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Asia-Pacific Programme of
Education for All

Equivalency Programmes (EPs) for Promoting Lifelong Learning

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FOREWORD

To meet the goal of Education for All (EFA), it is necessary to provide education not only through schools, but also through non-formal education programmes for children, youth and adults who have not completed their basic education. Schools can cater to only a handful of children and youth. Non-formal education (NFE) is a way to compensate for the lack of full formal schooling by giving opportunities to those who cannot continue their formal education.

Within the context of learning throughout life, learning is undertaken in a variety of settings: informal, non-formal and formal. For this reason, it is particularly important to recognize learning outcomes and establish equivalencies between what is learned through formal and non-formal education. Some countries in the region have developed equivalency programmes (EPs) that can promote the flexibility of student entry to and from formal and non-formal channels of education at primary and secondary education levels. EPs can develop systematic linkages between various NFE programmes and the existing formal general or vocational education systems. These programmes can play an important role in expanding the learning time and space of learners by providing them with appropriate recognition and certification of their achievement as incentives for them to continue learning throughout their lives.

In view of the limited resources available in the education sector in many countries, EFA strategies should ensure synergies between formal and non-formal education, rather than foster competition for available human and material resources. This means equivalency in terms of not only curricula and certificates, but also other important aspects of the two systems, such as policy support, delivery mechanisms in schools and community learning centres (CLCs), and training personnel to administer EPs, including monitoring and learning assessment.

UNESCO Bangkok supported India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand - countries which have considerable experience designing and implementing EPs - to undertake research studies to identify different EP models. In April 2005, these models were shared with six other countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Mongolia) during a regional workshop held in Manila, Philippines. These six countries are in the initial stages of developing EPs.

This publication is divided into two parts. Part I contains good practices in EPs from four countries. Part II focuses on the outcomes of the 2005 regional workshop, including suggestions for synergy between formal and non-formal education and for improvements in the quality of EPs.

It is our hope that policy makers, planners and programme implementers from both formal and non-formal education programmes, as well as from both GOs and NGOs involved in education, will find this publication useful for their work.

Sheldon Shaeffer
Director
Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, UNESCO Bangkok

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CD Attachment

Final Report of the Regional Workshop on Equivalency Programmes for Promoting Lifelong Learning (Manila, Philippines, 25 – 29 April 2005)

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Background

The importance of synergies between formal and non-formal systems has been discussed over the years in order to develop a comprehensive learning system for promoting lifelong learning. Equivalency programmes (EPs) are alternative education programmes equivalent to the formal system not only in terms of curriculum and certification, but also in regard to policy support mechanisms, mode of delivery, staff training, and support activities such as monitoring, evaluation and the assessment of learning. To achieve the goal of EFA and promote lifelong learning, there is a need to strengthen formal and non-formal education through the development of EPs 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.

The out-of-school population can continue their studies to obtain education certificates and diplomas equivalent to those awarded by formal schools. At the community level, coordination between formal schools and learning centres has taken place to share buildings, teachers and other resources. (An example is the cooperation between Associated School Project [ASP] schools and community learning centres [CLCs].) However, this cooperation often depends on local initiatives rather than any systematic mechanisms.

The Project

In view of the above background, in 2003 the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education, Bangkok, initiated a project on equivalency programmes within the framework of the Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL). This project has been supported by the Japanese Funds-in-Trust (JFIT) and the UNESCO Regular Programme Budget.

The overall objective of the project is to strengthen synergies between formal and non-formal education as a part of the national EFA action plans and to promote the lifelong learning of disadvantaged populations. The specific objectives are:

• to identify through research studies the good practices of equivalency programmes, including synergies between formal and non-formal education in the region, and to share the results of these studies;

• to develop national policy support mechanisms on synergies between formal and non-formal education for the implementation of equivalency programmes, including accreditation and learning assessment;

• to formulate national equivalency programmes and develop national action plans for the implementation of programmes, which include curriculum and materials development, the capacity-building of NFE/CLC personnel, learning assessment and accreditation; and

• to strengthen delivery mechanisms (such as formal schools and CLCs) to effectively implement equivalency programmes.

To achieve the above objectives, the following activities have been or will be carried out during 2004-2006:

1) Research studies were undertaken in India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand in 2004 to document the current equivalency programme practices in these countries.

2) A regional workshop was organized in Manila, Philippines, on 25-29 April 2005, inviting the four research countries and seven new countries to share experiences and formulate joint strategies and action plans at the national and regional levels.

3) Using the action plans developed at the regional workshop, each participating country during 2005-2006 would further review existing programmes or develop new ones, according to the specific needs and interests of each country.

4) In 2006, the project experiences and findings will be consolidated as a regional guide for equivalency programmes.

The Report

Although this report in printed form includes only summaries of project activities, the full texts of research studies, workshop presentations and reports are included on the attached CD.

For further details about the project and this report, please contact:

Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL)
UNESCO Bangkok

920 Sukhumvit Rd.
Bangkok 10110, Thailand
Tel: 66-2-391-0577 (ext. 314)
Fax: 66-2-391-0866
E-mail: appeal@unescobkk.org

PART I:

Good Practice in Equivalency Programming

Country Experiences

The research studies on equivalency programmes were undertaken in 2004 by teams of researchers in India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand.

The main objectives of the studies were to identify and document innovative strategies and effective approaches from the equivalency programmes, and recommend future actions to strengthen the programmes towards a synergy of formal and non-formal education. The studies cover:

• National equivalency programmes
• Policy support mechanisms
• Target learners
• Curriculum and learning materials development
• Capacity-building of personnel
• Delivery mechanisms
• Teaching-learning processes
• Accreditation, certification and learning assessment

In view of the local context, each country reviewed and finalized proposed guidelines for the studies, including the methodologies (e.g., document studies, sample surveys, workshops).

Part I consists of two sections: 1) summaries of the research studies in each country, highlighting their findings, and 2) key issues for consideration when planning and implementing equivalency programmes. The research studies were undertaken by national teams headed by Dr. Anita Priyadarshini (India), Dr. Ella Yulaelawati (Indonesia), Dr. Eliseo Barsaga (Philippines) and Dr. Wisanee Siltragool (Thailand). A synthesis of key issues from the papers was prepared by Dr. Anita Dighe of the University of Delhi, India.

India

Policy Support Mechanism

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) offers the Open Basic Education Programme as an equivalency programme for primary and upper primary levels through open and distance learning methodology. The eradication of illiteracy has been reflected in many policy documents in India since Independence. Reiterating this constitutional commitment, the National Policy on Education (1986) and the Programme of Action (1992) resolved that free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality would be provided to children up to 14 years of age before the 21st century.

As a manifestation of this national commitment, many education programmes have been launched. Since 2002, the Government of India has recognised the Open Basic Education Programme as a programme that is equivalent to formal schooling. The NIOS is the first and, at present, the only institution in the country to offer programmes from primary to senior secondary levels through open schooling.

Target Learners/Groups

The Open Basic Education (OBE) Programme offered by the National Institute of Open Schooling is an equivalency programme that targets children and is also offered under the continuing education scheme of the National Literacy Mission for adult neo-literates. The OBE programme has three levels -A, B and C- which are equivalent to formal school classes 3, 5 and 8, respectively. The OBE priority groups include disadvantaged groups such as women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, daily wage earners, those living below the poverty line and first generation learners.

Curriculum and Learning Materials Development

The NIOS curriculum of Open Basic Education (OBE) for adults offers a mix of academic and vocational subjects. The learning package consists of language(s), mathematics, science and social science as academic subjects, in addition to one vocational subject. Hindi, English or the regional language is the medium of study.

The OBE curriculum developed by the NIOS is competency-based. Certain key competencies have been identified in each area. A learner has to acquire proficiency in these competencies in order to qualify for a certificate. The curriculum is text-free and allows itself to be adapted to local situations. It prepares the learner to deal with practical life situations.

Although the curriculum for adults and children is about the same, certain specific areas have been included for adults. One such area is good parenting. Since the majority of the clients are parents, subjects like responsible parenthood, reproductive health, good habits and values have been included.

Another set of competencies included in the curriculum for adults relates to vocational education. The OBE prepares adults for future employment through its vocational education component. The curriculum includes vocational skills and values, such as the dignity of labour, equal wages regardless of gender, entrepreneurship and business ethics.

