Over 45 per cent of the world’s illiterate adults live in South Asia. The EFA goal of reducing illiteracy rates by half by the year 2015 is, therefore, a huge challenge facing South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. In response to this challenge, APPEAL is coordinating a regional project executed by the UNESCO Delhi Office with the support of the Japanese Funds-in-Trust.

The aim of the project is to conduct in-depth country-level research studies in three selected South Asian countries with large numbers of adult illiterates. These studies will review policies and practices related to literacy and non-formal education (NFE) in order to identify strengths, gaps, weaknesses and innovative aspects. The results will serve as a basis for recommendations to strengthen literacy and NFE programmes in the three countries. They will also be a source of information and feedback for policy makers in South Asia, as well as for further studies on literacy and NFE undertaken elsewhere by UNESCO.

Project activities began with the development of a draft framework and research methodology designed by the research coordinator of the Asia Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) to be used in country studies. At a meeting organized by the UNESCO Delhi Office, participants discussed the draft, which was subsequently modified and endorsed by researchers from the three participating countries – Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

Researchers in the three countries are now engaged in research activities according to the schedule and plan provided in the research framework. We expect these activities to be completed by November 2005. The findings of the studies should help the participating countries to identify strengths and weaknesses as well as innovative practices in literacy and non-formal education. The reviews and findings should also contribute to informal decisions that will pave the way for developing appropriate policies and strategies to help significantly reduce illiteracy in the three countries.

The ASPBAE will produce a synthesis of the three country studies. Input from the findings of the studies will be provided to the next South Asian Ministerial Forum on EFA. In addition, the research outcomes will serve as useful information for countries as they prepare for participation in the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE). The project also has potential to contribute to the achievement of the goals of the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD), as well as the Millennium Development Goals.

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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...
UNESCO Bangkok’s Gender in Education website (www.unescobkk.org/gender) has been reviewed and revised. The revised website provides online resources from basic gender concepts to gender mainstreaming with necessary tools and publications as well other resources that are available on other gender-related web sites.

For further information contact: gender@unescobkk.org or www.unescobkk.org/gender

Advocacy Brief

4. Role of Boarding Schools in Promoting Girls’ Access to and Retention in Basic Education

Manual and Toolkit

1. Exploring and Understanding Gender in Education: A Qualitative Manual for Education Practitioners and Gender Focal Points www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications/GenderEdu/index.htm

Analysis

1. A Study on How Research Results on Gender and Education have been Translated into Policy Formulations in South Korea www2.unescobkk.org/ips/ebooks/documents/Gender_Korea_Study/index.htm

In Asia, gender equity and equality in education vary considerably from country to country. As a part of activities undertaken by the Gender in Education Network (GENIA), several countries (Cambodia, Laos, Nepal, Thailand, and Viet Nam), with the support of APPEAL, have been providing gender training to provincial level education planners and implementers. Other countries in the region are conducting gender-related research. In Mongolia, researchers are conducting analysis on school curriculum from a gender perspective. In Thailand, a study on sexual harassment in public secondary schools is being finalized, and baseline sex-disaggregated data is being collected, while in Viet Nam a study is going to examine access, transition and retention issue in secondary education related to ethnic minority girls, with special emphasis on gender issues. Discussion on how to address the gender-related problems and girls’ education is being held in countries in Central Asia with a focus on qualitative research methods.

In January 2005, a Qualitative Research Manual on Gender in Education was published. This manual is about how to conduct qualitative research in order to promote gender equality in the classroom, the school, and, by extension, in the wider educational system. The manual was translated into Russian, Mongolian, Nepali and Khmer. The translation into Vietnamese is planned.

A series of advocacy briefs on role of men and boys in promoting gender equality, impact of incentives programmes in increasing girls’ access to and retention in basic education, providing basic education to girls from remote and rural areas, linkage between mother tongue-based teaching and girls’ education, and a scorecard on gender equality 1990-2000 were published and widely disseminated.
New ECCE Web Page Launched

In connection with the launch of the new UNESCO Bangkok Website, substantial changes in layout, structure and content have been made in the section on early childhood care and education (ECCE) -- www.unescobkk.org/ecce

The new pages are divided into:
- Information about us
- Activities
- Country-specific information about ECCE – for all of the various countries in the Asia-Pacific region
- Examples of innovative practices: good practices serve as models for developing good policies and projects
- Resources – a well-organized page that helps you to find reports, papers, advocacy information about the importance of ECCE, and links to other good ECCE websites

The new Web pages are continuously updated as new content is made available. Your comments and questions regarding content or structure are always welcome and can be sent to appeal@unescobkk.org.

National Seminars on Early Childhood Care and Education

Following the study “Early Childhood Care and Education in South-East Asia: Working for Access, Quality and Inclusion in Thailand, the Philippines and Viet Nam”, available at http://www.unescobkk/ecce/resources, national capacity building seminars have been conducted in each of the countries involved to address pertinent issues. Information on the workshop in Viet Nam was presented in the last APPEAL Bulletin. This issue provides a brief overview of the follow-up activities in Thailand and the Philippines.

