

PN-ACA-768

**Adult Education in Asia and the Pacific:  
Policies, Issues, and Trends**

by

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A collaborative study sponsored by the  
UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok, Thailand)  
and the United States Agency for International Development through the  
Advancing Basic Education and Literacy (ABEL) Project

1997

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## FOREWORD

This monograph draws on country notes and other materials generated during and in preparation for the Asia and Pacific Consultation on Adult Education for Development organized jointly by UNESCO's Asia and Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) and the Department of Non-Formal Education, Ministry of Education, Royal Government of Thailand in Jomtien, Thailand on 16–18 September 1996. The Consultation was in preparation for the UNESCO International Conference on Adult Education which is scheduled to take place in Hamburg, Germany, in July 1997.

Analyses contained in this monograph are based on information and assessments about programmes and development taking place in adult education in selected countries of the region based, in part, on country notes received from a limited number of countries.

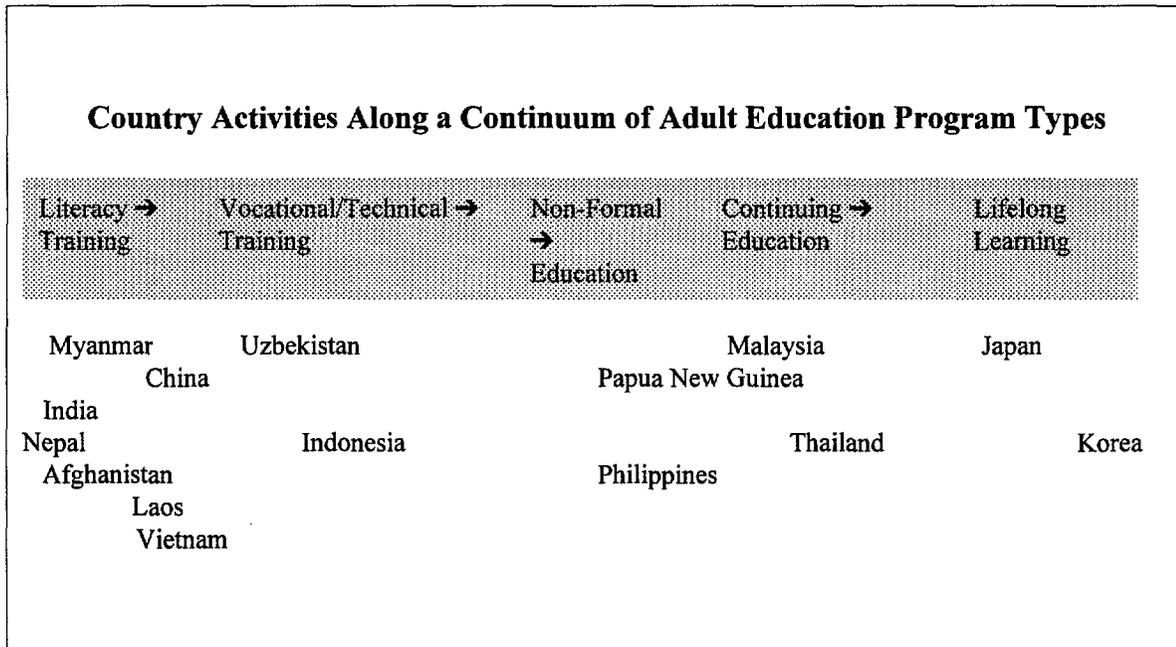
This monograph has been prepared as a collaborative effort of the UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and the Advancing Basic Education and Literacy Project, which is funded by the Human Capacity Development Center of the United States Agency for International Development. We thank Ms. Lorecia Roland of the Academy for Educational Development in Washington, DC, for her work in preparing this monograph.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many individuals and organizations played a significant role in the development of this monograph. I would like to thank the Asia and Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and Pacific, Bangkok—particularly Mr. Prem Kasaju and Ms. Darunee Riewpituk for their guidance and assistance. I would also like to thank Dr. David W. Chapman of the Advancing Basic Education and Literacy Project for his continued support and advice. Ms. Beverly Jones of the Academy for Educational Development presented an earlier version of this paper at the Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation on Adult Education, 16-18 September 1996, in Bangkok, Thailand. She was also immensely helpful in contributing useful information to the final drafts of the document.

## A "Map" of Adult Education Activities in the Asia-Pacific Region



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## Introduction

One of the most profound problems facing governments throughout the Asia-Pacific region is how to effectively respond to the education needs of the 889 million adults (1989) in the region who, as children, missed the opportunity to attend school or dropped out of school before attaining essential skills and knowledge. While virtually all countries in the region have developed some form of adult education, these programs vary considerably in their purpose, design, methods of operation, and ultimate success. Moreover, adult education is often outside the mainstream of the formal education system. As such, it may lack the infrastructure, the funding, and the political support it needs to fully respond to the demand.

The reasons adults missed the opportunity for formal schooling vary by individual history—family economic constraints, lack of access to a school, low-quality instruction that led to early drop-out, or membership in a group whose participation in schooling was limited by discrimination. Whatever the reason, many adults realize the economic, social, and political benefits of education and now seek to catch up. Yet adult education has come to mean different things in different countries. In some it is viewed as basic literacy training, in others it is more closely connected to vocational skill development, and in still others countries it is viewed more as self-enrichment. Perhaps for that reason, there has not been much cross-national sharing of information about what adult education activities are underway in ways that would help countries learn from the experiences of each other. This monograph is an effort to address this information need.

This monograph surveys the range of creative approaches that governments in the Asia-Pacific region have developed for providing basic education to adults. It is intended to better inform educators in the region about the program design options available to them, the experience of neighboring countries in implementing these designs, and the practical problems they should expect to face in developing programs to reach this important group. Specifically, the monograph describes the variety of adult education programs operating in the region, the audiences the different programs seek to serve, their methods for reaching adults, how programs are funded, and the issues and problems the various programs have had to address.

## Context for Adult Education in the Region

### *UNESCO's Interest in Adult Education*

UNESCO has had a long interest in and commitment to adult education. At the UNESCO-sponsored International Conference on Adult Education held in Paris in 1985, representatives of Ministries of Education and other institutions and organizations from throughout the Asia-Pacific region met to discuss and formulate strategies for advancing the cause of adult education. Ten years later, in 1996, in preparation for the next International Conference on Adult Education scheduled to be organized in July 1997, in Hamburg, Germany, UNESCO's Asia and Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL), in collaboration with Thailand's Department of Non-Formal Education in the Ministry of Education, convened the Asia and Pacific Regional Consultation on Adult Education. The Consultation served as a forum in which representatives of Member States could share information, learn of recent progress, and discuss new directions and trends in the field. This document summarizes recent literature and experience of APPEAL member countries in the Asia-Pacific region in the intervening ten years. In addition, it draws on country notes provided by **Cambodia, India, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Thailand, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam** with up-to-date, country-specific information.

This monograph is part of UNESCO's commitment to encourage sharing of educational program information across the region. Preparation of this monograph was co-sponsored by APPEAL and the Advancing Basic Education and Literacy Project (ABEL 2), which is sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by an international consortium of organizations, led by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) in Washington, DC.

### *Focus on the Asia-Pacific Region*

The primary focus of this monograph is in three geographical areas: (a) *South Asia*, (b) *East Asia and the Pacific*, and (c) *South-East Asia*. **South Asia** is understood to include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and Uzbekistan. These countries, in general and with some exceptions, are characterized by less developed economies and low levels of literacy. Indeed, the region has been referred to by local authors as "the illiteracy bowl" (Nayar, 1989). Most countries in this group continue to concentrate their adult education programs on literacy training, although continuing education efforts are increasingly being incorporated into these programs.

**East Asia and the Pacific** includes Australia, Brunei, China, Fiji, Japan, Kiribati, Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Singapore, the Solomon Islands, Malaysia, Thailand, Tonga, and Vanuatu. While there is considerable variation within the region, compared to South Asia these countries tend to have stronger economies. While some are still concentrating their adult education efforts on literacy training, several have extended their focus to include continuing education. Some examples of country concentrations are as follows:

**Malaysia** and **Thailand** associate adult education with human resource development; the desire is to develop human potential and improve the quality of life through continuing education programs. **China** expects adult education to play a role in national modernization efforts and development programs. **Japan** and **Korea**, having gone through periods of rapid economic growth, are concentrating on lifelong learning.