The flexibility in the system allows agencies to identify their own local specific vocational trades and offer these to their learners. A vocational course has the same weight as an academic subject. Some of the OBE vocational courses focus on the preservation of fruits and vegetables, health and beauty care, cutting and tailoring, basic computing, and horticulture (growing roses). The choice of vocational subjects to be offered is decided in consultation with the accredited agency, taking into consideration local needs. More courses are added to the list according to demand.

Under the OBE programme, the materials are developed in a decentralized manner, i.e., by district-level agencies with the objective of making them locally specific. For example, a curriculum is provided to the district-level agencies. After identifying its needs, each district recruits local subject writers who are trained in writing self-instructional materials. In this way, a district can develop its own set of course materials for every subject.

The construction of the curriculum and its manifestation into effective teaching/learning materials are always a challenge. Innovative approaches attempt to reduce the educational load, as the literacy ability of the newly literate may still be fragile. Thus, the competencies of two subjects are often integrated. For example, Hindi is taught using issues from environmental science, with one common textbook used for both subjects.

Delivery Mechanisms, Approaches and Personnel

The implementation of the equivalency programme is carried out with the help of national, state and district-level government and non-governmental organisations. No separate organisational structures have been set up for the equivalency programme. These are accredited to the NIOS as accredited agencies (AAs). The role of the AAs is to provide academic and non-academic guidance to learners.

The study centres for the OBE programme are the continuing education centres (CECs). The CECs are also responsible for conducting a number of educational activities. Since the OBE programme is essentially a distance education programme, the emphasis is on flexibility and enforcing the learners' freedom to learn. Each subject has a study time of 100 hours. Fifty hours are for guided learning and fifty are for self-learning. Contact classes are conducted at the CECs. It is expected that retired teachers and educated youth contribute to the teaching of learners in classes 5 and 8.

The *prerak*/facilitator is the functionary at the grassroots level for the continuing education programme. The OBE programme works in collaboration with the formal school system. There is a great deal of resource sharing in all areas. Thus, the task of capacity-building is carried out by three main agencies: the State Literacy Mission Authority organises training to ensure effective implementation of the programme, the State Resource Centre designs and conducts training programmes for different levels of functionaries, including *preraks*/facilitators and district officials, and the National Institute of Open Learning organises training programmes for lesson writers and evaluators.

Accreditation, Certification and Learning Assessment

The OBE programme has been flexibly designed so that a learner may take the final examination whenever he/she is prepared for it. The administering agency and the NIOS determine examination schedules. At Level A, the evaluation process has two components, written and oral. Grades are awarded and certificates given only when the learner completes the required number of subjects. The examination may be conducted in Hindi, English or the regional language. The administering of the examination is done in close collaboration with the formal school system.

The OBE programme certificate is recognised by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, for entrance into higher education and employment. As a result of this certificate, younger learners have been able to find places in formal schools or obtain gainful employment.

Indonesia

Policy Support Mechanism

Since 1970, Indonesia has promoted equivalency education as part of the non-formal education system. Over the years, legal provisions have stipulated the number of years required for compulsory education. Thus, in 1973/74 the Government declared the first six years of education to be compulsory. In 1989, the Government issued the Law of National Education System No. 2, which defined nine years of basic education (primary and junior secondary levels) as compulsory education.

It was, however, the enactment of the Act of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 in 2003 on the National Education System that provided the impetus to support educational reform in non-formal education (NFE) in Indonesia. This edict reiterates the constitutional mandate of the right to education by stating that "every citizen has equal rights to receive a good quality education." As a result of the various legal provisions, there are a variety of NFE programmes now on offer. The equivalency programme consists of Package A (equal to six years of primary school), Package B (equal to three years of junior secondary school) and Package C (equal to three years of senior secondary school).

Target Learners/Groups

Education Act No. 20, 2003, stated the importance of special services for specific groups, particularly in rural areas: "Education with special services is provided for learners in the remote and less developed areas and/or for learners who are victims of natural disasters or suffer from social deficiencies, and those who are economically disadvantaged."

Article 32 states that special attention should be given to disadvantaged groups, including those who are economically disadvantaged (dropouts, child workers, street children), members of poor agricultural or fishing communities, those who live in remote areas (including ethnic minorities) and those who are victims of social ills (child trafficking) or natural disasters.

The participants in Package A, B and C programmes are of two kinds: school-age children who have limited or no access to formal education, and adults who need education at primary and secondary levels.

Curriculum and Learning Materials Development

In Indonesia, due to decentralization policies, the only authority in education at the level of the central government is that related to setting up national standards of competencies, preparing the national curriculum and education calendar, and evolving an evaluation system. Accordingly, formal school teachers have greater freedom and autonomy to select learning content, methods and approaches. In this way, they are encouraged to produce their own syllabi based on their creativity in adjusting to learners' needs and abilities, local conditions and resources, and cultural factors.

However, the curriculum did not change in the equivalency programmes until early 2004. The equivalency packages A, B and C used reproductions of materials developed in early 1994 that were similar to those used in the formal system. The content of these materials was very academically oriented and did not really serve the different needs and diverse backgrounds of learners. The Directorate is now designing new academic curricula, updating the existing ones and making them suitable for NFE. In addition to competency-based Package A, B and C programmes, the Directorate has been designing a new life skills curriculum that is based on livelihood issues, household management, local economics and work ethics.

The new curriculum is designed around local conditions and potential, along with relevance to the needs of target learners. Forty percent of the curriculum emphasizes life skills through work-oriented programmes. The curriculum consists of the following:

1. Morale-building and academically-oriented subjects that are equivalent to the minimal competencies at primary and secondary education levels
2. Life skills-oriented subjects that stress the ability to create one's own work or to work in the business enterprises of others

The learning materials are in the form of competency-based modules. The modules contain objectives, expected learning outcomes, activities and evaluation. They are presented as an integration of academic principles and best practices that are customized to the diversified and real needs of the client groups. The Directorate now is in the process of designing life skills modules mainly in agriculture and fisheries. Schoolbooks and other existing resource materials are used for enriching the equivalency programme.

Delivery Mechanisms, Approaches and Personnel

The equivalency programme is implemented by developing the potential of the communities through institutions that carry out community-based NFE activities, including community learning centres (PKBM = *Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat*). There are several social and religious organisations that undertake such work at the community level. The Government, through the Ministry of Education, plays the role of a facilitator, meaning thereby that it does everything possible to enable local organisations and/or community groups to play their roles as implementers of the programme.

The Directorate is now in the process of re-designing the learning materials for Packages A, B and C. The delivery system is supposed to focus on the needs and potential of local communities, using flexible learning materials that allow for a variety of choices. The principles of andragogy and pedagogy will help tutors to master different teaching and learning methods. They will make use of a variety of these methods tailored to the diverse backgrounds and characteristics of learners in equivalency programmes. These include constructivist methods, cooperative and group learning methods, simulation, demonstration, individual learning, assignments and apprenticeships, among others.

The education personnel consist of tutors and NST (*nara sumber teknis*/skills-based resource persons), FDI (facilitator desa intensif/intensive village facilitators), TLD (*tenaga lapangan dikwas*/field staff of the Directorate of Community Education) and penilik (supervisors). These are people who have the commitment, motivation and ability to teach, mentor, tutor and facilitate learning activities. Preparatory training is available in basic statistics, rural sociology, the rural economy, andragogy, pedagogy and NFE.

Accreditation, Certification and Learning Assessment

There are two kinds of evaluation of learning outcomes, namely individual self-assessment and final examination. Individual self-assessment is integrated into each module. Learners can measure their performance by responding to problems posed in the exercises and by completing the learning activities provided in the modules. National examinations for Packages A, B and C are organised by the Assessment Centre, Office of Research and Development, Department of National Education. Education Act No. 20, 2003, stated that "the outcomes of the NFE shall be recognized as being equal to the outcomes of formal education programmes after undergoing a process of assessment by an agency appointed by the Government or local government based on national education standards."

Moreover, the Decree of the Minister of National Education on the Evaluation of Learning Outcomes at the national level states that evaluation at the completion of the programme is carried out through a national examination organized by the Assessment Centre, Office of Research and Development, Department of National Education. Thus, at the end of Packages A, B and C, a national examination is held

to ensure quality control and to officially recognize those who have completed equivalency programmes. The national examination is held twice a year. Those who meet the criteria for passing the national examination are declared "successful." Each learner who passes the examination receives a letter certifying examination success, issued and signed by the Education Evaluation Centre. He/she also receives a certificate issued by the Directorate of Community Education, Directorate General of Out-of-School Education and Youth, signed by the Head of Education Services Office of the relevant district/municipal government.