Thailand: Striving for Best Practices in ECCE

The seminar was organized jointly by Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, National Institute for Child and Family Development (Mahidol University), UNICEF Thailand and UNESCO Bangkok. The objectives of the seminar were to:

1) Arrive at a consensus on the main challenges and key issues related to the fulfillment of the goals for ECCE within the context of the National EFA Plan and overall human and social development goals of the Royal Thai Government;

2) Strengthen the capacity of relevant Ministry officials and their partners in Thailand to identify pertinent, cost effective strategies for expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children (EFA goal 1).

Following opening remarks by Mr Hakeem, Coordinator of APPEAL, and an opening speech of Khunying Dr. Kasama Varavarn, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education findings from the ECCE study were presented by Feny de los Angeles-Bautista as a background for panel discussions and workshops for the rest of the seminar. The participants broke into smaller working groups and discussed priority areas for the various age groups as well as strategic planning required to address key issues. Special focus was put on disadvantaged and vulnerable children with a panel presenting issues related to early intervention and inclusive education.

Khun Chaipreuek Sereeruk, the Director of Policy and Planning at the Ministry of Education, joined the workshop on the final day and made an account for ECCE in the context of the education system in Thailand. He announced that the government will provide 500-600 million baht for ECCE in 2005. The main activity will be to support “good example”/model schools in 921 districts. Each school will receive THB 500,000. Khun Chaipreuek further committed to initiate a Multi Agency Steering Committee on ECCE comprising members from 4 ministries and NGOs.

The Philippines: Striving for Best Practices

This national seminar was organized by the Council of the Welfare of Children of the Government of the Philippines with the support of UNESCO Bangkok, UNICEF-Philippines and in collaboration with Community of Learners Foundation (COLF).

The main goals of the seminar were to:

1) Arrive at a consensus on the main challenges and key issues related to the fulfillment of the goals for ECCD within the context of the National EFA Plan, CHILD-2.1 and overall human and social development goals of the Government of the Philippines;

Continued on page 5
APPEAL has initiated a project on CLC networking to strengthen CLCs in their function as the focal community centres for providing various services to the people. Although many CLCs have been initiated as small multi-functional institutions, the functions of any single CLC are often limited if it is unable to collaborate with other organizations within and outside the community. Various regional forums have addressed the key issues concerning CLC networking and have come to the following conclusions:

Networking in general

- Networking is a collaborative effort to benefit from the resources, personnel, expertise and experiences of all partners.
- Member organizations need the necessary capacities to contribute to the network.
- The process of creating good coordination is a long-term one and should be participatory and transparent, open and supportive.
- Joint activities involving network members are usually effective but not always efficient because of difficulties in coordinating the different ideas and initiatives of members.
- Efficient information sharing mechanisms such as databases are essential.
- Identifying good “start-up issues” to begin networking is also important.
- People, rather than technologies, are the key to maintaining a good network.

Networking of CLCs

- CLCs can establish networks with other local organizations such as schools and development agencies (e.g., health, agriculture).
- A CLC can establish sub-centres and coordinate their activities to extend services to all community members.
- A number of CLCs can form clusters of CLCs at district and higher levels, which could grow into a national network or federation.
- CLCs can link up with research organizations, universities, private businesses or NGOs to obtain technical assistance as well as opportunities for field-level experience.

By strengthening local networks, CLCs will have the potential to promote sustainable community development through coordinating various skills training and education programmes. This potential will enable communities to assume ownership of the socio-economic development process instead of depending on externally driven “community development plans.”

In light of these general observations, the APPEAL project, supported by the Japanese Funds-in-Trust, aims to help countries in the region to develop CLCs as coordinating agencies for local networking with the private sector, development organizations of governments and NGOs, and academic and research institutions such as universities. During the first phase of the project, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines and Thailand are conducting studies to identify ongoing innovative practices used for CLC networking. The findings will be shared during the regional workshop on CLC networking to be held in Indonesia in August 2005.
ICT in Non-Formal Education Programmes

APPEAL has been supporting countries in the region as they explore the effective development and use of information and communication technology (ICT) for non-formal education (NFE) in order to empower learners and their communities through community-based programmes and institutions such as community learning centres (CLCs). During the first phase of the project (2003–2004), five countries participated, namely Indonesia, Lao PDR, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Uzbekistan. The second phase, which began in June 2004, includes China, India, Iran, the Philippines and Viet Nam.

This project has helped participating countries to expand the potentials of ICT for community empowerment through NFE, building on existing literacy and skill training infrastructures such as CLCs. In particular, CLCs need to continuously strengthen the organizational abilities and sense of ownership on the part of local communities and their people.

Most of the countries have used ICT as a tool for supporting skills training programmes to enable local people to increase their incomes. In addition, most of the communities at the project sites have their own local databases for the purpose of community planning.

