on 15-16 October. The participants will review the activities of the ARTC network and the roles of its members, with a view especially to suggest future NFE programmes and strategies for the region. A field visit to a Kominkan (a citizen’s public hall in Japan) to observe and learn about its management and lifelong learning activities will be organized for ARTC representatives.
New CD on CLCs Almost Ready

APPEAL is producing a documentary CD on Community Learning Centre (CLC) activities in order to facilitate the sharing of experiences amongst countries in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as with other regions. The CD consists of two sections – an overview of APPEAL’s CLC regional programme, and a brief summary of CLC activities in each country that has participated in the programme for more than one year. Eight countries will be featured. We hope that this product will be completed and ready for dissemination by the end of the year.

CLCs Move Into Other Regions

The CLC concept and strategies have been adapted for Arab states. Inspired by experiences in the Asia-Pacific region, UNESCO Beirut and UNESCO Amman are going to set up 20 MCLCs (Multi-purpose Community Learning Centres) in their own region. Ten of these centres will be located in Lebanon. With the assistance of an NGO, MCLCs will also be introduced into Jordan.

New Publication on CLCs

UNESCO Paris will soon publish a volume on CLC experiences in Asia, the Arab world and Africa. The publication will highlight the following:

- How CLCs/NFE contribute to and promote lifelong learning
- How CLCs contribute to international development efforts such as EFA, the UNLD and MDGs, and their possible contribution to the forthcoming United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development
- Challenges in the future