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Philippines

Policy Support Mechanism

In 1977, the Government institutionalized non-formal education (NFE) through the creation of the Office of the Undersecretary of NFE under the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (now called the Department of Education or DepED). The office of the Undersecretary for NFE is given responsibility to serve as the coordinating arm for integrating all programmes of various government agencies and NGOs involved in NFE. Due to various developments that have taken place to further strengthen NFE in the Philippines, there are now a variety of NFE and learning programmes and projects that respond to the specific and immediate needs of various client groups. The NFE Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) system provides alternative means of certification of learning to Filipinos aged 15 years and above. Other government agencies such as the Departments of Health, Agriculture, Trade and Industry, National Defence, and Social Welfare and Development have developed and integrated NFE into their activities.

Target Learners/Groups

The NFE A&E system provides alternative means of certification of learning to Filipinos aged 15 years and above who are unable to go through the formal school system or who have dropped out from formal elementary or secondary education. The NFE A&E system envisions the development of a society where people continue to learn on their own throughout their lives so that they can improve their quality of life and help in national development efforts. Its mission is to provide learning opportunities that will empower out-of-school youth to become contributing members of society.

Curriculum and Learning Materials Development

The NFE A&E Curriculum Framework is based on the new national definition of functional literacy and its major indicators developed by the Literacy Coordinating Council (LCC). Functional literacy is defined as "a range of skills and competencies – cognitive, affective and behavioural – which enables individuals to:

i)   live and work as human persons,

ii) develop their potential,

iii) make critical and informed decisions, and

iv) function effectively in society within the context of their environment and that of the wider community (local, regional, national, global) in order to improve the quality of their life and society."

The NFE A&E Curriculum Framework uses five interrelated learning strands:

a) Communication skills

b) Problem-solving and critical thinking

c) Sustainable use of resources/productivity

d) Development of self and a sense of community

e) Expanding one's world vision

The NFE A&E Curriculum Framework emphasizes "functionality" and does not conform to the traditional subject approach of the formal school system. It aims to develop the basic skills adult learners need to function successfully in their roles as parents, workers and community members.

The learning materials, developed from this curriculum, reflect this focus, drawing from the life experiences of NFE learners to equip them with skills and knowledge useful for solving the problems of daily life and immediate improvements in the quality of their lives. The balance between the focus of learning on core literacy skills and functional content shifts toward the latter as learners master essential reading, writing and numeracy skills and move from one learning level to the next.

The NFE A&E system aims to assist learners to move along a continuum where they are empowered to take more control of their own learning. As the learners master new skills and competencies and develop confidence in learning, they become less dependent on facilitators and more responsible for learning independently. The NFE A&E Curriculum Framework is non-formal in its focus, content, competencies and learning approaches, as well as in its sociological, psychological and philosophical dimensions. It emphasizes functionality and competency-based learning, and incorporates the Four Pillars of Learning, namely: Learning to Know; Learning to Do; Learning to Be; and Learning to Live Together.

Delivery Mechanisms, Approaches and Personnel

The NFE A&E learning support delivery system is designed to meet the different needs of learners. It provides learners with a range of learning interventions so that they may develop the minimum requirements of the NFE A&E Curriculum Framework, which considers knowledge, attitudes, values and skills. The equivalency programmes are delivered mainly through service providers who are contracted by the DepEd, including NGOs, government organisations such as colleges and universities, and umbrella organisations with national or regional networks that have qualified affiliate members in the communities.

The NFE A&E learning support delivery system aims to help NFE learners advance from functional literacy to self-directed learning by supporting the mastery of the skills and competencies necessary to take the National NFE Accreditation and Equivalency Tests. At the same time, not all learners who want NFE A&E certificates study under the NFE A&E delivery system. After an initial assessment of their learning needs, some learners apply for certification of their prior learning by taking the National NFE A&E Tests. Such learners simply register for the next elementary or secondary level NFE A&E test scheduled in their locality. If they pass this test, they get a certificate. Other learners may opt to upgrade their knowledge, skills and competencies before seeking certification through NFE A&E tests.

The key person in delivering the NFE A&E programme is the instructional manager (IM), who is responsible for supervising/facilitating the learning process for groups of up to 25 NFE A&E learners. The IM performs the role of a regular (or conventional) literacy facilitator at the elementary level, particularly during the lower elementary stage. The role of the IM changes at the advanced elementary and secondary levels to help learners take more and more responsibility for their own learning through self-instructional learning materials. The IM has three main functions: instruction, coordination and administration. Many IMs are elementary/secondary schoolteachers or people with a teaching background.

Another key person is the NFE District Coordinator. The NFE A&E programme is located in the Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE), recently renamed the Bureau of Alternative Learning Systems (BALS). One of the divisions of the BALS is the Staff Development Division. The training programmes of the NFE A&E system are designed primarily to address the training needs and requirements of the key NFE A&E officials, personnel and stakeholders at the central and field levels.

Accreditation, Certification and Learning Assessment

Accreditation under the NFE A&E system is of two types: a) certification of an individual's learning outcomes and b) accreditation of learning programmes.

Certification of a student's learning outcomes consists of in-programme post-learning assessment of learner skills acquired, equivalency testing and certification. Post-learning assessment includes the use of non-formal assessment methodologies such

as portfolio assessment as well as pre- and post-module and other forms of assessment. Equivalency testing uses test instruments based on the A&E curriculum framework and learning materials for two levels of certification, which are deemed qualifications comparable to the formal school system. Equivalency testing is administered by the NETRC in accordance with test administration guidelines that are jointly developed by the BNFE. Successful NFE A&E candidates will be issued certificates signed by the DepEd Secretary.

The accreditation of learning programmes consists of the formal recognition of institutions/agencies/organisations offering NFE programmes. It involves institutional collaboration with partner NFE agencies to facilitate the articulation of programmes, the formulation of national standards and summative evaluation to ensure quality control over A&E-related NFE programmes offered by independent NFE service providers. Before a learner reaches the accreditation stage, he/she has to go through the NFE A&E system's multiple pathways to achieve learning goals:

• STEP 1: Enrolment, Screening and Orientation
• STEP 2: The Learning Process
• STEP 3: Assessment, Equivalency and Graduation

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Thailand

Policy Support Mechanism

Thailand gives high priority to education and recognises its importance for human and social development. As a result, NFE programmes of various kinds have been on offer over the years. A large number of organisations have supported NFE and their numbers have steadily risen. This support culminated in the National Education Act 1999, which states in Article 10 that people will have equal rights and opportunities to receive at least 12 years of basic education. Because of this Act, the Government has the mandate to cover all areas and target groups and to provide quality basic education.

Thailand's long history with equivalency programmes dates back to 1940. Today, the levels of education reached by equivalency programmes include primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education.

Target Learners/Groups

Equivalency programmes in Thailand have targeted the out-of-school population. The learners are from various backgrounds and include industrial workers, people in the business and service sectors, members of hill tribes, homeless children and teenagers, conscripts, prisoners, people with physical disabilities, and Thai people living overseas, among others.

Curriculum and Learning Materials Development

Equivalency programmes currently in operation are based on the non-formal basic education curriculum (2001) that is the core curriculum and similar to that of the formal school system. The programmes developed by any organisation have to follow this curriculum. The Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission, however, has made improvements in order to make the learning materials more suitable to the target groups. The curriculum categorizes subjects for three levels (primary, lower and upper secondary) into three general areas:

a) Fundamental (Thai, mathematics, science and foreign language)

b) Experience-oriented (social and community development, life skills development and vocational development)

c) Quality of life improvement activities. This area focuses on developing intelligent, happy learners (according to the "*khit pen*" philosophy) who can undertake vocational training and lead productive lives.

The learner has to register for the entire course, which covers four terms. Each term lasts 20 weeks. At all levels, learners have to register in four fundamental subjects, four experience-oriented subjects, and for at least 100 hours of quality of life improvement activities. For the upper-secondary education level, learners have to register in more than the minimum requirement of fundamental and experience-oriented subjects. Other specific target groups such as hotel workers and prisoners need to study specific subject areas and necessary skills that facilitators and learners plan together to suit their experiences and backgrounds.