As the project is still at the pilot stage, linkages between project experiences and EFA policy and planning need to be strengthened in many of the participating countries. The first-phase countries will use their project experiences to undertake policy initiatives to institutionalize the ICT component (especially as applied at CLCs) into NFE policies and practices.

Experiences of the projects from Lao PDR, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Uzbekistan have been synthesized and published as ICT for Community Empowerment through NFE, highlighting country experiences, innovative features of the project, and future challenges. This publication is available in print and can also be downloaded from UNESCO Bangkok’s Website (www.unescobkk.org).

Other innovative developments such as the Community Multimedia Centres (CMCs) from UNESCO CI have a great potential for improving ICT applications at CLCs. To strengthen linkages with CMC initiatives, the next regional sharing forum organized jointly with the CI sector will take place in India in October 2005.

To assist ICT activities at CLCs, a resource pack on literacy and continuing education is currently being finalized in print, CD-ROM and online. During 2005, this resource will be disseminated to planners, practitioners, researchers and other personnel working in literacy and continuing education. These individuals will find the pack useful for developing national resource materials in this area. The draft content of the package includes guidelines for planning and implementing literacy and continuing education activities as well as discussions of various content areas such as ICT, gender, HIV/AIDS, environment, and culture.

A summary of findings from the country study report was presented for discussion to serve as a springboard for more in-depth discussions. Key issues identified included:

1) The need to improve the quality of care and teaching particularly in centre-based and home-based ECCD programmes serving children from low-income communities;

2) To systematically identify those who are not currently reached or served by ECCD programmes and promote proven viable, responsive and cost-effective programming options e.g. home-based ECCD with parent education and playgroup features;

3) The refinement of a functional referral system for children with special needs and disabilities to ensure access to inclusive early childhood development programmes;

4) National standards frameworks for programmes and curriculum in ECCD and strategies for promoting the application of these standards among local government units responsible for service delivery and the private sector and non-government organizations;

5) Through a combination of plenary presentations and small-group discussions the seminar provided a venue for information exchange, consensus-building and collaborative work in relation to existing and proposed national programming approaches. Participants stressed the importance of a decentralized context for service delivery, standards and frameworks for curriculum, child development assessment including the development of a referral system for children with special needs and disabilities, training and supervision of service providers, monitoring and evaluation of ECCD programmes. A special focus was put on vulnerable and disadvantaged children who are excluded or at risk of being excluded because they have disabilities, are affected by illnesses including HIV/AIDS, belong to indigenous cultural communities, or because they are poor and/or are living in remote areas.

ECCE Report

2) Identify pertinent, cost effective strategies for expanding and improving the quality of comprehensive, integrated early childhood care and development, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children (EFA goal 1) as mandated by national law i.e. R.A. 8980 “The Early Childhood Care and Development Act.”
Regional Workshop on Systematic Resource Development and Capacity Building for NFE Personnel

In 2004, with the financial support of the Scandinavian Funds-in-Trust for EFA, UNESCO APPEAL launched a project whose aim is to take stock of systematic resource development and capacity building in the field of NFE. Countries participating in the project include Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Nepal and Pakistan. In order for these five countries to share project experiences and lessons learnt, UNESCO APPEAL organized a regional workshop held from 28 March to 1 April 2005 in Bangkok and in Korat, Thailand. The Office of Non-Formal Education, Ministry of Education of Thailand, and the Sirindom Institute of Continuing Education for Development also contributed to arranging and sponsoring this event. The workshop brought together 19 participants from the five project countries and from four new ones: Bangladesh, China, East Timor and Vietnam. Dr. Sawat Tichuen, Advisor on the Education System, Office of the Education Council, Thailand, was specially invited to be the resource person for this workshop.

The overall objective of the workshop was to provide participants with an opportunity to share experiences and to formulate master plans for systematic resource development and capacity building.

The specific objectives were fivefold:

- To review the experiences of participating countries and their national studies, to analyze the field data from these studies, and to design and formulate master plans on resource development and capacity building using already existing resources
- To obtain first-hand experience through study visits in the host country
- To identify key elements, strengths and challenges, as well as come up with recommendations for improvement
- To formulate follow-up action plans for implementing the project in the participating countries
- To build knowledge and skills in data collection and analysis, particularly in formulating master plans based on sharing experiences from the five project countries

The workshop participants shared a brief overview of APPEAL’s programmes and strategies for promoting EFA, APPEAL’s strategies and activities related to literacy and continuing education, and EFA plans, progress and actions. They also heard the results of the various national studies and analyses, along with the NFE master plans from the five project countries and profiles.
of NFE programmes in each new participating country. During group work, the participants undertook an in-depth analysis of the national studies and master plans, with a view to scrutinizing the development process and making suggestions for improvement.

APPEAL also invited participants to discuss strategies and activities relevant for inter-country cooperation under this project, and welcomed suggestions to UNESCO to support the efforts of member countries.

Each country team developed draft country action plans. All participating countries were invited to submit proposals to UNESCO to implement the activities proposed in their respective action plans.