*South-East Asia* is comprised of Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos PDR, Myanmar (or Burma), the Philippines, and Vietnam. The region's economy and adult education efforts fall between those of the South Asia region and the East Asia/Pacific region.

***Literacy in the Region***

The central purpose of many adult education programs is literacy training. In this, the region has enjoyed some success. While literacy is still low in many countries, particularly in the South Asia region, the figures are steadily improving in virtually all countries in the region. As Table 1 demonstrates, literacy rates in the South Asia region rose from 49% in 1990 to 53% in 1995; in East Asia rose from 87% in 1990 to 89% in 1995; South-East Asia from 83% in 1990 to 85% in 1995; and the Pacific from 79% in 1990 to 82% in 1995.

**Table 1: Literacy Gains in the Region**

	1990	1995
<b>S. Asia</b>	49%	53%
<b>East Asia</b>	87%	89%
<b>South-East Asia</b>	83%	85%
<b>the Pacific</b>	79%	82%

Source: UNESCO Compendium of Statistics on Illiteracy, 1995 Edition  
 Data provided by: UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

However, many literacy programs incorporate much broader skills than learning to read and write. Whether by design or by accident, program planners in the Asia-Pacific region have found that they are more effective at imparting literacy skills if combined with the teaching of relevant life skills.

## Adult Education in the Asia-Pacific Region

### *What is it?*

Adult education is a term used to describe a wide range of educational services provided to youth and adults who either never received formal basic education or received too little to establish literacy and numeracy. It encompasses programs to provide youth and adults with life skills for economic and/or social development, such as skills training, apprenticeships, and formal and non-formal programs in health, nutrition, population, agricultural techniques, the environment, science, technology, family life, and other societal issues. Countries in the region use several different terms to describe activities that involve the education of adults. Elaboration of those terms helps illustrate the variety of programs that are underway in the Asia-Pacific area.

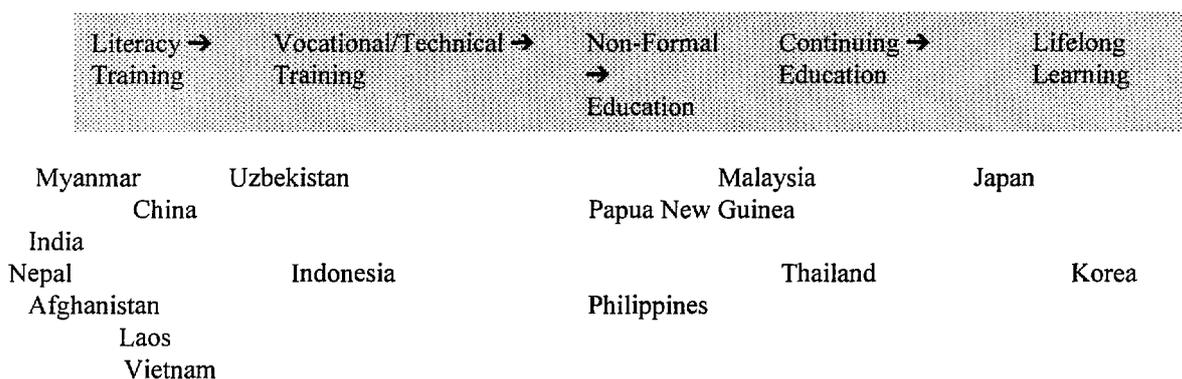
- ***Literacy Training*** is probably the most prominent form of adult education, at least in the South Asia region. The conventional wisdom is that if adults were more literate and numerate, they would be eligible for higher level jobs or be able to perform their current jobs better. Increased job performance contributes to a more robust national economy. Consequently, in less economically developed countries, where literacy rates tend to be extremely low, adult education is generally focused on literacy training. Many of the countries under analysis have initiated mass literacy programs to address such concerns.
- ***Vocational/Technical Education*** refers to educational programs that are designed to enhance particular skills or job performance of participants. Such programs are considered a form of adult education in that they are generally geared toward the workforce. Such programs may be sponsored by the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), employers, or other interested parties.
- ***Non-formal Education*** (NFE) is a general term that is often associated with adult education programs, though it can actually refer to activities for younger people as well. Non-formal education refers to all educational programs that are outside of the formal education system. Such programs may be sponsored by government, but they are often sponsored by local NGOs, international donor organizations, universities and research groups, or private institutions. In selected countries such as **Thailand** and **Indonesia**, and increasingly elsewhere in the region, non-formal education programs have formed an important part of the national strategy of the Ministries of Education for achieving the goal of basic education for all.
- ***Continuing Education*** differs in meaning from country to country. Broadly speaking, it refers to the continuing efforts to maintain literacy among newly literate populations. The experience of the more developed countries in the Asia-Pacific region in which literacy goals have nearly been attained is that newly literate individuals are likely to lapse back into illiteracy unless specific efforts are made to reinforce and support the initial learning. Such programs have been found to be most successful when they relate

to life skills development: for instance, agriculture, crafts, health and hygiene, or child-rearing. Efforts have also gone into developing more reading materials and libraries in several countries so that the newly literate population will have access to reading material on a wide range of subjects with which to practice their new skills.

- **Lifelong Learning** is a term used, particularly in industrialized countries, for programs in which the objective is to have citizens continue the educational process on their own: “learning for its own sake.” In most developing countries, the adult population is focused on surviving from day to day; lifelong learning is a luxury that many in Asian-Pacific countries feel they cannot afford. Nonetheless, in some countries in the region, the concept of lifelong learning is beginning to gain momentum.

The emphasis a country places on adult education is, in part, related to the economic development of the country. Adult education initiatives in countries at earlier stages of economic development tend to concentrate on pragmatic ends—literacy, numeracy, vocational skill development. Countries with stronger economies tend to emphasize individual enrichment. Figure 1 illustrates the general continuum.

**Figure 1: Continuum of Adult Education Program Types**



***Who participates in adult education?***

While there is no single definition of who is considered an “adult,” most countries in the region define adults to be the out-of-(formal) school population of 15- to 35-year-olds. Some countries have stretched that range from 14 to 40, while others consider those aged 25 and up to be adults. Nonetheless, the narrower 15-to-35 range is the best approximation for what many in the region consider candidates for adult education. In general, literacy, vocational, and technical training are targeted at those who missed formal schooling. Continuing education and lifelong learning are designed as add-on experiences for people who did receive at least some formal education but either need or want additional education.

### Box 1: Who Participates in Adult Education?

- ▣ Those too poor to have attended school.
- ▣ Minority groups that were denied access to formal schooling.
- ▣ Those in distant locations without access to a school.
- ▣ Those excluded from school due to discrimination.
- ▣ Those whose parents did not think it important to send them to school (often the case with girls).

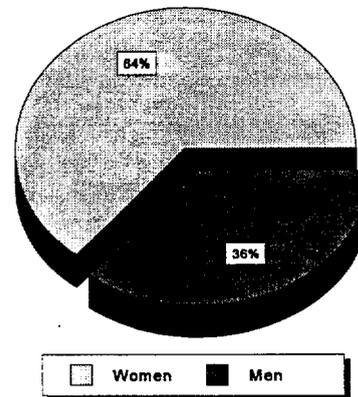
As Figure 1 illustrates, the focus of most adult education programs across the region is literacy. The people most likely to need or want to participate in these programs are a direct function of the groups that have been excluded from formal schooling. Several groups stand out: women, those in remote or isolated rural areas, those in overcrowded urban slums, minorities, the physically disabled, and the socially disadvantaged.