Vocational education is also available as occupational development for lower secondary school learners. These learners are workers who want to pursue their education while working. It can be organised in factories and through distance education. There are three subject areas required: general subjects, vocational subjects (specialised and practical areas), and free elective areas.

Delivery Mechanisms, Approaches and Personnel

The number of organisations that support NFE programmes has been on the rise over the years. These include NFE centres, district NFE centres, science education centres, border vocational promotion centres, special target group NFE centres, adult education schools and community learning centres (CLCs). There are approximately 6,000 CLCs set up in villages throughout the country. There is no separate organisational structure for the equivalency programmes. Learners can contact district NFE centres (available in all districts) to enroll in these programmes. The classes are usually provided in formal schools and CLCs. Some of them occur in appropriate and convenient places for learners such as factories.

Learning activities emphasize a process of critical thinking, learning by doing, problem solving, and the development of skills so as to make the learners more inquiry-minded and less dependent on rote learning. The learning methods vary from learning in a group (at least three hours per week) to self-study.

Teaching personnel include NFE volunteer teachers, CLC facilitators and local experts (local wisdom for skill training, formal school teachers and experts from various organisations specialising in agriculture and livestock, industrial and public health experts). Learners can also learn from various resource centres, including museums and science centres.

Accreditation, Certification and Learning Assessment

The Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission (ONFEC) cooperates with the Departments of Curriculum and Instruction and General Education to operate the equivalency programmes for people not in schools. A learner has to register as an "out-of-school" learner from the beginning of the term. Then he/she has to join group activities and regularly meet the group facilitator (in the group) to foster development in various areas, cultivate favourable attitudes and consult with the facilitator as needed. Learners have to satisfy the academic requirements for each subject to successfully complete the course.

Learners can select from three types of study methods: distance learning, classroom, and self-study. The credits earned in one type of learning can be transferred to the others. However, the evaluations for each type of learning may be different, which in turn may affect standardization in measuring learners' achievements.

The Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission has developed evaluation tools to ensure that the quality and standards of the NFE programme are maintained.

In regard to learning assessment, there are 21 NFE evaluation centres at the provincial level covering all 5 regions of the country. If a learner passes, his/her evaluation results will be sent to the National Evaluation Committee, comprised of the ONFEC, the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, and the Department of General Education. Before receiving certificates, learners have to participate in EP learning assessment camps. The whole process of evaluation takes two months. In 2006, authority will be decentralized to regional NFE centres for evaluating the learning performance of NFE learners, who will not be subject to assessment at the national level.

Issues for Consideration in Planning and Implementation of Equivalency Programmes (EPs)

1.   The importance of political commitment and appropriate legal provisions

There is no denying the fact that a strong political commitment in favour of the education of disadvantaged groups is an essential pre-condition in planning EPs. The experiences of Thailand and Indonesia show that national governments over the years have formulated policies and even made legal provisions that have greatly facilitated the process of planning as well as implementation of such programmes. In the case of Thailand, EPs have had a long history. Needless to say, this factor has enabled experimentation, innovation and further improvement of these programmes. An important constitutional commitment made in the case of both countries is that of the "right to education" of all citizens (unlike in India, which only has a constitutional commitment for ensuring free and compulsory education to children ages 6-14). The rights perspective is an enabling factor in envisioning systems of education, whether formal or non-formal, that would be of comparable quality.

2.   The need for clear articulation of varied client groups

The disadvantaged and the educationally marginalized groups are an omnibus category. In non-formal education (NFE) programmes, it is customary to refer to designing education programmes for such general categories as the "rural poor," the "urban poor" or those "difficult to reach." Experience is now showing the need to further disaggregate these broad categories and to specifically identify each of these groups so that the educational content, methods and materials can be carefully worked out. The studies from Thailand and Indonesia have highlighted the importance of clearly spelling out such client groups, both among children as well as among adults, so that appropriate programmes can be designed for each group.

3.   The need for a variety of NFE programmes and the involvement of GOs and NGOs, civil society groups, experts and personnel of various kinds

Political commitment to provide educational opportunities to disadvantaged groups has to be translated into a wide range of NFE programmes, with institutional and manpower support. The advantage of a range of programmes is that they respond to the specific and immediate needs of various client groups, as well as serve their long-term interests, thereby making possible a multiplicity of curricula and an assortment of delivery approaches. EPs are one option out of a wide variety of options available. Experiences from the Philippines and Thailand show the importance of having a variety of education programmes for different groups of learners who have varied learning needs. The involvement of organisations and

agencies would signal society's commitment to the cause of NFE. In Thailand, for example, the number of institutions that are involved in NFE has risen to better serve the entire country.

4. The importance of understanding contextual factors while planning and designing EPs

The four country studies reflect varying cultural, social, educational, economic and linguistic contexts. Indonesia, in particular, has shown how important it is to take note of social and cultural factors while designing EPs. Contextual factors therefore become an important variable in the design of such programmes. No "blueprints" can be prescribed. EPs have to evolve according to varying local contexts.

5. The importance of convergence and synergies between education and various development departments

This is a need that has been oft-repeated. Considering the fact that EPs must be planned for members of marginalized groups, it is incumbent to collaborate and coordinate at the grassroots level. The country studies have shown that poverty still remains the main reason for a large majority of learners failing to participate in or dropping out of both formal and non-formal systems of education. Clearly, livelihood issues need to be addressed. The Department of Non-Formal Education should, therefore, not be the sole agency responsible for EPs. Thailand has shown how EPs have been an integral part of socio-economic development over the past sixty years. Notable, too, is how Thailand's Ministry of Education has secured participation in NFE at the provincial, district and school levels.

6. Curricular framework: centralized, decentralized or a combination of both?

Indonesia offers a case where educational reforms have taken place in recent years that have resulted in the devolution of responsibilities to the provinces and districts. One major development is that teachers in formal schools are being encouraged to develop locally relevant materials, based on the local context and the needs of varied groups of learners. Gradually, this process is being replicated in the non-formal stream, as well. On the other hand, the Government of Thailand has approved a National Curriculum Framework (2001). As a result, there is insistence that the curricula for EPs should follow the national curricular framework. This has meant less diversity and fewer choices for different target groups.

Indeed, it is necessary to consider whether EPs should have a national curriculum framework in the interest of maintaining quality and ensuring standards, or whether curriculum development should be decentralized in order to ensure the relevance of curricula to the needs and interests of various client groups. The Philippines experience seems to indicate that, while following the NFE A&E Curriculum Framework, it is still possible to develop learning materials that draw upon the life experiences of typical NFE learners in order to equip them with the

knowledge and skills useful for solving the problems of daily life. The NFE A&E Curriculum Framework emphasizes "functionality" and does not conform to the traditional subject approach of the formal system. It aims at developing the basic skills that adult learners need to function effectively as parents, workers and members of the community.

Thus, the tension between the demands of the formal system to make the curriculum subject-based and the compulsions of the non-formal system to make the curriculum flexible, needs-based and problem-oriented must be reconciled when designing EPs.

7. **Issues related to the language used as medium of instruction in EPs**

In multi-lingual societies, the medium of instruction in any educational programme can determine the extent to which it fails or succeeds. Yet, language issues never get the attention they deserve at the planning stage. The Philippines and Indonesian studies refer to the language problem of EPs, but in a somewhat cursory manner. The issue of mother tongue literacy and the transition to the standard regional/national language has received the attention of education planners. However, with regard to EPs, language issues in materials development, as well as in the teaching/learning process, assessment and evaluation, need to be given serious attention.

8. **The need for developing a professional cadre of functionaries at the grassroots level**

The research studies seem to indicate that in most cases no separate personnel were appointed for the EPs. As in other NFE programmes, however, it is the grassroots functionary who plays an important role in the implementation of programme activities. What kind of professional support is provided to these individuals? The Indonesian study has shown that a large percentage of the EP workers were not even provided any training. Considering the complex roles they play, the number of responsibilities they have to shoulder, and the skills and competencies to be developed by learners, the creation of a professional cadre of local-level EP staff would seem to be an absolute necessity. Just as teachers need professional training, those who work for EPs at the grassroots level will also need professional development programmes of very high quality.