The following key observations and comments resulted from the workshop:

- The workshop provided a useful forum for the participating countries to share in project progress, in particular, the results of the country studies and the preparation of the NFE master plans.
- Ownership of EFA planning and implementation is essential for making the plans realistic and feasible, instead of depending too much on external experts.
- The field visits provided participants with concrete ideas about the implementation of capacity building and materials development to strengthen NFE at the district and CLC levels, since Thailand has developed strong, comprehensive mechanisms in this area.
- Participants, mostly involved in the policy and planning of basic education (in particular, NFE), gave APPEAL useful suggestions for developing technical interventions and strategies for regional cooperation to support countries in the region engaged in EFA programming and monitoring.

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The Meeting report can be downloaded at: www.unescobkk.org/education/appeal

For more information on any of the above, please contact Mr Olof Sandkull at o.sandkull@unescobkk.org

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) in collaboration with UNESCO Bangkok, UNESCO Phnom Penh, and OHCHR organized a National Consultative Meeting on Rights-based Education in Cambodia 3-4 February 2005 in Phnom Penh. The aim of the meeting was to discuss human rights obligations in education in the context of Cambodia, and to share experiences of best practices to put a rights-based education into operation. About 60 participants attended the meeting representing MoEYS, the donor community, UN agencies and local and international NGOs.

The core of the meeting was to identify the obligations to fulfill the right to education as this responsibility lies primarily within the government. It was recognized that the right to education is both a fundamental right in itself and is essential for the achievement of all other human rights. In addition, it was argued, it is essential for the development process in the country as education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized can lift themselves out of poverty, and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities. None of the civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights can be exercised by individuals unless they have received a minimum of education of good quality.

Understanding how the concepts of human rights relate to education is a prerequisite to translate human rights standards into guidelines for national education strategies. The meeting suggested the MoEYS to apply a rights-based approach to education in Cambodia. In particular, it drafted a set of recommendations, which stated that the government should include all aspects of rights-based education in the new education law soon to be discussed in the Parliament, ban any form of corporal punishment, infuse human rights in the curricula for pre-service and in-service teacher training and increase the budget allocation for education to 25% of the national budget.

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A New Resource on Mother Tongue Bilingual Education

Because language is the main medium for communicating meaning in most learning activities, learners must be able to understand and speak well the language used in education. Usually people understand their first language best, and are most comfortable speaking it. Multilingual people may be equally proficient in several languages. The first language is often called the “mother tongue,” or the “home language.” Generally, the first language is the language you have learned first or that you know best, the language you identify with or that others identify you with as a native speaker. Research and experience show that “first language first” bilingual education may be the best alternative for facilitating the learning of ethnic minorities in a linguistically diverse nation. “First language first” education programmes use the learners’ first language for teaching beginning literacy and initial curriculum content. Then they gradually introduce the second language, usually a national language, as another medium of instruction. Programmes such as these have also been called “mother tongue first bilingual education” or “mother tongue-based bilingual education.”

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 of Asia and the Pacific in undertaking action research on using the mother tongue/bilingual approach in pilot literacy projects for ethnic minority communities. These countries shared their experiences at the Regional Workshop on Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy Programmes for Ethnic Minorities held in Kunming, China, from 17 to 22 May 2004.

The outcomes of this workshop have been incorporated into a publication entitled First Language First: Community-Based Literacy Programmes for Minority Language Contexts in Asia. This resource deals with education programmes that use learners’ “first language first” as a medium of instruction, for adults as well as children, in various Asian contexts. It is divided into two parts.

Part I addresses the planning and implementing of a sustainable multilingual literacy programme. It highlights experiences from nine countries, focusing on community mobilization, identification of learning needs, development of minority language writing systems, development of curriculum and materials, training of facilitators, strategies/tools for evaluation, and strategies for government policy and sustainability.

Part II includes resource papers written by well-known linguists and descriptions of best practices in mother-tongue literacy from five participating countries (Bangladesh, China, India, the Philippines and Thailand) in the region.

This publication contains valuable information for policy makers, planners and practitioners in regard to planning and organizing quality literacy programmes for minority people. It is now available at www.unescobkk.org
Regional Research Studies on CLCs

Since 1998 APPEAL, in line with the overall goal of EFA and in collaboration with UNESCO country offices, has been carrying out the Community Learning Centre (CLC) Project with the financial assistance of Japan and Norway. The countries taking part in this project for the period 1998-2003 include Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam. During 2004-2005, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and the Maldives were invited to join the project.

After several years of implementation of the CLC project, APPEAL proposes to initiate regional research studies on CLCs from May to September 2005 involving nine countries, namely China, Indonesia, Thailand, Viet Nam, Bangladesh, Nepal, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Lebanon (representing the Arab states).