*Women* comprise one of the most prominent groups. Since the majority of

the illiterate population in the Asia-Pacific region is female, it is not surprising that enrollment in many of the adult education programs within the region is also overwhelmingly female. In most countries in the region, the female illiteracy rate is at least 1.5 times that of males. Of the 889 million illiterates in the Asia-Pacific region in 1989, nearly two-thirds (593 million) are women (Figure 2). The numbers are staggering: There are 159 million adult female illiterates in **China**, 144 million in **India**, 18 million each in **Pakistan** and **Bangladesh**, 6.8 million each in **Iran** and **Turkey**, 4 million in **Nepal**, and 3.3 million in **Afghanistan**. Only in the **Philippines**, **Japan**, and the **Maldives** (in Asia) and in **Australia**, **New Zealand**, **Tonga** and **Samoa** (in the Pacific) are literacy rates roughly equal between males and females. Gender disparities in access to formal schooling are further exacerbated by urban/rural disparities and by cultural views that tend to work to the disadvantage of females.

Women are often caught in the convergence of cultural and economic circumstances that limit their ability to participate in the formal educational system. Cultural traditions in some countries within the region dictate that women carry the major responsibility for such household duties as feeding the family, feeding the livestock, fetching cooking and bathing water, and caring for the children. Many also have roles as farmers and producers in subsistence agriculture. Young girls are often withdrawn from school at a young age to assist their mothers with such duties.

**Figure 2: Female Illiteracy as a Proportion of Total Illiteracy in the Asia-Pacific Region**



Source: World Education Report 1995  
Data provided by: UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Moreover, the tradition of girls marrying early in their adolescence often removes them prematurely from educational opportunities. Further, in countries with dowries, education tends to increase a girl's dowry price, thereby reducing her options for a marriage partner. These girls grow up to be partially or completely illiterate as adults.

At the same time, the potential benefits of literacy training for women have been well established. Female literacy is positively related to improved family health and nutrition. In countries where women play an important role in farming, literacy has been linked to improved land use and agricultural practices. There is also a positive inter-generational effect of literacy. Educated women are more likely to enroll their own daughters in school.

Given the cyclical relationship between girls' and women's education, described above, the association between the adult female and the girl-child is understandable; however, the literature reviewed linked the categories of "Girls and Women" so often that one could only hope that adequate distinctions had been made between the two in the curricula. Women have more advanced educational needs than girls and should not be taught verbatim from the same curriculum. In the same way, women, due to their particular cultural circumstances (as described in the paragraph above), have needs that may distinguish them from their male counterparts.

A tendency in the design of programs for women has been described by one author as the "doctrine of domestication" or the "home economics" syndrome. Programs seeking to be relevant may focus on enhancing women's domestic skills—sewing and craft making, cooking or family health, nutrition or family planning—as though the home were the only aspect of their lives. Women continue to be excluded from training in agriculture or technology, fields in which many women might participate.

There are others, in addition to females, who have been under-represented in the formal education system and who seek access to literacy and other adult education opportunities. In particular, adults in *remote or isolated rural areas*, those in *overcrowded urban slums*, those belonging to *ethnic minorities*, those from *socio-economically disadvantaged* families, and those with *physical disabilities* are more likely to have missed out on formal schooling and, consequently, have the most interest in and need for adult education.

One dilemma facing people responsible for designing and implementing adult education programs is that these under-represented groups may, themselves, differ widely in what they need and how those needs are best met. A single curriculum may not meet the needs of all these subgroups to the same extent. Nonetheless, one element operates in common: most adults seeking basic literacy and/or vocational skills training view it as a route to improved economic opportunity. The most successful programs involve income-generating activities. For example, **Afghanistan** has had a notable case in which literacy programs have been combined with vocational training and health care.

In the Asia-Pacific region, much of the ethnic minority population lives in virtual isolation. The Orang Asli in **Malaysia** and the aboriginal people of **Australia** and **New Zealand** are examples. Location is one of the issues of access for the Orang Asli. Another is that poorly educated parents have little concept of the need to educate their children. The literature reviewed on the Orang Asli was specific to children's education, but it is clear that the parents need to be educated as well. Further, educational planners need to figure out the *purpose* of that education so that the education is useful to the target population; otherwise problems of poor retention will continue.

Cultural barriers leave some potential learners out in the end. That culture is, and has been, a major impediment for many in attaining learning objectives must be acknowledged by policy makers or progress can never be made. In the same way that in many countries culture has traditionally dictated that women are ineligible for educational opportunities, also neglected are the disabled, ethnic or religious minorities, and members of the population that may be difficult to reach in urban slum, rural, or isolated locales. Realizing that it is harder to change mind-sets than it is to change policy, policy makers must first be absolutely determined to provide access to these target groups. They can then move ahead to figure out what kind of education these individuals want and require and then how best to deliver it. It is important that the learners' context be considered or the program is not likely to succeed. With particular regard to these neglected target populations, research is needed on adult learners as distinct from children.

### ***What is taught?—Developing an adult-appropriate curriculum***

Adult educators must recognize that a successful adult education program depends on having adult-appropriate learning materials. Adults are not children; they have already learned many of the life lessons contained in the instructional materials used in the regular (formal) school curriculum. The adult curriculum must be relevant to the lives and survival needs of the adult learner in order to maintain his or her interest. For example, the content of the reading materials for adult literacy training needs to address adult issues and portray adult relationships.

The curriculum must be relevant to or have an immediate impact on their lives—to the point that imparting literacy or numeracy skills is almost incidental. For example, **Australia** and **New Zealand**, among others, are seeking to link remedial education, including instruction in literacy and numeracy, to vocational training. In other countries, the linkage is to civic education, development training, or the fostering of parenting skills. In combination with continuing education, such basic education skills development would constitute a “curriculum for life.”

Further, if a program is finding that significant numbers of students are leaving the program, it is imperative to find out why and make adjustments accordingly. There may be home issues such as the spread of a serious illness, or a broad food shortage, or climate or weather pattern issues such as the anticipation of the rainy season. Whatever the case, planners need to figure out the issue and address it in the classrooms in a way that continues to convey basic education skills.

Adults generally have rather valid reasons to stop attending class; planners need to listen to these reasons.

### ***Reaching the learner: Distance education***

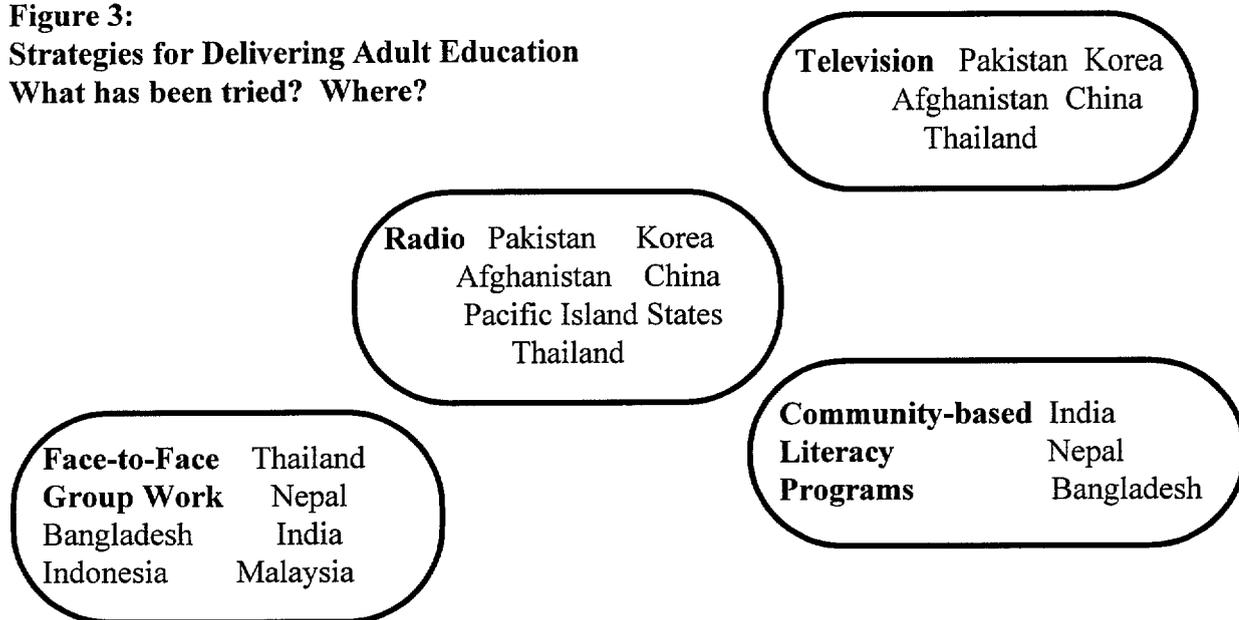
Participants in adult education programs are often widely dispersed geographically and may be caught in competing work and family obligations that make it difficult for them to consistently appear at a fixed time and place for instruction. Consequently, countries have sought creative strategies for reaching learners that are compatible with the demands on learners' lives. For example, public libraries, mobile libraries, educational radio and television, and folk media have been used effectively for continuing education efforts in many countries. A **Malaysian** newspaper won a literacy prize in 1987 for its publication of special reading materials for newly literate learners. In **Thailand**, a nationwide system of village newspaper reading centers has been established to strengthen the commercial delivery network of reading materials to rural communities.