9. **The need for a national education act that equates NFE equivalence with formal education**

The Indonesian experience highlights the importance of legislation that clearly states the equivalency of the two education systems, as well as the importance of a decree that identifies the agency conducting examinations at the national level. A national education act provides the legitimacy not only for EPs, but also for accreditation and certification. The other three studies deal with the complex

technicalities of conducting the assessment and evaluation of learning outcomes. Thailand's concern with quality issues and maintenance of standards is notable.

10. The importance of community partnership and community support

As is the case for all education programmes, community partnership is essential for the success and sustainability of EPs. Indonesia's experience shows how local communities can be mobilized so that they become partners in implementing such programmes. Since dropout rates are high in EPs and achievement rates are still low, community support is essential for steps to be taken to improve the efficiency of the EPs.

Unresolved Dilemmas

The studies indicate that despite success achieved in implementing EPs, some problems still persist. The unresolved dilemmas that need to be addressed include:

1. Despite policy initiatives and legal provisions, many members of the public still believe that EPs are nothing more than second-rate education programmes. Public perception about the utility and importance of such programmes must improve. Advocacy programmes are necessary for this purpose. The mass media could play an important role in changing public perception.

2. EPs are still inadequately financed. Not only are budgetary provisions inadequate for NFE programmes, there are also disparities in the allocations made for formal schooling and NFE. Thailand's experience has shown that even though equal rights and opportunities are guaranteed in Article 10 of the National Education Act, the non-formal system in general, and the EPs in particular, still suffers from inadequate funding. On the other hand, if the EPs are in a project mode, there is always the danger that once the funds dry up, the programmes will cease to exist. Governments appear to be reluctant to provide adequate financial support for EPs.

3. There is also the problem of the low status and low pay of grassroots-level workers. EPs are very demanding. They require skilled, trained and committed manpower to be successful. Yet, minimal investment is made with regard to the functionaries who run such programmes at the grassroots level, who, by and large, receive inadequate professional support. This problem needs to be seriously addressed.

4. None of the research studies have been able to conclusively establish the efficacy of the EPs. While there is reference to high dropout rates as well as low achievement rates, there is a need for substantive data to show what adults learn, what their achievement levels are and how useful such programmes are in improving the quality of life of those who belong to disadvantaged groups.

5. In a rapidly globalizing world, change is so fast that the developing countries risk being further marginalised in a competitive global knowledge economy because their education and training systems are not equipping learners with the skills they need. The existing institutions need to replace the information-based, teacher-directed rote learning provided in the formal education system with a new type of learning that emphasises creating, applying, analysing, and synthesising knowledge, and engaging in collaborative learning throughout life. This is the challenge faced by developing countries. Whether policy makers, planners and administrators will overhaul existing structures and bring about crucial change remains to be seen.

PART II:

Outcomes of the Regional Workshop on Equivalency Programmes for Promoting Lifelong Learning

(Manila, Philippines, 25 – 29 April 2005)

The Workshop

The regional workshop was jointly organised by APPEAL and the Bureau of NFE and A&E, Department of Education, the Philippines. There were 24 participants from 11 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, namely Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. Two participants from each country, from both formal and non-formal education and who were in charge of the planning and implementation of basic education programmes, were invited.

The overall objective of the workshop was to orient and build the capacity of basic education personnel to plan and implement effective equivalency programmes (EPs) for promoting lifelong learning through the synergy of formal and non-formal education.

This section of the report highlights the outcomes from participants' discussions and group work during each session of the workshop.

Sharing Country Experiences

New countries participating in the project (Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar and Viet Nam) shared country experiences concerning their existing equivalency programmes, as shown in the matrix on pages 29-33.

Participants also expressed the following general concerns:

• Although NFE and informal education are important components of EFA and lifelong learning, they are often considered to be "second class" education. Accordingly, financial allocations to this area are insufficient in most countries.

• Boundaries between formal education and NFE are becoming blurred due to the expansion of learning time and space caused by various learning opportunities, in particular, the open learning system.

• There is an important distinction between NFE and informal education. While NFE consists of structured education programmes outside the formal system, informal education is learning through unstructured activities.

	Bangladesh	Cambodia	China	Lao PDR	Mongolia	Myanmar	Viet Nam
Year of Initiation of EP	Full -fledged EP in Bangladesh is yet to be developed	1981	Anti-illiteracy programme started since 1950s and is still run as a requirement to achieve the national goal of basically eradicating illiteracy. A few rural private schools have started in 1990s and some urban private schools have started since 2000 for children selected by schools and the children of migrant workers.	Primary Junior / Upper Secondary Certificate started in 1990	2001	Initiated in 1998, started in 2001	1945

Equivalency Programmes (EPs) for Promoting Lifelong Learning

	Bangladesh	Cambodia	China	Lao PDR	Mongolia	Myanmar	Viet Nam
Policy and legislative support for EP	Both legal framework and policy framework are yet to be developed	Non-Formal Education Act 2001	Education Law (1985) the Private School Promoting Act and the Regulation for the Implementation of the Act (2000-2004); Over the next several years, the State will make further amendments to the Compulsory Education Law, the Education Law, the Law of Teachers, the Higher Education Law and draft out the Law of Schools, the Law on Education Examination, the Education Investment Law and the Lifelong Learning Law.	**Policy Support** - National Education Law 2000 - Decree on Compulsory Education in 1996 - NFE Policy 1993 - National EFA Action Plan 2004 - NGPES **Need to improve** - MOE ordinance & decrees 1997, focusing on: - Need to have decree on EP - Regulations to use formal education facilities, and teachers in/out policy between FE/NFE (re-entry)	Education Law (1991): Order of Minister of Education, Culture and Science on National Curriculum of Primary and Basic Education EP in 2001. "Government Action Plan" of 2004-2008 "National Programme on Literacy Education" (2004-2012)	The EFA 2003-2015 plan Education Law ,1973	• Constitution 1992 • Law: - Law of UPE 1991 - Law of Education 1998 • Government documents: - **Presidential Decree No 17, 18, 19 on establishment of literacy and complementary classes throughout the country** - **Gov. Regulation No 90 (1993) on National Education System – NFE considered as one of 5 sub-systems** - EFA National Action Plan 2003-2015 - National Strategy on Education Development 2001-2010 • Minister Decree - Minister Decree on Development of Complementary Schools and Classes - Minister Decree No 3004 (1997) on Complementary Curriculum - Minister Decree No 48 (2002) on Lower Secondary Complementary Curriculum

	Bangladesh	Cambodia	China	Lao PDR	Mongolia	Myanmar	Viet Nam
Target groups	School dropouts, working children, hard to reach and adults	School dropouts, adults, minority groups disadvantaged children	School dropouts, youth and middle-aged adults 15-45 years old, with particular attention paid to women and girls	- Basic Literacy: out of school and dropouts 15-40 years old. - Primary: general population. - Secondary Education: Police, Army, government staff, youth, street children, disabled, offenders, prisoners, etc.	School dropouts, out-of-school children, youth and adults	Youth who do not enroll in school, out-of-school children from 7 years onward	Out-of-school youth and adults
Levels of FE/NFE equivalency (approx. number of learners at each level of EP for the current year)	Basic Education up to Grade III Vocational education – up to Grade V Under INFEP – 2.47 M learners were made literate	Literacy Grade IV 1,000,000 learners Literacy & Post Literacy Grade VI – 30,000 learners Lower secondary Grade IX – 1,500 learners Upper Secondary – Grade XII – 600 learners	Same levels are arranged at formal schools and private school while for illiteracy eradication the level is equal to Grade III of primary education	- Literacy graduates 45,000 (eradication basic literacy) - Primary graduates 25,000 (grades 1-5) - Lower Secondary graduates (grades 6-8) 2,000 learners - Upper Secondary graduates (grades 9-11 or 12 in the future) 3,000 learners	For 2004 academic year, more than 5,600 learners are involved in the NFE training by EP	Non-formal primary education : 2541 Over-aged school children : 50,721	Literacy =3rd grade: 45,000 - Primary education (4 – 5 grades) : 30,000 - Lower second ed (6-9 grades): 250,000 - Upper second ed (10-12 grades); 350,000 - Higher ed (college and university): 180,000
Main providers EP	NGOs are working both in basic and vocational education Government recently has taken up EP through Reaching Out-of-School Children (ROSC) Project	M/O Education, NGOs, international organisations	Private schools in urban areas and cultural and technical schools for farmers (some CLCs) with the support of primary schools in rural areas.	M/O Education, Department of NFE, provincial and district education services and bureaux	National level: NFDE Local level: Education and Cultural Department and NFE learning centres - local NGOs, civil society, international NGOs	Ministry of Education, NGOs, religious associations, international organisations	- CE Department MoE - National Institute for Education Strategy and Curriculum Development