The overall objective of the research studies is to evaluate CLC outcomes and impacts, and to disseminate the results to EFA stakeholders for strengthening existing literacy and continuing education programmes. The research findings should also help to promote the institutionalization of CLCs within the framework of EFA action plans. Specific objectives of the project are as follows:

1) To carry out joint research on existing CLCs to analyze their strengths, weaknesses and potential as effective delivery mechanisms for lifelong learning activities, particularly literacy and continuing education programmes

2) To share the initial research findings at a regional forum in order to identify key issues and explore effective strategies for future actions at the regional, national and grassroots levels

3) To disseminate the research findings and forum outcomes to EFA stakeholders at the policy, management and practitioner levels in the countries, as well as to international donor agencies

This research is part of APPEAL's inter-country activities to provide Member States in the region with forums to share country experiences and jointly explore future potentials of CLCs to promote EFA and lifelong learning. It will result in a regional research paper to be presented at a meeting on CLCs to be organized as a side meeting during the 5th EFA High-Level Group Meeting, tentatively to be held in China during the last week of November 2005.

In order to plan and design regional research studies on CLCs, APPEAL convened an expert meeting in Bangkok during 7-9 June 2005. The workshop brought together eleven participants, including nine researchers as the team leaders from the nine participating countries, Dr. Prem Kasaju, the former Director and Representative of the UNESCO Islamabad Office as the research coordinator, and Mr. Shigeru Aoyagi from UNESCO Headquarters.

After the expert meeting, the researchers are now carrying out the research work together with team members in their respective countries. They will prepare draft country research papers for presentation and discussion at a regional forum in Shanghai in September 2005. In view of the forum outcomes, the researchers will revise these papers. Dr. Prem Kasaju, the research coordinator, will synthesize the country research findings together with the forum outcomes and finalize the regional research paper by November 2005.
To promote the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) launched in 2003, UNESCO Bangkok has published a promotional kit that includes a brochure, a regional progress report for 2004, postcards, posters and a promotional video. The progress report covers the main events and activities of the Decade in the countries of Asia and the Pacific. It also profiles UNLD regional resource team members as well as important issues to be addressed during the Decade such as gender, disability and ethnic minority languages. The kit has been disseminated to government offices, NGOs, research organizations, international agencies and others throughout the region.

APPEAL and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) jointly organized an international symposium on non-formal education (NFE) held in Tokyo on 13-14 October 2004. The overall objective of the symposium was to promote EFA and the UNLD through NFE within the context of lifelong learning. There were 120 members of the audience at a public open forum on the first day and 60 participants at an expert forum on the second day, many of whom were government officials, university academics, students and NGO staff in Japan. Also in attendance were 18 international participants from 10 countries, including UNESCO and JICA country offices. During the symposium, participants discussed the overall purpose and prospects of NFE, as well as more specific topics such as community-based approaches, the role of NFE in lifelong learning, health and HIV/AIDS, income-generating programmes for rural development, and environmental education for sustainable development.

As an important component of the UNLD, UNESCO has launched the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) targeting 34 of the world’s countries with literacy rates of less than 50 per cent or populations of more than 10 million that lack literacy competencies. LIFE is a programme of action in support of the achievement of EFA and a key operational
mechanism to substantially increase literacy learning opportunities within the framework of the UNLD. At present, 85 per cent of the world’s population without literacy competencies and skills live in these countries, and the majority of them are female. LIFE will therefore aim at empowering women and girls, in particular, by means of literacy programmes. In the Asia-Pacific region, nine countries will be invited to participate in this project, namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea. The preparatory phase is under way this year (2005) for actual commencement of the project in 2006.

To further the initiatives of the UNLD and the regional resource team, regional strategies and actions during the Decade will be developed during the ACCU-APPEAL Joint Planning Meeting on Regional NFE Programmes in Asia and the Pacific, to take place in Tokyo from 12 to 16 July 2005. Heads of the respective NFE departments of 21 countries in the region, as well as representatives from the UNLD regional resource team and UNESCO country offices, will participate in the meeting.

In order to promote inclusive education in the Asia-Pacific region and to commemorate the ten years that has passed since the Salamanca World Conference in 1994, a Regional Workshop on Inclusive Education was organised by UNESCO Bangkok from 19-21 October 2004 in Bangkok together with UNESCO Paris and the EFA Flagship on the Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion. The sub-theme was ‘Getting All Children into School and Helping Them Learn’ which also was reflected in the objectives of the workshop, namely to share experiences of inclusive education practices and explore future actions to promote it within the framework of EFA.

In total, about 100 participants from 20 countries attended, representing ministries of education, NGOs, universities, international experts, donor and UN agencies. The keynote address was delivered by Professor Mel Ainscow from the University of Manchester, on Salamanca 10 years on: what has been the impact internationally? During the first day several UNESCO resource materials were presented and the Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments was launched. On the second day, participants could choose to attend two of four thematic sessions on Legislation and Policy, Teacher Training, Curriculum Development and Local Capacity-building and Community Development. The final day was shared with the participants of the 6th National EFA Coordinators’ meeting, which ran concurrently with the workshop. Presentations and group work was conducted that highlighted the links between inclusive education and EFA. The main message was that inclusive education offers the means by which Education for ALL can be achieved. The participants then developed recommendations on how to integrate inclusive education within the EFA framework. In a number of countries, the workshop had a tremendous impact by increasing the understanding and thereby putting the issue of getting all children into school on top of the agenda.