<b>Box 2: Strategies for Reaching the People</b>	
→	public libraries
→	mobile libraries
→	educational radio
→	educational television
→	community-based NGOs
→	special supplements in newspaper
→	linkages with formal schooling
→	provision of books to temples, churches, and other groups
→	non-formal meeting places
→	community learning centers
→	mobile learning class arrangements
→	development of special textbooks and learning materials for adult learners

Of particular note is the increasing role that technology is playing in the delivery of adult education. As more regions gain access to radio and television, technology-based strategies for delivering adult education are becoming more prominent in the region. Distance education techniques (radio, television) are of particular interest as a way of delivering adult education, given the potential for reaching people in hard-to-reach places. Figure 3, below, graphically displays distance education methods in different countries of the region. Distance education has been employed to promote literacy through television programs in **Pakistan** and through radio correspondence courses in **Thailand**. These courses are often accompanied by periodic facilitated group meetings, as in the Adult Functional Literacy Project's television viewing centers in **Pakistan**. Research has shown that a far greater number of people benefit from the courses than just the participants in the viewing centers. The BBC Education Drama program in **Afghanistan** represents a successful example of the use of radio to address some of the basic education needs of people beset by war. Newspapers in **Bangladesh** have been used to raise public awareness of the national commitment to Education for All issues. **China** uses the media—newspaper and radio—to serve its vast population at a modest cost. **Korea** is opening thirty television channels for educational purposes, four for direct instruction and the others for

program information. The **Pacific Island States** find radio to be a highly cost-effective means of enriching programs in schools in remote and hard-to-serve locations.

**Figure 3:**  
**Strategies for Delivering Adult Education**  
**What has been tried? Where?**



Distance education and mass media in education are particularly useful in financially difficult times; however, a major shortcoming is the lack of adequate infrastructure, especially in the rural areas where educational services are most needed. By all accounts distance education efforts need to be exploited further.

### **Delivery of Adult Education**

Countries with large illiterate populations often implement *mass literacy campaigns* or *functional literacy campaigns*. *Mass literacy* campaigns, as have been practiced in **China**, **Myanmar** (Burma), **Vietnam**, and **Laos** as well as several South Asian countries, are national efforts to mobilize the illiterate masses to learn to read and write in a relatively short period of time. The caveat in such programs is that, while they have a quantitatively broad impact, their effectiveness tends to be short-term. When the campaign is over, the excitement about literacy dissipates and motivation tends to wane. Mass literacy campaigns have a better chance at longer-term success when provisions are made for follow-up. **India** and **Bangladesh** have implemented Total Literacy Movements that involve the entire community, not just individual learners. The follow-on programs offer learners an opportunity to practice literacy skills while also conveying content that promotes other aspects of development, such as good nutrition or better agricultural practices. The general principle is that adults' demand for literacy depends

largely on the extent that literacy is viewed as instrumental in fulfilling adults' economic, social, and cultural needs.

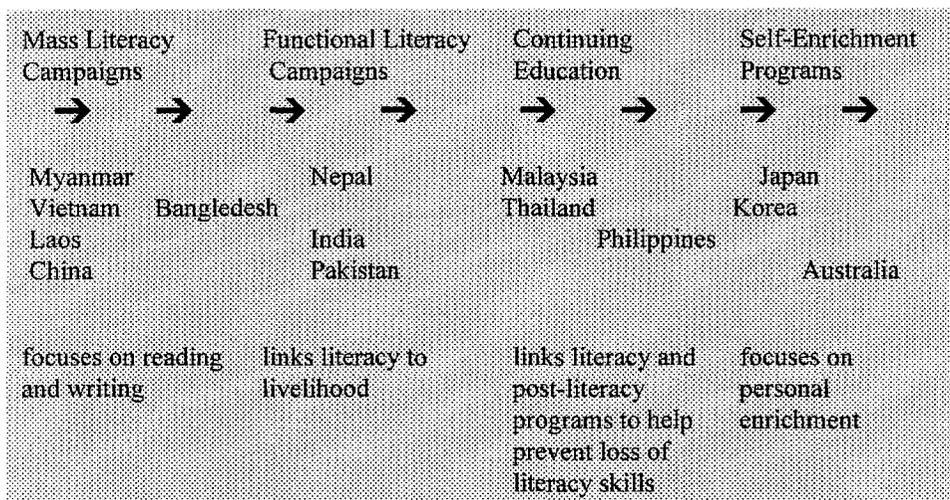
*Functional literacy* campaigns start at the later point of motivating learners to participate by developing meaningful levels of literacy and linking that literacy to livelihood. These campaigns, while much more focused with regard to geography, content, and target groups, are also much more costly than the mass literacy campaigns. Many countries have found combinations of the mass literacy campaigns and the functional literacy campaigns to be effective. At the conclusion of a mass campaign, **Indonesia** implemented a basic education program and later a large-scale and more functional project—Kejar Paket A. On the other hand, **Nepal** began its literacy effort with experimental functional literacy programs designed to develop an institutional network and foster technical capabilities, which are now being used to implement a national (mass) literacy campaign. **Thailand** used a mass literacy campaign to raise its literacy levels in the 1940s and has since focused its functional literacy programs on target groups. The number of individuals reached through such campaigns is understandably much less than through mass literacy campaigns.

*Continuing education* efforts have been used to link literacy and post-literacy programs. Like literacy program follow-up activities, continuing education is an effort directed toward recently literate individuals so that they do not lose those skills. And like the functional literacy programs, continuing education tends to be relevant to the participants' lives. Appropriate literature is not broadly available in many countries of the Asia-Pacific region; the literature that is found is most likely in the national language or even a foreign language altogether. The reading levels required for such material are often beyond those of the learners or newly-literate, and, of course, the content of children's textbooks is generally too elementary for adults to take seriously. In many countries, continuing education activities involve the development of simple reading materials, such as rural newspapers for distribution to neo-literates. In **Vietnam**, workers are eligible to receive paid study leave to continue post-literacy complementary education, while in **Indonesia** employment-oriented training programs allow participants to receive training and revolving loan funds to initiate or improve earning activities, youth training programs, and apprenticeship or vocational courses. In **Malaysia**, continuing education includes family development programs, religious and moral education, leadership training, and industrial training programs.

*Self-enrichment* is the end objective on the continuum of adult education strategies. It is anticipated that access to educational opportunities will improve citizens' lives by providing them a desire to learn for a lifetime and an ability to think freely. As more continuing education efforts are linked to literacy training, self-enriching education opportunities also increase, for then learners can begin to understand the usefulness of their new skills by putting them into practice in various life-situations. Due to economic circumstances, very few countries in the region—**Japan**, **Korea**, and **Australia**—are able to offer much self-enriching adult education.

Figure 4 links the array of adult literacy programs on a continuum and relates them to the skills gained in each program type. The majority of the programs in the region are either mass or functional literacy campaigns. Few are self-enrichment programs.

**Figure 4: Continuum of Emphasis Within Adult Education Programs**



### *Who does the teaching?*

Depending on the country, those who teach in adult education programs may include professionally trained full-time adult education instructors, primary school teachers, local community leaders, extension workers, military personnel, and students. Who teaches depends, in large part, on how the program is funded, how it is sponsored, and the geographical area in which it is located. However, experience throughout the region suggests that with proper training and technical support from educators, non-professional instructors can greatly extend coverage of literacy services, increase content relevance, and significantly improve their own individual competence.