	Bangladesh	Cambodia	China	Lao PDR	Mongolia	Myanmar	Viet Nam
Curriculum, types of learning materials produced	NCTB curriculum is followed; NGOs and UNICEF also developed some materials	Nationally developed curriculum for different target groups	No EP curriculum for basic education	For primary level, there are curriculum, reading books and materials. Additional learning materials for literacy programmes are under preparation.	Education Standards and NFE curriculum, student textbook for primary and basic education	Teacher guidebooks and student textbooks for NFPE learners, same competencies as formal schools

Other learning materials for main subjects, namely Myanmar, Math, English and General Studies (including Science, Social Science and Life Skills) | EPs have special curricula based on the FE curriculum; EPs use the same textbooks as FE |
| **Quality assurance mechanisms** | Some standard mechanism is to be developed; NBNFE and DBNFE are established to take care of NFE | Achievement test conducted by M/O level and by province and district authority for primary level. Education for secondary | Usually tests are conducted at private schools, while literacy tests are conducted by local education departments and would be checked and approved by provincial inspection | M/O Education Provincial and district-level authorities conduct tests | No specific mechanism to assure quality; same criteria of examination as for FE. | DMER and district-level authority conduct tests | - Network established for monitoring and evaluation at all levels
- Regular reports
- Field visits |
| **Capacity-building arrangements for admin and management** | NBNFE & DBNFE are established | M/O Education UNESCO UNICEF & ILO | Capacity-building arrangements for administration and management meetings and trainings are conducted by education departments at various levels | M/O Education | Various training for personnel; funding from the state budget "Top to bottom" approach dominates | DMER, DBEs conduct training for NFE facilitators | MoET is responsible but not systematic nor regular; inadequate development of training programmes; lack of training materials |

	Bangladesh	Cambodia	China	Lao PDR	Mongolia	Myanmar	Viet Nam
Key issues/ barriers to establishing equivalency	- Inadequate legislative support - Financial constraints	- Human resources - Infrastructure - Facilities - Funding - Lack of awareness	- No curriculum for non-formal basic education - Lack of awareness about the systematic equivalency mechanism and professional guidance of EPs	- Human resources infrastructure - Facilities - Budget	- Certification issues - Synergizing FE and NFE	- Funding for sustainability - Need to find to gov't and donor organisation support	- Low perception of NFE/EP - Gov's limited finance for NFE - Low quality
Cost factors for learners and providers	Education allowance and stipend for working children are provided by gov't. and development partners TK = 100 per student with reading materials and school uniform are given to learners	- Teaching and learning materials - Teacher incentives	- Paper, pencils and learning materials are supplied by country and township authorities	- Gov't. supplies learning materials - At secondary level, learners pay partially for teachers	- NGO contribution for learners and providers - Govt support for facilitators	- Textbooks, teacher salaries, transportation expenses, survey study, data collection etc.	Cost for learners: - Fee from learners - Cost of the textbooks and training materials Cost for providers: - Cost field visits and course/materials dev - Cost for capacity-building - Survey and datea collection
Evaluation/ assessment procedures	Uniform system is going to be developed by NBNFE under the guidance of MOPME	Ministry of Education and district authority conducts achievement test	On behalf of the provincial government, the provincial education department organizes supervision team to check the education quality for both formal school education and literacy education	District authority conducts exam for primary level Provincial: lower secondary level National: upper secondary and national examination	No systematic and sustainable evaluation procedures	District/township authority conducts achievement test and placement test - have primary completion certificate for Formal School - no certification for Non formal Primary education completers - need to develop standardized test for equivalency programme	Two kinds of assessment - Assessment of learning outcomes conducted by teachers during/after each semester - Promotion examination after literacy programme, after LSE & USE level by the provinces: test prepared by MoET

Policy, Target Groups and Delivery Mechanisms

Using results from the overall analysis of EPs in general, the participants reviewed specific aspects of programmes in the four research countries, namely policy, target groups and delivery mechanisms, followed by a review of existing practices in newly participating countries.

Open forum discussions addressed the following points:

• There should be a national education act and policy direction for an open learning system. These are not supposed to be separate entities and they can interface.

• The term "equivalency" needs to be clarified as to whether an EP has to be exactly the same as a formal system. Participants generally agreed that it is important to set a standard of competencies/achievement, then employ diverse approaches: either formal mechanisms or NFE through flexible programme delivery.

• Clarification on key concepts such as "equivalency," "distance education" and "open learning" is needed to ensure the quality of NFE programmes.

• Functionaries at the grassroots level play a critical role, but NFE workers often have low status and receive low salaries/honoraria.

Curriculum and Materials

Participants undertook an in-depth analysis of curricula and materials used in EPs. The following issues were highlighted during the discussion:

• Subject-based curricular inputs do not necessarily mean that they are straight-jacketed materials. There are ways to make them flexible through needs-based and participatory approaches.

• Issues related to the derivation of materials from a curriculum should be given proper attention. Otherwise, there is a danger that an innovative curriculum could generate traditional materials.

• There is a need to have different materials for children and adults according to their needs and demands for learning through an EP.

• There is a need to develop materials in the mother tongue, since learning is easier when done in one's own language.

Assessment

Participants shared their views about assessment and discussed the following key points:

• The assessment of learning outcomes and its certification deserve serious attention. They would help ensure quality and maintenance of standards for EPs. Examinations should be conducted strictly and efficiently for this purpose.

• Learning achievement can be assessed not only through examinations, but also by other means. If formal schools introduce automatic promotion without tests, EPs may also explore alternative means such as portfolios.

• Life skills should be included in the assessment together with academic subjects.

• There is a need to set up an efficient management information system (MIS) to keep records and information about EPs.

Suggestions for Synergy between Formal and Non-formal Systems

At present, some countries in the region face obstacles and challenges. There are problems of older children and youth who are out of school, of teachers in NFE programmes who are not permanent employees, of inadequate training programmes for NFE teachers, of inadequate NGO-GO partnerships, and (more importantly) of inadequate financial support for NFE programmes.

In order to circumvent these constraints, a well-formulated policy is needed that explains how to establish synergies between the formal and NFE systems.

In regard to cooperation and linkages between different agencies and personnel in formal education and NFE, there are several possibilities.

1. **Sharing physical resources**

   There could be a sharing of community resources such as formal school buildings, equipment, libraries, laboratories and school playgrounds. The OBEP of India is built on the concept of resource sharing.

2. **Sharing education personnel**

   Thailand's experience clearly shows how education personnel such as teachers, tutors, facilitators, vocational instructors and resource persons can be shared and how a smooth movement between the two systems can take place.

3. **Strengthening teacher training programmes**

   The existing formal in-service teacher training programmes could be strengthened by incorporating methodologies and processes found to be effective in NFE training programmes. Likewise, formal curriculum standards and materials could be incorporated into the in-service training of NFE personnel. Joint workshops would help in the exchange of ideas and experiences between not only teachers, but also officials in the two systems.

4. **Sharing accreditation and certification**

   If one institution could have the responsibility for conducting examinations for both the formal education and NFE systems, then credit transfer, accreditation and certification would become easier.

5. **Setting up an efficient management information system (MIS)**

    An efficient MIS could be set up if NFE data were integrated into national education statistics. Likewise, the inclusion of qualitative data on formal education (e.g., reasons for dropouts) would help in strengthening the MIS.

6. **Ensuring inter-agency cooperation**

    Such cooperation - not only between formal education and NFE, but also between the various departments and agencies - would ensure the strengthening of existing programmes.

    But for all this to happen, strong advocacy programmes are needed that would bring about general awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the formal and NFE systems.

Suggestions for Improving Quality

Some strategies for improving the quality of EPs are suggested below:

1. **Ensuring quality improvement**

    This means improving the quality of existing and new programmes. An efficient monitoring system that is formative and process-oriented would help to improve the content and the teaching/learning methodology of such programmes, as well as the outcomes of learning.