The full Workshop Report can be found at: www.unescobkk.org/education/appeal
The Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) and the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) recently convened the 2005 ACCU-APPEAL Joint Planning Meeting on Regional NFE Programmes in Asia and the Pacific. The meeting, held in Tokyo during 12-16 July, was undertaken in cooperation with the Japanese National Commission.

Twenty-one experts from twenty countries attended, with seven experts as observers, as well as three Japanese experts. The countries represented included Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, East Timor, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam.

The objective of the meeting was to review the Asia-Pacific situation in regard to literacy and adult and continuing education within the framework of Education for All (EFA), with special attention to the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) and the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD). The meeting was a platform for sharing ideas on effective policy formulation and implementation of NFE programmes, as well as strengthening networking among NFE policy makers and experts in the Asia-Pacific region.

Mr. Koji Nakanishi, Director-General of the ACCU, delivered the opening remarks on how to achieve the goals of the Dakar forum, the UNLD, and the UNDESD. Mr. Takashi Asai, Assistant Director-General for International Affairs of the Japanese National Commission, noted that five years have passed since the World Education Forum (WEF) in Dakar, and that greater effort will be needed to meet its goals. Mr. Abdul H. A. Hakeem, APPEAL Coordinator/Education Advisor, summarized the growing interest in literacy, continuing education and NFE. Ms. Maria Malevri, UNESCO Paris, briefed participants on the progress of the UNLD since 2003.

The meeting revealed the importance of the planning procedures and the development process between the ACCU and APPEAL, and set future directions, strategies and actions. Subjects covered during the meeting included a) an overview of NFE in the region; b) a review of country EFA/NFE activities; c) UNESCO’s challenges and contributions to lifelong learning, EFA and ESD; d) partnership, networking and coordination; e) NFE strategies for national and regional levels; and f) the finalization of ACCU and APPEAL action plans.

During plenary and group sessions, the participants shared, discussed and worked out proposals and plans for future action in their respective countries, reflecting the focus of the meeting and its agenda. They also enjoyed the opportunity for a study visit to observe and experience a “kominkan,” a Japanese-style community learning centre.

The meeting concluded with a number of recommendations from participants. First, advocacy efforts should be increased in regard to policy formulation and coordination among partner organizations, both at the national and regional levels. Second, there should be a greater emphasis on capacity building, technical resources and delivery mechanisms in programme development. Finally, partner organizations need to work together to ensure that information dissemination, data management, and monitoring and evaluation take place throughout the region within the framework and infrastructure of EFA, the UNLD and the UNDESD.

At the end of the meeting, participants carried out a performance evaluation of the event as feedback for the purpose of planning appropriate activities for future meetings.
International Workshop Held in China on Life Skills Learning

Background

Since 2003, the Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) has piloted a project on life skills learning to meet one of the Dakar goals, namely to enable everyone to acquire appropriate learning and life skills through both formal and non-formal education. This project receives support from the Japanese Funds-in-Trust and the Regular Programme.

Because the concept of life skills is broad and is subject to diverse interpretations, there should be a common platform for both a definition and concrete strategies. Following up a regional workshop on life skills learning held in Indonesia in December 2003, APPEAL, the UNESCO Institute of Education (UIE) and UNESCO Beijing, in collaboration with the International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education (INRULED), jointly organized a technical workshop in Baoding City and in Beijing, China, during 13-17 June 2005.

Twenty-five participants from twelve Asian and African countries attended the workshop. These countries, in addition to the Life Skills Learning Project, have been involved in two other projects related to this topic. Since 2004, six Asian countries (Shutian, India, Kazakhstan, the Philippines, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam) have participated in a project on “Life Skills Learning through Non-Formal Education” supported by APPEAL. In addition, the UIE is implementing an inter-regional project on “The Capacity Building of Literacy and Life Skills Education for Disadvantaged Young Adults” (CABLE4Y) in three Asian countries (Niger, Mali and Zambia) and three Asian countries (Bangladesh, China and Lao PDR).

Objectives of the workshop

The overall objective of the workshop was to provide a congenial environment for APPEAL and UIE project personnel to share experiences, identify key issues in life skills learning and explore effective means of providing life skills learning opportunities within the overall framework of Education for All (EFA). The specific objectives were as follows:

1. To share country experiences related to life skills learning activities carried out in the participating countries
2. To identify key issues in life skills learning related to content, materials, application in literacy and NFE programmes, assessment, networking, and the training of personnel
3. To learn at first hand about life skills activities through a study visit in the host country
4. To develop comprehensive and practical strategies for implementing life skills activities that will be relevant to the learning needs of disadvantaged children, youth and adults in order to enable them to improve the quality of their lives
5. To formulate follow-up action plans for implementing life skills learning activities in order to institutionalize project experiences in national EFA strategies and monitoring mechanisms

Workshop participants focused in particular on target groups, content, training, learning materials, the training process, partnerships and networking, and monitoring and evaluation. They addressed these topics during presentations, group work, individual or country team activity, and plenary open forums.