The amount and type of training teachers receive depends greatly on the purpose and goals of the adult education program in which they work. In most countries, short-term training courses are provided to prepare instructors to organize literacy courses. However, because mass campaigns often have insufficient funds to provide comprehensive training, periodic tutorial sessions by professional teachers may be used to supplement teaching by less experienced volunteers. Manuals and other materials may be used by the often para-professional instructors to support the instruction process, such as APPEAL training materials for literacy and continuing education personnel.

The issue of teacher availability is problematic, particularly in the less accessible regions of a country. Adult education, in and of itself, is one solution to this problem. As more adults

become proficient in basic skills, the teaching profession can become an option for more individuals in the remote or difficult-to-reach areas where teachers are currently unavailable. Ongoing training of available teaching personnel may help provide them with the motivation they feel they are lacking on a regular basis. One drawback to continued training, however, is that teachers often seek higher paying jobs elsewhere based on their new skills. Enticements are needed to keep the best teachers on task; one means is to promote them to be curriculum designers or planners of other kinds—their expertise would certainly prove valuable.

### ***Funding adult education programs***

While countries in the Asia-Pacific region have expressed a commitment to expanding adult education, the financial implications of translating that commitment into practice have sometimes proven difficult. Virtually all continuing education programs face the problem of limited funding since funding for adult education is often seen as competing for the limited resources that are directed toward the literacy effort itself. Indeed, while national budgets for education have been steadily increasing since the international Education For All conference in Jomtien, Thailand, the majority of education funds in most countries are earmarked for the primary and secondary education of children. Consequently, adult education programs have very limited funds with which to plan curricula, hire instructors, and secure space.

The search for ways around these financial difficulties has led some countries to share much of the responsibility for adult education with NGOs. **Papua New Guinea** (PNG), for example, has developed a secretariat that coordinates governmental and non-governmental agencies in an effort to share financial responsibility for the country's adult education initiatives. **Vietnam** also involves governmental and non-governmental organizations in its literacy programs; however, in the absence of a specific budget for adult and non-formal education, learners often contribute to their own training. A unique case is that of **Uzbekistan**, where, to date there is no donor involvement and there are no NGOs in the country; all educational funding comes from the government.

### ***Planning and management of adult education programs***

There are a number of reasons countries undertake adult education. The most obvious objectives of adult education are as a strategy for development, as an impetus for lifelong learning, and as a means of empowerment; less apparent objectives include eliciting political support and competing for international donor funds.

A preliminary step in the planning process is for policy makers to acknowledge their full range of objectives. Progress cannot be made toward goals unless they are clearly and honestly outlined. Beyond that initial step, there should be an examination of who is involved in the decision-making process to make those objectives a reality: does everyone represent government agencies or a particular department of the government? Is this adult education effort envisioned to be centrally funded and run or more locally managed?

As longer-term objectives are considered, it may be useful to include some other sectors represented within the country such as NGOs, universities, “think-tank” research institutions, private companies, the mass media, and members of the target population itself. Some non-formal education programs have found inclusiveness and partnering to be a strong and useful method, if seamlessly planned and coordinated by a central agency; the country examples for **Papua New Guinea** and the **Philippines** provide useful examples. They have found effective tactics for generating, coordinating, and sustaining interagency support to be: (1) formal delegation of responsibility, (2) establishment of coordinating committees or use of existing channels to serve as coordinating mechanisms, (3) regular monitoring and follow-up by interagency teams, and (4) reporting on not only the overall progress in literacy but also on the performance of each participating agency. Given such measures, coordinated efforts may succeed.

In a number of situations, with impetus from the national level, successful popularization efforts have been carried out by grassroots organizations, the mass media, religious leaders, and folk artists. Development agencies, including the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF, have been instrumental in developing curricula and learning materials and providing continuing education. In **China** and **Vietnam**, for example, individual communities provide necessary resources—human and financial—to undertake local literacy courses. In the extensive government-supported Kejar program of **Indonesia**, the village development organization is responsible for identifying learners’ needs, organizing learning groups, providing facilities, and conducting follow-up programs.

Partnerships often become a serious policy option when planners are confronted with decisions on funding. As stated earlier, budgets for adult education tend to be lean. The case for additional funding in the sector must be continually pressed, but during stark financial times, creative partnerships are likely to be more successful. For example, while the Ministry of Education may have limited funds for adult education, the Ministries of Agriculture, Labor, Transportation, Women’s Issues, and others may each have small amounts of money set aside for training programs. NGOs may have access to international funding sources but require access to the national infrastructure to implement programs. Partnerships along these lines are a significant means of addressing the resource allocation question in adult education.

Along with this initial planning is the need for monitoring and evaluation structures. An accurate and up-to-date database plays an important role in the planning and management of literacy efforts. Many plans and programs have suffered from having targets set unrealistically high or insignificantly low. Others lack data regarding the magnitude of the problems, future trends, and profiles of the learners. There is a need to train individuals to maintain these records, though most funding for training in the education field is directed toward teacher training. UNICEF, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank are assisting the development of educational management information systems in **Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam**. UNESCO is also supporting several countries in this region to develop Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), notably in **Myanmar, the Philippines, Vietnam, Nepal, Pakistan, Fiji,** and

**Papua New Guinea.** In **Cambodia**, a census is being conducted to collect basic data on program locations, attendance, and facilities. Several countries are engaged in or recognize the need for mapping exercises to rationalize the location of programs.

Most countries in the region are only now beginning to realize and act upon the needs in the area of program structures. The **Philippines**, for example, has recognized the need to increase and make more systematic its monitoring and evaluation programs, and UNESCO is supporting efforts in many countries to develop educational indicators to facilitate the monitoring of Education for All (EFA) activities. Such activities address the ongoing need for evaluation and follow-up of the programs once established.

Additionally, pre- and in-service training for teachers is key to success, particularly with para-professional instructors. In addition to refreshing their teaching skills, regular training sessions can re-energize and motivate teachers to do their jobs better. Teachers should be re-infused with the program's philosophy and reminded how key their role is to the program's success. Occasional classroom visits by curriculum planners or trainers might also prove useful to see the actual implementation of the program.

## **Why Do Governments Invest in Adult Education?**

The reasons governments invest in adult education can be complex and interwoven. However, an analysis of the reasons offered by countries in the region fall into six categories.

***Because adult education is expected to contribute to national economic development.*** Adult education is an important component of a national human resource development strategy which, in turn, is an important element in most countries' economic improvement programs. Literacy and numeracy are prerequisites for virtually all employment opportunities in the modern sector beyond basic manual labor. Literacy is widely viewed as the entree to higher-level jobs. Similarly, skill training is increasingly necessary to keep up with international technological advances.

***Because governments are committed to the principle of universal basic education.*** Several countries have passed constitutional provisions making access to basic education a constitutional right for all citizens. Adult education is seen as a way of fulfilling a national commitment.

***Because basic education is a route to citizen empowerment.*** A stated objective of several adult education initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region is as a means of empowerment. While programs often aim to impart basic learning skills to individuals, the broader objective is often to bring about changes within the social and economic structures of society. Some countries have linked literacy programs to the struggle for liberation or to social reconstruction after liberation. For instance, there was a desire to reintegrate the military into the population in **Vietnam** or motivate the masses to do away with the "old ways" as was the case of **China**. **Uzbekistan** is re-

educating its population in order to move to a free market economy, and the **Thai** Minister of Education sees adult education as a critical contribution to an improved human resource base.

***Because governments seek international recognition.*** Many countries of the Asia-Pacific region have been active participants in the United Nations agencies' efforts to attain Education for All, specifically through UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All. The goal of this program is to promote literacy, primary schooling, and continuing education in the Asia and Pacific regions as interdependent components of basic education, and as essential pre-conditions for poverty alleviation and sustainable human development.

***Because governments seek international funds linked to adult literacy.*** Governments may implement adult education programs as a way of attracting new international assistance or fulfilling commitments made as part of earlier donor-funded activities. Their strategy is to find a program element that is highly regarded by UNESCO, the World Bank, or some other international organization, and develop an initiative in that area. The resulting funding flow often has benefits to the recipient country beyond the immediate focus of the project.