2. **Ensuring quality assurance**

    Establishing standards that have to be reached, improving the professional capacities of education personnel, and setting up an efficient and transparent assessment system would all go a long way toward improving the quality of EPs.

3. **Ensuring that livelihood issues are addressed**

    Because EPs have to principally address the needs of marginalized communities and groups, it is incumbent that livelihood issues are addressed in order to improve the quality of life for individuals and communities.

4. **Ensuring community participation**

    Community participation is essential for bringing about an overall improvement in the quality of the EPs. It is also necessary for ensuring the continuity and sustainability of these programmes. Community members also need to participate in setting up an efficient MIS to ensure greater accountability and transparency.

Conclusion

Key issues shared and discussed during the workshop may be summarized as follows:

• In order to meet EFA goals, it is essential to promote other forms of alternative learning through NFE for out-of-school children and disadvantaged groups. Inclusive education needs to consider the inclusion of alternative approaches such as EPs to accommodate those who cannot attend regular schools in developing countries. It may not be possible to place all of them in school.

• EPs have provided opportunities for formal education personnel to learn about NFE and explore possible alternative education arrangements for out-of-school children who cannot attend regular formal schools.

• In a learning society, EPs promote lifelong learning. People (particularly the disadvantaged, including out-of-school youth and adults) can choose the channel of learning which is the most appropriate and convenient for them so that they can pursue their studies beyond primary education to the upper secondary and tertiary levels.

• Identifying the learning needs of the target groups is a prerequisite and essential for the effective implementation and development of EPs.

• The notion of "equivalency" needs to be further examined, including issues involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of EPs. The importance of advocacy for promoting EPs should also be more widely recognized. It is, therefore, important for educators in the formal and non-formal sectors to cooperate and work closely to ensure standardization and quality.

• The setting of standards is crucial to maintaining the quality of EPs; at the same time, diversity in programme planning and implementation should be allowed in order to meet specific local needs and contexts.

ANNEXES

Annex 1:
A Guideline for Preparation of Research Studies on Equivalency Programmes for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning

I. Introduction

UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL), in line with the over-all goal of UNLD and EFA and in collaboration with UNESCO country offices, is currently implementing a project entitled, "Equivalency Programmes for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning".

In general, this project is designed to support the countries of the region to strengthen synergy between formal and non-formal education through the development of equivalency programmes for out-of-school children, youth and adults to access basic education and continuing education, and thereby improve the level of their education.

In particular, it will undertake research studies that will identify model equivalency programmes to highlight practical and effective practices. These will be shared during a regional workshop and can be replicated to help build EP capacity in the participating countries. *For details about the project, please refer to the project concept/document*.

The project will be implemented under UNESCO's regular budget and mainly under Japanese Funds-in-Trust for EFA. Under UNESCO's regular budget, four countries (India, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand) will be supported to conduct research studies on equivalency programmes according to this guideline. The research study will be carried out under the first phase from mid-March to June 2004.

II. Preparation of the Research Project

The following points should be taken into account when undertaking the research project:

1) Concept

"Equivalency programme" under this project is operationally defined as an alternative education to the existing formal education. The idea of equivalency may vary in the interpretation depending on the nature and context/situation of each country's educational system; however the concept of an "alternative learning system" is used for common understanding. This includes not only equivalency in terms of curriculum and certificates, but also policy support mechanism, delivery mode and capacity-building with support systems such as monitoring, evaluation and assessment of learning. The most important focus is to strengthen the synergy between both systems of education,

and to concentrate on the "models of equivalency programmes of selected countries that emphasize good and effective practices."

2) Research Abstract/ Conceptual Framework

The basic approach of this project is research and development (R&D). A need for a clear research abstract/conceptual model/framework must be developed to facilitate a better understanding of dependent and independent variables, the overall project direction and the connection of each research activity and its parts.

3) Research Team

Each participating country will form a research team to undertake a study on "models of equivalency programmes." NGOs, educational institutions and the APPEAL Resource and Training Consortium (ARTC) can participate or can partner in the research. A consultation between the government and the partner organisation should be done in the process. This research may also involve personnel such as policy makers, planners and curriculum developers (both from formal and non-formal education), other institutions of higher learning and grassroots implementers.

4) Source of Information

The research project may introduce the following UNESCO – APPEAL developed materials for project implementation:

• "Equivalency Programmes," Volume III of the *APPEAL Training Materials for Continuing Education Personnel (ATLP-CE)*

• *Innovations in Non-formal Education – A Review of Selected Initiatives from the Asia-Pacific Region*

• *Handbook on Effective Implementation of Continuing Education at the Grassroots Level*

The maximum and full use of existing mechanisms/infrastructures (such as the use of existing service providers and of ARTC as research project conduit) is highly recommendable.

5) Information/Experience Sharing

The results of the studies and the processes undertaken will be documented for sharing and dissemination during a regional workshop. Experts from equivalency programmes in Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and India will be maximally utilized to gain insight into: identifying and incorporating policy support system strategies, curriculum, materials development and learning assessment in order to strengthen project implementation (Phase 2).

III. Suggested Outline for Study Report

The research study report may be divided into two parts, in addition to the executive summary:

1) Executive Summary

This part gives an overview of the whole research report, and highlights rationale, the research outputs, good/best practices, challenges and recommendations.

2) Part 1: Research Objectives and Methodology

This part should state precisely how the study has been undertaken and cover the following main features:

• Preliminary Page

The preliminary (cover page) is the Research Description. The proponent will develop a half page brief description of the research study, identifying and explaining the general purpose and importance of the study in their own context/country, target sites and sampling size, time frame, organisation/agencies involved and the indicative cost.

• Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the research ensure the clear and direct link to the methodology and activities of the research. Therefore, the broad objective of this study is geared towards the strengthening synergy of the formal and non-formal education. The specific objectives are:

a) to identify innovative strategies and effective approaches of the equivalency programmes model;

b) to assess the effect of the model equivalency programmes in promoting access and equity of education services;

c) to make recommendations for synergy, focusing on policy formulation, curriculum development, delivery mechanisms and capacity-building of personnel to strengthen the synergy between formal and non-formal education;

d) to determine and suggest measures for replication of effective equivalency programmes; and

e) to capture and document the processes involved from the start to present covering the different areas and developmental stages of equivalency programmes as the core outcome of study.

• **Scope and Coverage**

This describes the geographic (stratified location/sites (both urban and rural/city or far-flung/remote areas), socio-economic situation/condition, purposive sampling population and target size being studied. It includes the description of information sources, investigation coverage and parameters of the study.

• **Research methodology**

The research methodology should capture the complex dynamics of the various equivalency programme models. It includes the statistical design/treatment, as well as identification and selection of investigative approaches that contribute to achieving the research study objectives.

3) Part 2: Research Content

Part 2 provides specific information about equivalency programmes in each country. The following is a suggested outline:

• **Background**

The background of the study should be concise and precise. This includes a brief description of the educational context/trends, literacy and continuing education situation highlighting the main issues and concerns, main delivery mode of formal and non-formal education, and the policy support system/legal mandates.

• **Main content of equivalency programmes**

The research should focus on good and effective practices from the actual implementation of existing equivalency programmes, with proper documentation of the processes involved since the programme's start. It highlights the "how to" and the "breakthroughs" of the implementation that have led to success as a model equivalency programme. A video documentary of success stories and effective process evaluation can also be submitted by participating countries as part of the research report document. The following is suggested content:

- National equivalency programmes
- Policy support mechanism
- Target learners
- Curriculum and learning materials development
- Capacity-building of personnel
- Delivery mechanism
- Teaching-learning process
- Accreditation and certification and learning assessment.

- **Outputs of Research**

This section should analyze and synthesise key findings of the study, covering both quantitative and qualitative results that demonstrate good/effective practices of equivalency programmes. It describes successes and identifies relationship, patterns that have strengthened synergies between formal and non-formal education.

- **Conclusion and Recommendation**

At the end of the study, it is likewise important to present recommendations by specific category, such as planning, organizing, implementation, training etc. It describes the evaluative implication of the findings to real practice/situation of programme implementation and highlights possible policy formulation and courses of action based on the findings of the study. This section also considers lessons learnt, future challenges and recommendations on practical utilization of the findings and their implication.