In addition to the on-site workshop activities, a study visit to Xushui County enabled participants to obtain first-hand information about local practices in life skills learning.

The workshop got under way with opening remarks by Mr. Du Yue, Deputy Secretary General of Chinese NatCom, followed by the observations of Mr. Zhou Nanzhou, Director of the INRULED and of the Education Commission of Hebei Province. UNESCO and the UIE arranged orientation sessions for introducing participants and explaining the organization of the workshop, and introductory presentations on EFA, APPEAL strategies and the UIE’s action areas.

Lessons learnt

The workshop participants from the various Asian and African countries shared their experiences in providing life skills learning activities, and identified and discussed key issues concerning life skills and their place in literacy and NFE programmes. They also examined inter-country resource development strategies and made the following suggestions to UNESCO and the UIE in regard to such activities in the future:

1. Existing resources on life skills developed by several countries, especially India and the Philippines, should be disseminated to others, both in print (e.g., manuals) and online (e.g., the UNESCO Bangkok Website).
2. Guidebooks with practical information can help strengthen the implementation of generic life skills training, as well as programmes that combine life skills with literacy and contextual practical skills.
3. Practitioners in different countries should cooperate in producing and sharing context specific materials on topics such as “the culture of peace.”
4. Some countries consider life skills learning to be of vital importance. These countries will need comprehensive guidebooks, training materials and practical learning materials. Multimedia packages using ICT are effective for delivering these kinds of resources. Learners should be able to use some materials for acquiring life skills through self-learning.
5. Appropriate materials should be made available to training programmes at the regional and national levels. Participatory approaches should be further emphasized and demonstrated as a part of these programmes.
6. Networking among countries and technical organizations should be strengthened for the purpose of sharing resources, undertaking research and organizing capacity building activities.
Regional Workshop on Equivalency Programmes for Promoting Lifelong Learning

In 2004, to strengthen the linkages between formal and non-formal education for the purpose of lifelong learning, UNESCO APPEAL initiated a project entitled “Equivalency Programmes for Promoting Lifelong Learning.” Four countries India, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines undertook national research studies on equivalency programmes (EPs). To enable other countries joining the project to benefit from experiences in the planning, implementation and evaluation of EPs, APPEAL (in cooperation with the Bureau of Alternative Learning Systems, Philippine Department of Education) organized the Regional Workshop on Equivalency Programmes for Promoting Lifelong Learning. The workshop took place in Manila during 25-29 April 2005.

The workshop was attended by 23 participants from 11 countries of the Asia-Pacific region: Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. There were two participants from each country, one a policy maker or planner in charge of NFE programmes and curriculum development at the national level, and the other a coordinator or administrator of one or more of these programmes. Ms. Anita Dighe, Director of the Campus of Open Learning, Delhi University, New Delhi, served as the resource person for this workshop.

The overall objective of the workshop was to enable NFE personnel to share experiences in order to increase their capacity to effectively develop, implement and evaluate equivalency programmes.

The specific objectives were as follows:

- To review the experiences of participating countries in developing literacy curricula and materials
- To build knowledge, attitudes and skills in implementing EPs through sharing experiences from the four project countries
- To obtain first-hand experience through a study visit in the host country
- To develop strategies on government policy in regard to curriculum and materials development, accreditation and assessment, stronger delivery mechanisms and synergies between formal education and NFE
- To formulate follow-up action plans for implementing EPs in the participating countries

The workshop consisted of six plenary sessions for sharing country experiences, seven rounds of group discussions and reports, two rounds of a “gallery tour,” and a half-day field visit. Participants were concerned with the following topics:

1. EP policy, levels, target groups and delivery mechanisms
2. EP curricula and materials
3. Accreditation, certification and assessment
4. Synergies between formal schooling and NFE
5. Quality issues

Each participating country developed a country action plan according to guidelines prepared by APPEAL. As a follow-up to the workshop, participants were reminded to submit project proposals to UNESCO in order to conduct national activities implementing the country action plans in their respective countries.
News from the APPEAL Resource and Training Consortium (ARTC)

Participation in the UNLD Resource Team

The ARTC was formed in 1997 and serves as the technical arm of APPEAL in order to promote EFA and the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD). At present, there are 13 ARTC member institutions.

A regional resource team network was established to promote the UNLD in accordance with the initiatives of UNESCO Headquarters. The network includes the following participating agencies: ARTC, ACCU-LRC, the Asia South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE), the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), and the Christian Blind Mission (CBM). The Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), Bangladesh, represents the ARTC as a UNLD resource team.

During 2004, a planning meeting was held in Tokyo on 14–16 October 2004, in conjunction with the UNESCO–JICA International Symposium. The resource team is working to develop APPEAL’s directions and strategies for implementation of the UNLD and EFA in the region.