***Because the provision of basic education is a way of eliciting citizen support for the government.*** There are often partisan political objectives for providing adult education. Unlike roads or airport construction (which are generally viewed as collective benefits), adult education is a personal benefit that government can take credit for distributing directly to individual citizens at the community level. Such benefits can be used to manipulate public sentiment. For example, at election time the ruling party may implement an adult education program to win the votes of illiterate adults.

## Adult Education as Practiced: Country Examples

A description of some of the adult education programs currently operating in the region provides a useful illustration of the creative and varied approaches already underway. The following case descriptions are drawn from country notes provided by participants to the Regional Consultation on Adult Education sponsored by UNESCO's APPEAL and the Department of Non-Formal Education, Ministry of Education, Thailand, in September 1996. Summaries of country notes provided by representatives of **Cambodia, India, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Thailand, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam** are provided below.

### *Cambodia*<sup>1</sup>

Cambodia's current adult education status needs to be understood within the context of the nation's recent fifty-year history: French colonialism through 1953, followed by the Vietnam War, the aftermath of which brought the devastating regime of the Khmer Rouge. Only since the United Nations-brokered elections in 1993 has the nation seen a degree of peace.

The illiteracy rate among the adult population (those above the age of 15) is 65%. Further, since the majority of the educated in the country were executed under the Khmer Rouge regime, there is a dearth of educated individuals. Adult and non-formal education have a critical role to play in human resource development and capacity building in Cambodia.

From the country note, it is clear that international funding sources are key to adult education activities. World Education/Cambodia is a major international organization in the country; it provides training in adult non-formal education through UNICEF, the European Union's PRASAC project, the FAO-supported Integrated Pest Management project, NGOs, and several government ministries including the Ministries of Rural Development, Health, Environment, and Women's Affairs.

### *India*<sup>2</sup>

India is a country with relatively high illiteracy levels, particularly in specific regions. The campaign approach, used widely in India, is a concerted effort to address the problem of literacy in a defined region within a limited period of time. Various social resources and a high degree of voluntary commitment are required. Most significant to a campaign is its preparatory phase, major steps of which include: (1) holding planning meetings to identify individuals and organizations that could serve as resources; (2) creating an environment for literacy through cultural mobilization and the use of folk cultural forms; (3) organizing committees at the district,

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<sup>1</sup> Country note submitted by Cambodia listed no author.

<sup>2</sup> India country note submitted by Prof. Denzil Saldanha, Unit for Sociology of Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Bombay, India.

block, and village/ward levels; (4) conducting surveys to identify potential learners and instructors; (5) preparing and acquiring instructional material; and (6) instituting training programs for instruction at various levels. The preparatory stage constitutes a mobilization that lasts for about six months; it is followed by the teaching-learning phase which is expected to last for an additional two years.

India's contemporary literacy movement was initiated in 1988 in the form of the Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), a voluntary, non-government experiment of social transformation and social action that was broader than literacy and education. The group's strategy of targeting the residual sub-literate population in high literacy regions eventually spread throughout the country without sufficient regard for context (1990-92 in Sindhudurg, Wardha, Ratnagiri, Latur and Nanded districts in Maharashtra; 1992 in Goa).

Separate from the model of mass literacy experimented with in the Kerala state, between 1989 and 1993, a group of voluntary activists formed the Committee of Resource Organization (CORO) with an organization branch in M Ward—an area with a major concentration of non-literates in Bombay city. While similar to the other literacy campaigns in its aspects of social mobilization and the spirit of volunteerism it invoked, this effort was focused in an urban metropolis. It relied primarily on literacy activists drawn from local communities with some support from individuals from educational institutions and had minimal coordination with the official educational machinery.

As of March 1996, the campaigns have been extended to cover 394 districts, including more than 100 million people (average age, 15 to 35) of the estimated 110 million illiterate citizens nationwide. It is estimated that 62% of the learners are female. Of particular significance, the literacy campaigns have rapidly expanded to regions with the greatest needs. Paradoxically, those areas also have the least prepared human resource capacity and are least prepared to implement the campaigns in a manner appropriate for mass participation or to fully utilize the funds that have been provided.

The preparatory mobilization phase, which emphasized the generation of widespread volunteerism and the creation of an environment conducive to literacy through the use of folk media, drifted into gradual neglect. While initially mass literacy campaigns may have had positive impacts socially and on literacy rates, they have reached the point of relative stagnation in regions of mass illiteracy and underdevelopment. It has been acknowledged that significant modifications are needed to the campaign approach, particularly in the highly illiterate northern states referred to as the "Hindi belt" (with the exception of Rajasthan, literacy achievement rates in these regions are far below the national average), where the cultural context presents obstacles to literacy interventions with regard to gender, community, and class. Another area of concern is the sustainability of literacy gains over time, especially with regard to the post-literacy phase. In high literacy states, it has been found that 89.5% of the newly literate remained enrolled in post-literacy activities, while in the medium literacy states the rate was 72.4% and in low literacy states the rate was 69.1%.

Country note authors offered several suggestions for revitalizing India's literacy campaigns:

- (1) *Contextualize the campaign strategy for the low literacy districts of the country.* Literacy campaigns need to confront the caste, class, and patriarchal structures that work against the non-literate and inhibit isolated literacy interventions. Mobilization along these lines and organization for communitarian social benefits (water, wasteland management, health, primary education) would have to accompany literacy interventions.
- (2) *Preparatory phase as a pre-condition for funding.* The preparatory phase is essential to the success of a literacy campaign: it sets in motion the participatory organizational structures, the cultural mobilization, and the provision of academic inputs (including training, materials, and surveys) on a large scale.
- (3) *Need for gender sensitivity.* With approximately 70% of the enrolled being women, the campaigns are effectively a women's collective process. There is a need for flexibility in the schedule and pace of learning, consideration of women's functional needs, and confrontation of the structures of patriarchy through social awareness.
- (4) *Eliminate the artificial distinction between the "literacy phase" and the "post-literacy phase."* It is suggested that the literacy phase's concentration on symbolic systems and the post-literacy phase's efforts to provide functionality, social awareness, and organization for participation in development be merged conceptually from the preparatory phase.

These suggestions and observations concerning the mass literacy movement should be viewed in light of the significant gains of the campaigns as well. For example, approximately 70% of the learners and 40% of the instructors have been women/girl-children; from the experience, many women have gained a means of articulation and have often become involved with powerful organizational forms for self-expression. The campaigns have also been able to touch the homes of deprived communities, castes, and classes in a major way. Additionally, the general increase in demand for primary education can be linked to the campaigns.

### ***Papua New Guinea***<sup>3</sup>

According to Papua New Guinea's (PNG) 1990 census, the country had a 45% literacy rate. While strategizing to improve that figure, a local definition of literacy was developed.

*Literacy in PNG means being culturally able to pass on both orally and by the printed page the oral tradition which enriches the diverse social practice by*

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<sup>3</sup> Papua New Guinea country note submitted by Willie Jonduo, National Literacy and Awareness Secretariat, Department of Education.

*individuals in every local community. These orally transmitted social practices radiate life and give meaning to a community and an individual in what to do to survive in order to see PNG prosper with its abundant natural resources as an active agent in all institutions.... the active individual will then be able to participate socially, politically, economically and spiritually and achieve integral human development through the integration of cultural traditions and reading and writing skills.*

Given today's rapid pace of change, PNG is dedicated to making all of its citizens active participants in the society. With more than eight hundred languages and the apparent desire for community level relevance, the "language of literacy" question is key to PNG. Census bureau estimates literacy rates as follows: Tok Pisin, 30.7%; English, 29.1%; Motu, 6%; and other languages, 38.5%. The education department, through the National Literacy and Awareness Secretariat (NLAS), has made much progress in implementing and supporting non-formal programs in the language of the learner. Positive results have been attained in learning and in cultural maintenance. Success has also been achieved at imparting numeracy and literacy skills through the actual use of common daily life practices.

NGOs have taken the lead in improving literacy rates by involving local communities; such government agencies as Education, Home Affairs, Health, Agriculture; and universities. Though the majority of the population is involved in some form of non-formal education, PNG does not have a non-formal education department. Since there is no single department or organization wholly responsible for non-formal literacy efforts, funding tends to be scarce. Partnerships between government agencies, NGOs, and communities, such as the Literacy and Awareness Secretariat (mentioned above), spread financial responsibility.