IV. Proposed Time Schedule

The research activities will be implemented during the overall project's first phase (three month duration). The following activities vis á vis timelines are:

Activities	Time frame
Development of guideline on the preparation of research study	February 2005
Refinement of guidelines and development of research abstract/conceptual framework	Mid March 2005
Contract issued by UNESCO for undertaking research study	Late March 2005
Implementation of the research study Submission of research progress report	March to June 2005 April 2005
Submission of final reports/complete research final copy	June 2005
Dissemination of the research study	July 2005

V. Budget

Each participating country will prepare and submit together with the research proposal their own budgetary allocation for this study, which will range from US $5,000 to $6,000. Please indicate if there is additional or matching resources from government and other donors (human and materials resources).

Annex 2:
List of Participants

PARTICIPANTS

BANGLADESH

Mr. Md Abdus Salam Khan
Additional Secretary
Ministry of Mass and Primary Education
(MOPME)
Building # 6, Bangladesh Secretariat,
Dhaka-1000
Tel: 880-2-7173461
Fax: 880-2-7168871
E-mail: pmed.gob@bdcom.com

Prof. Iqbal Aziz Muttaqi
Institute of Education and Research
University of Dhaka
Dhaka 1000
Tel: 880-2-9661920-59 Ext. 6188
Fax: 880-2-8615583
E-mail: muttaqi@citechco.net

CAMBODIA

Mr. Bun SOK
Secretary of State
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
80, Preah Norodom Blvd., Phnom Penh
Tel: 855- 23 217250, 855-16835787 (mobile)
Fax: 855- 23 217 250/240 369/217 022
E-mail: nfe@camnet.com.kh

Mr. In The
Deputy Director
General Ministry of Education and Sports
169 Preah Norodom Bldg.
Sangkat Boeung Keng Kang I,
Khan Chamkar Morn
Phnom Penh
Tel: 855-23 219258, 855-11813737 (mobile)
Fax: 855-23 219257
E-mail: nfe@camnet.com.kh

Mr. Tauch Choeun
Deputy Director
Non-Formal Education Department
169, Preah Norodom Blvd., Phnom Penh
Tel: 855 23 362 334, 855 12901224 (mobile)
Fax: 855 23 217 250/240 369/217 022
E-mail: nfe@camnet.com.kh

CHINA

Mr. Qi Zhiyong
Deputy Director
Gansu Institute for Educational Research
No. 51 Guangchang Nanlu, Lanzhou,
Gansu Province, 730000
Tel: 86-931-8960256
Fax: 86-931-8960679
E-mail: qzy_gsier@gsier.com.cn

Mr. Yuan Yimin
Deputy Director
Jiangsu Agency for Educational Evaluation
15 West Beijing Road, Nanjing 210024
Tel: 86-25-83239018
E-mail: yuanym@ec.js.edu.cn

INDIA

Ms. Anita Priyadarshini
Deputy Director
National Institute of Open Schooling
B 31B Kailash Colony
New Delhi 110048
Fax: 91-11-26282499
E-mail: anpriya@yahoo.com

INDONESIA

Dr. (Ms.) Ella Yulaelawati
Deputy Director of Equivalency Program
Directorate General of Out-of-School Education
and Youth
Ministry of National Education
Tel/Fax: 62-21-5725507
E-mail: yulaela@cbn.net.id

LAO, PDR

Mr. Khamhoung Sacklokham
Director-General
Department of General Education
Ministry of Education
Lane Xang Avenue
B.P. 67, Vientiane
Tel: 007-215-423, 911-494
Fax: 007-856-21-215-423,911
E-mail: Kadamvd@yahoo.com

Mr. Ounpheng Khammang
Deputy Chief
Planning and Administration Division
Department of Non-formal Education
Ministry of Education
Lane Xang Road, P.O. Box 67, Vientiane
Tel: 856 21 213980
Fax: 856 21 223489
E-mail: k_ounpheng@yahoo.com

Mr. Vanhsay Noraseng
Deputy Director-General
Department of Non-formal Education
Ministry of Education
Lane Xang Road, P.O. Box 67, Vientiane
Tel: 856 21 213980; Fax: 856 21 223489
E-mail: vanhsayek@yahoo.com

MONGOLIA

Ms. Yembuu Batchuluun
Director
National Non-Formal and Distance
Education Centre
Government Building - 10
Barilgachdiin talbai-2, Ulaanbaatar-44
Tel: 976-11 32 43 44; Fax: 976-11 32 43 44
E-mail: batchuluun@nfde.mn and
batchuluun@hotmail.com

Mr. Luvsandorj Tsogdov
Curriculum Specialist
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
Government Building 3
Ulaanbaatar
Fax: 976-11-323158
E-mail: luvsandorj@mecs.pmis.gov.mn

MYANMAR

Mr. Thura Aung Tun
Chairman
Myanmar Board of Examination
No.166, Latha Street, Latha Township,
Yangon
Tel: 95-1-371978
Fax: 95-1-256229

Ms. Daw Ni Ni San
Assistant Education Rearch Officer
Department of Myanmar Education
Research Bureau.
426, Pyay Road,Yangon University
Compound,
Kamayut Township, Yangon
Tel: 95-1-502077; Fax: 95-1-526153
E-mail: merbmlrc@mptmail.net.mm

PHILIPPINES

Dr. (Mr.) Eliseo Barsaga
Program Director for Research
SEAMEO-INNOTECH
Tel: (632) – 9247681 loc. 118
Fax: (632) – 9287694
E-mail: ely@seameo-innotech.org

Ms. Zenaida Domingo
Head, Business Development Office
SEAMEO-INNOTECH
Tel: (632) – 9267348
Fax: (632) – 9210224
E-mail: zeny@seameo-innotech.org

Ms. Carolina S. Guerrero
Director IV
Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS)
Department of Education
Tel: (632) - 6355188
Telefax: (632) – 6355189
E-mail: carolebnfe@yahoo.com

THAILAND

Ms. Rungnapa Nutravong
Education Officer
Bureau of Academic Affairs &
Education Standards
Office of Basic Education Commission
Ministry of Education
Bangkok, 10300
Tel: 66 2 282 9222 Ext 707
Fax: 66 2 628 5335/0 2281 1912
E-mail: rungvong@hotmail.com

Dr. (Ms.) Wisanee Siltragool
Education Officer
Office of Non Formal Education Commission
Ministry of Education
Bangkok, 10300
Tel: 66 2 282 2853
Fax: 66 2 280 1688
E-mail: wisanee44@yahoo.com

VIET NAM

Mr. Nguyen Cong Hinh
Senior expert
Continuing Education Department
Ministry of Education and Training
49 – Dai Co Viet St., Hanoi
Tel: 84-4-8681405
E-mail: nguyenconghinh@yahoo.com

Ms. Thai Xuan Dao
Director
Research Centre for Non-formal Education
National Institute for Education Strategies
and Curriculum
4 Trinh Hoai Duc, Hanoi
Tel: 84-4 823 2562
Fax: 84-4 7332008
E-mail: thaixuandao@yahoo.com

RESOURCE PERSON

Ms. Anita Dighe
Director
Campus of Open Learning
University of Delhi, New Delhi
110007
Tel: 91-11-2766-2449 Fax: 91-11-2766-7799
E-mail: dir_col@du.ac.in

LOCAL HOST SECRETARIAT

Ms. Carmelita P. Joble
Chief
Continuing Education Division
Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS)
Department of Education

Ms. Abigail C. Lanceta
Education Program Specialist II
Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS)
Department of Education

Ms. Sharon B. Buti
Education Program Specialist II
Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS)
Department of Education

UNESCO SECRETARIAT

**UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau
for Education**
920 Sukhumvit Road, Bangkok 10110
Tel: 66-2 3910550; Fax: 66-2 3910866

Mr. A.H.A. Hakeem
Coordinator, APPEAL
E-mail: a.hakeem@unescobkk.org

Mr. Kiichi Oyasu
Specialist in Literacy, APPEAL
E-mail: k.oyasu@unescobkk.org

Ms. Darunee Riewpituk
Specialist in Continuing Education, APPEAL
E-mail: r.darunee@unescobkk.org

Ms. Valentina Belosludtseva
Secondment, APPEAL
E-mail : v.belosludtseva@unescobkk.org

Ms. Lifang Wang
Secondment, APPEAL
E-mail : l.wang@unescobkk.org

Ms. Yoko Sato
Intern, EPR
E-mail: y.sato@unescobkk.org