Welcoming ARTC secondment to APPEAL

Since 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 2004)
2. Mr. Leonard Tabaranza, Bureau of Non-Formal Education, the Philippines (February-July 2004)
6. Mr. Muhammad Bilal Aziz, Bunyad Literacy Community Council (BLCC), Lahore, Pakistan (July-December 2005)

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

The following key observations and comments emerged from the workshop:

1. The identification of the learning needs of target groups is an essential prerequisite for the effective implementation and development of EPs.
2. It is important for each country to seriously consider the notion of “equivalency” and to understand the issues involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of EPs.
3. A standardized setting is important for maintaining the quality of EPs, but at the same time diversity in programme planning and implementation should be allowed in order to meet specific local needs and contexts.
4. Participatory approaches are often emphasized, but seldom introduced at the grassroots level, including the NFE programmes in the Philippines observed during the workshop.
5. Specialists in inclusive education need to consider alternative programmes such as EPs to accommodate those who cannot attend regular schools in developing countries for one reason or another.
6. The workshop was a good opportunity for formal education personnel to learn more about NFE and explore possible alternative education arrangements.
Study Missions to Thailand Give Visitors a Chance to Share Experiences, Learn and Replicate

Since its inception, APPEAL as a regional organization has emphasized the sharing of country experiences and good practices among its members. By organizing and promoting study missions or tours in the field of education and community development, APPEAL has enabled educators and officials in the Member States to share experiences, exchange ideas and innovations, observe best practices at first hand and replicate them back home. Recently, this concept has extended to education experts and practitioners outside the region. From November 2004 to July 2005, at the request of Member States, APPEAL facilitated four educational study missions to Thailand, two of them from outside Asia and the Pacific.

All four missions had an opportunity to observe and learn about Thai education experiences -- in particular, those in the field of non-formal education. The missions came from Ethiopia (20-23 January 2005), Cambodia (1-5 March 2005), Iraq (9-15 March 2005), and Bangladesh (June 27-30, 2005).

Ethiopian educational study mission

This study mission was an example of interregional (African-Asian) exchange of learning and the sharing of good practices in the field of non-formal education. Coordinated by APPEAL and facilitated by the Addis Ababa UNESCO Office, the mission team was funded by the Save the Children Fund Norway in Ethiopia. The team comprised nine members, including a representative of SCF Norway and high-level government officials from federal or regional ministries.

The mission team had an opportunity to learn, observe and share in UNESCO programme activities with the assistance of APPEAL staff, personnel from the Thai Ministry of Education, and local community people. The team members had an opportunity to visit some of the project sites (around Bangkok and in Nakhon Pathom province) launched and technically supported by APPEAL.

Cambodian educational study mission

Coming from a neighbour and regional partner, with many similarities to and already acquainted with Thai culture and customs, the Cambodian study mission focused more on grassroots-level activities than on policy. Consisting of 14 members -- government officials from the provincial to central levels -- the mission team visited three provinces in eastern and northeastern Thailand (Surin, Sa Kaeo and Roi-Et).

Practical learning, observing community-level activities (such as community learning centres and NFE classes), and exchanging, sharing and interacting with community people directly were the main features of this mission.

Iraqi educational study mission

Comprising nine members (five high-level governmental officials, two staff members from UNESCO Jordan, and one each from UNESCO Paris and the UNESCO Baghdad Office), the educational study mission from Iraq visited several project sites in Thailand. Among them, the Thai Women’s Correction Centre was considered remarkable in view of its commitment to lifelong education. Presentations by APPEAL staff and sharing in APPEAL activities also contributed to broadening the experience of the visitors from Iraq.

Bangladesh educational study mission

Six members of the Education Programme of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee came to Thailand on a study mission conducted by UNESCO Bangkok in cooperation with ONFEC.

The mission team visited project sites in metropolitan Bangkok and in Lampang and Chiang Mai provinces. In addition to visiting regional, provincial and district NFE centres, libraries and supporting agencies such as the Centre for Education Technology and the Herbal Development Centre, they had an opportunity to observe learning sessions at a variety of community learning centres (CLCs). These ranged from sophisticated centres delivering training via ICT, to remote CLCs serving “hill tribe” communities. The mission team also enjoyed sharing experiences with the facilitators of these CLCs and with administrators of NFE centres at various levels.

During the mission visits, Mr. Sheldon Shaeffer, Director of UNESCO Bangkok, and Mr. A.H.A. Hakeem, Coordinator of APPEAL, addressed the mission teams, speaking about the UNESCO shared vision and APPEAL activities.

Benefits

The members of the study mission teams expanded their knowledge of activities in the field of non-formal education and lifelong learning from the grassroots to the policy levels. They also had an opportunity to observe actual practices and to exchange ideas and innovations with policy makers and practitioners. Finally, they benefited from the opportunity to obtain APPEAL materials for the purpose of replication and adaptation.