The PNG Ministry of Education is trying to engage the entire nation in literacy efforts. Programs are planned from the national level, the provincial level, and the community level. The *national level* features a close working relationship between several NGOs and the national government. The national government is responsible for procuring equipment, producing literacy materials, and assembling a corps of governmental and non-governmental literacy trainers for the provinces. The *provincial level* features Literacy Awareness Materials Production centers in each province, where province-specific materials are developed. The provinces are also more closely involved with NGOs. Unfortunately, there is a lack of provincial-level infrastructure such that funds channeled through provinces may not reach the intended project. The *community level* features individuals from the community producing literacy materials. Communities also develop their own programs, despite a lack of infrastructure to sustain them. Other constraints at the community level include literacy teachers not understanding teaching methods and teachers being unable to produce their own materials.

## *The Philippines*<sup>4</sup>

After the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship, in its declared “total war against poverty,” the Aquino administration espoused the democratic right to education for all. Nonetheless, studies have found that the Philippine education system continues to have problems of quality, access, sustainability, equity, and efficiency. According to 1985 census figures, the number of illiterates in the 10-to-75 age-group was approximately 6 million; the figure has likely increased since that time. Furthermore, there was a lack of fit between the educational program and its graduates as related to the employment needs of the country—the result has been the exodus of many Filipinos abroad, known as the “brain drain.”

Non-formal basic education (NFE) has been one way of mobilizing different sectors of society to contribute to making education work and to helping people learn outside the formal educational structures. The objectives of NFE include eradicating illiteracy and raising the level of functional literacy; providing employed and unemployed youth and adults with appropriate technical/vocational skills; and developing proper values and attitudes for personal, community, and national development.

The current program of NFE evolved out of the Bureau of Continuing Education in 1987. NFE was accorded high priority by the 1987 Constitution which directs the State to “establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people; and to encourage non-formal, informal, and indigenous learning systems” (Philippine Constitution: Article 14, Section 2). In addition to the Education for All Plan of Action undertaken by the Philippines (which, with regard to NFE, endeavors to eradicate illiteracy and to provide continuing education for adults and out-of-school youth), the 1991 Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM) made several recommendations that have since become national policies. First, the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) was restructured into the following units: (1) Department of Basic Education, to focus on basic education in both formal and non-formal sectors; (2) Technical Education and Skills Development Authority to handle post-secondary vocational/technical education and skills training; and (3) Commission on Higher Education to coordinate higher education programs and institutions.

The NFE department collaborates with other governmental departments including Social Welfare and Development, Agriculture, Interior and Local Government, Local Government Units, Health, and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. Additionally, the NFE department cooperates with several non-governmental organizations such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Translators Association of the Philippines, and Association for Non-Traditional Education in the Philippines.

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<sup>4</sup> Country note submitted by the Philippines listed no author.

NFE is currently implementing the Philippines Non-formal Education Project, funded by the Asian Development Bank. The project aims to reduce the incidence of basic and functional illiteracy in areas with the lowest functional literacy rates and the lowest elementary school participation rates. The project has three components: (1) Functional Education and Literacy, which provides a wide range of inputs to improve the quality and relevance of community-based adult literacy programs making extensive use of NGOs, state or private universities and colleges, local government units, and other government agencies to deliver the program; (2) Continuing Education Program (CEP), which supports the development of alternative learning systems, including an equivalency and accreditation system; and (3) Capacity-Building Program (CBP), which provides staff development and specialist support to strengthen the institutional and staff capacity of DECS to manage a decentralized community-based, non-formal education program.

In addition to NFE programmatic efforts, the academic sector has become involved in the delivery of NFE. Supplementing more traditional functions of instruction and research, colleges and universities have initiated “extension services.” These are community outreach programs or non-formal education which focus on poor communities, especially out-of-school youth, the unemployed, pre-school children, and housewives/mothers. The direction of the programs depends largely on the mission of the schools. Many of the programs are in livelihood/income-generation activities, community mobilization, sustainable agriculture, early childhood education through child care programs, primary health care, and other such areas. Educational institutions rely on their own teachers, non-teaching personnel, and students to implement the non-formal/adult education activities.

Non-governmental organizations in the Philippines are often involved in the social movements aspect of non-formal education, in particular “capability-building for empowerment.” For example, even the conduct of functional literacy is viewed not as an end in itself, but a means toward broader learning (for example, agrarian reform, environmental education, women’s education) depending on the expressed needs of the participants. Such activities—often referred to as popular, mass, or community-based education—are derived from the present contexts of the people and thus have no set center.

In addition to the NFE department and other governmental agencies, universities, and NGOs, businesses and private profit-oriented organizations have also begun to develop their own social outreach programs. Activities are often aimed at poverty alleviation, increased social service delivery to the poor, and support for employment/income generation. Agencies involved in such activities include MERALCO Foundation, Philippine Business for Social Progress, and the Children and Youth Service Foundation.

A few of the problems, issues, and constraints to non-formal education in the Philippines include:

- a lack of coherence in the NFE networks;

- insufficient budgetary allocations for implementation of NFE programs (balanced against the need to efficiently and effectively deliver existing formal education services);
- disjointed development of NFE initiatives;
- need for sustained dialogue on the relationship between education and development among non-formal/adult education practitioners;
- lack of concrete policy support for the education work done by NGOs and others from the social movement;
- need for an evaluation system that measures NFE impacts in terms of such contributions as adult acquisition of useful knowledge, reduction of infant mortality rate, or increased farm productivity; and
- low governmental priority of NFE.

Recommendations were presented that suggest the opportunities for social engineering that NFE provides. It was suggested that the basic sectors and groups—peasants, workers, indigenous peoples, and women and youth—be involved in all policy-making, executive, and implementing bodies. It was also suggested that greater coordination among the various initiatives and efforts of all sectors is needed.

### *Thailand<sup>5</sup>*

The country note submitted by Thailand described adult education among the imprisoned population. In addition to maintaining custody for prisoners in the country, the Department of Corrections (a division of the Ministry of the Interior) is responsible for providing prisoners social services, including education and training. As a part of the rehabilitation program, efforts are made to change the prisoners' socially unacceptable behavior. The Department of Corrections, therefore, oversees activities relating to moral, cultural, and general education. In addition, welfare services are provided to prisoners while imprisoned and after-care services upon release. The Department of Corrections is also responsible for developing and supervising vocational training of inmates, which aims at developing and improving their manual skills as well as using their labor.

The adult education curricula used in Thai prisons are under the control of the Department of Non-formal Education within the Ministry of Education. Inmates who attend classes provided by the prison authority and who fulfill all the requirements are eligible to receive an equivalency certificate from the MOE or the authority concerned. Prison educational programs fall under four categories: religious education, general education (four levels), higher education, and vocational education.

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<sup>5</sup> Thailand country note submitted by Somboon Prasopnetr, Senior Expert in Penology, Department of Corrections, Ministry of the Interior.

The tri-level religious education courses are entirely voluntary. A large number of inmates are involved in the general education program. The first level, a six-month course, is for those who are illiterate. The second level is a six-month course for those who are semi-literate, while the third and fourth levels, both requiring 18 months, allow prisoners to further their studies and receive certificates at different levels. Further education is an option for those who are interested through correspondence courses with the Sukhothai Tammatirat Open University. Vocational education was the most heavily attended program in 1995. The purpose of the program is to provide skills and knowledge that will be useful to inmates after release. Courses, offered both in class and workshop formats, include agriculture, carpentry, barbering, welding, car repair, dress making and tailoring, radio repair, carpet making, wood and bamboo craft, masonry, and others. There are also short courses available for those whose prison sentences are less than six months. Certificates are available. All courses are carried out through the cooperation of the MOE, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, and the Ministry of Industry.

Some of the constraints with regard to educational programs in Thai prisons include *insufficient classroom space*, which leads to inefficient teaching and learning. While the Department awaits a decision on budgets to build new classrooms, some prisons have been allowed to use income from prison products to construct classrooms. *Texts and teaching equipment* have also been found insufficient, such that despite receiving private sector and donor assistance, additional government funds have been requested. Further, there is a need for *qualified instructors* because many courses are currently taught by guards or prisoners. There is also the dual issue of administrators' and prisoners' interest. In both cases, there is a greater interest in vocational programs than in the general education program because vocational training reaps immediate rewards for both groups. Study tours abroad have been suggested to foster interest in general education among administrators, and the study schedule for prisoners may be altered to allow general education participation in the morning and vocational courses in the afternoon. Further, the Department of Non-formal Education may waive general education course fees to encourage prisoner participation.

### ***Uzbekistan***<sup>6</sup>

Uzbekistan is a country with a reported 97% literacy rate; however, because the nation is transitioning both to a market economy and from a Cyrillic to Latin script, broad-based retraining is necessary among the adult population. There are various means for adults to continue their education, including full-time training, evening training, training by correspondence, or family and extension education.

Evening secondary schools are a primary means for adults to pursue educational goals. Attending such programs are largely people who were unable to complete their education in a

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<sup>6</sup> Uzbekistan's country note submitted by Alisher Akhmedor, Head of Education Department, National Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

full-time secondary setting for whatever reason. With the change from a nine grade system to a twelve grade system, the trend toward such programs has increased. Youths seem to prefer to enter the workforce after grade nine, while furthering their studies in their free time. A network of fifty-four schools called the Centers of Adult Education form the base of the evening schools. During the three years of study that the program offers (grades 10 through 12), students may pursue careers in such fields as accounting, electronic equipment, design, restoration, cooking, clothing industry, or stenography.

With regard to the national policy on adult education, the Law on Labor deems that employers are obliged to provide the necessary conditions for scheduling training in addition to work. Also, workers in training courses have the right to a paid shortened work week. During the academic year, the work week may be shortened by one work day to allow study time, up to thirty-six working days per academic year. Further, in the period that trainees are not on the job, they are to be paid at least 50% of their average monthly wage by the employer (not less than the fixed minimum wage).

All adult education activities in Uzbekistan are through formal governmental structures. Programs are funded from the national education sector's budget; there are not yet non-governmental or foreign sources of funding in the country.

### *Vietnam*<sup>7</sup>

In response to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All, and the World Literacy Decade, Vietnam has made the eradication of illiteracy by the year 2000 a priority. Particular focus has gone to providing literacy skills to women and girls. The 1994 census revealed more than eight million illiterates in Vietnam, more than 70% of whom were women and girls. The situation is magnified in the mountainous and remote areas, where one out of five women over the age of 10 is illiterate. Since 1985, Vietnam has been involved in several activities to address illiteracy in the country with an emphasis on girls and women.

From 1985 to 1987, policies were put in place to transform a bureaucratic and subsidized economy into a market economy; adjustments were made in the MOE to complement formal education with a continuing education program. In 1989, the Government of Vietnam responded to the International Year for Literacy Education by establishing the National Committee for Literacy with the participation of several ministries and mass organizations. In 1990 Vietnam signed and participated in UNESCO's APPEAL program, which focuses on literacy, post-literacy, and continuing education. From 1991 through 1992, the Law on Universalization of Primary Education was passed, the National Plan of Action for EFA was developed and approved, and a National Conference on EFA was held in Hanoi to develop concrete EFA

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<sup>7</sup> Country note submitted by Vietnam listed no author.

projects for Vietnam's 53 provinces. Since that time, a number of meetings and conferences have occurred for the purpose of furthering the cause of EFA; to date fifteen provinces have been recognized as achieving the national standards of literacy and universal primary education (UPE).

The primary implementor of adult and non-formal education in Vietnam is the Ministry of Education and Training. The National Committee on Literacy was established to bring different literacy institutions together to share and combine their efforts in the country. The Committee's activities are funded through budgets for pre-school, primary, literacy, and continuing education. The National Committee is comprised of such ministries as Health, Agriculture and Rural Development, Defense, Finance, Culture, and Information. Non-governmental organizations like the Vietnam Women's Union, the Youth Union, the Peasants' Association, and the Trade Union are also on the Committee. The Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) has been particularly active in numerous internationally funded (i.e., UNICEF and UNESCO) pilot projects.

With regard to policy, there are three general objectives relating to adult, continuing, and non-formal education: (1) literacy for adults ages 15 to 35, focusing on adolescents (male and female) in ethnic minority groups, and in remote and mountainous areas; (2) developing post-literacy education curricula to prevent relapses into illiteracy by the newly literate in order to effectively improve their knowledge and the quality of their lives, and so they may implement their citizens' rights and responsibilities; and (3) developing a continuing education system with diversified curricula and methodologies in cooperation with different institutions to provide better education opportunities to every group in need. Another specific objective is to ensure that each province and each district/commune has one continuing education center so that everyone that needs and wants to attend is provided the educational opportunity.

Distance education has existed in Vietnam for many years in the form of complementary education, in-service education and training, and thematic training courses and through mass media (television, radio, newspaper). In the contemporary context, it has been suggested that continuing education should vary its forms to meet the demands of life and transition to a socialist-oriented market economy. Development of a diverse continuing education curriculum and the establishment of continuing education centers in the community will better meet people's increasing demand for knowledge.

Among the issues and constraints that have been identified, it has been acknowledged that there is a limited awareness surrounding adult and non-formal education. Implementors of adult education, at all levels—from central to grassroots—have not been properly trained. Further, the curriculum needs to be diversified and the methodology made more flexible. There is apparently a lack of cooperation between institutions and organizations that provide adult education services, creating a situation of overlap and wastage. Also, the government budget for adult and non-formal education has only been available for literacy education; facilities and resources remain poor.

Solutions under consideration to address these constraints include

- developing diversified curricula for continuing education;
- organizing different and flexible continuing education activities;
- developing and printing materials and mobilizing resources to support various stakeholders (i.e., teachers, learners, communities);
- associating and cooperating with various institutions and organizations to establish a supportive mechanism for the provision of continuing education; and,
- improving awareness, knowledge, and professional skills on adult and non-formal education among different levels in the non-formal education sector (i.e., policy makers, researchers, teachers).

In addition to these proposed solutions, Vietnam has enacted a number of measures for the successful implementation of functional literacy activities, including improving incentives and trainings for teachers. There has also been a separate budget for literacy education and UPE since 1995. However, there is no specific budget for adult and non-formal education; since the withdrawal of Government subsidies for education services in 1989, programs are dependent on the learners' contributions.

## Trends and Future Directions

In the ten years since UNESCO's last International Conference on Adult Education (Paris),

- countries in the Asia-Pacific region have made notable progress in extending basic literacy to previously under-served adult populations;
- countries are demonstrating new sophistication in addressing vocational and other life needs of learners within basic literacy training;
- countries are increasingly recognizing the need to provide continuing education opportunities that reinforce and help ensure the retention of basic literacy; and,
- countries are making increased use of technology in delivering adult education.

Asia-Pacific countries have an array of experiences with adult education programs in literacy, vocational, and continuing education formats. Distance education has also been used in the region with success. With the increasing availability of computers throughout the world, training in the use of new technologies represents a future direction in adult education.

While some areas in the region are still affected by issues of access to “low-tech” devices—chalkboards, chalk, writing materials, desks, tables, or chairs—many more areas are facing access issues anew with regards to such “high-tech” tools as computers, the Internet, video-conferencing, and laser technology.

Technology changes too fast for any country, or region of a country, to be without for long and expect to catch up later. Many of the more industrialized countries of the region—**Australia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Thailand**, and others—are fortunate to have access to technology, the wave of the future. Care should be taken in those countries to offer training, not only to those who currently use such equipment in their daily lives and work, but also to those who do not. As with target populations who still seek access to basic education facilities, lest these groups be neglected and later have to catch up with the rest of society, as many people as possible should receive training in technologies. Industrialized countries are learning that the gap between the educated and the uneducated, the rich and the poor, is widening around the issue of technology.

Unfortunately, the less developed countries will feel similar effects unless they become involved now. Otherwise, the poor nations will only get poorer. Major hurdles have to be addressed in order for technology to be useful and *sustainable* in such settings: infrastructural issues such as electricity and telephone line access, as well as issues of *cost*, usefulness, and cultural context. Such issues are beyond the scope of this literature survey; further research and study are required.

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