

SEAMEO INNOTECH's Initiatives on NFE and Literacy

In line with fostering constructive and continuing dialogue and consultation on LITERACY innovations and practices the SEA Region, SEAMEO INNOTECH engaged itself in conducting the following NFE and Literacy related activities:

Second Regional Education Forum with the theme: "Literacy Policies and Practices in Southeast Asia". This 3-day forum provided the participants with a regional perspective about the current state of literacy policies, practices, programs and innovations on literacy which was able to generate new insights, ideas and possibilities on how best to address the challenges and issues given the Southeast Asian context.

It was attended by twenty-two (22) Senior Education Officials from the 11 Ministries of Education who are directly involved in the design and implementation of literacy programs and projects in their respective countries. Providing the International and Regional perspectives, inputs and insights were: Mr. Abdul Hakeem, Education Advisor and Coordinator, Asia Pacific Programme of EFA and Ms. Margarete Sachs-Israel Head, UNLD Coordination Unit, UNESCO Paris.

There was a rich exchange of experiences, programs and strategies between and among the participants as they try to address the literacy challenges and concerns in their countries. Several issues and concerns came up during the discussion which ranged from the need to come up with a shared and common definition of literacy, documenting good practices on the ground for easy replication to other areas, need for a solid monitoring and evaluation of literacy efforts, providing opportunities for skill application to sustain literacy skills and the need to come up with responsive and appropriate literacy interventions for specific target groups, to name a few.

The following are some possible action steps suggested to be adopted/adapted by the participants depending on their country's specific concerns and needs:

- Conduct an inventory of literate environment
- Assist in setting up management information system for NFE which includes youth and adult literacy
- Design evaluation programs to measure outcomes of literacy program and the need to invest in impact studies and benchmark surveys
- Map stakeholders and partners at various levels
- Foster experience sharing between countries at the regional level
- Develop partnerships with universities and research institutions
- Develop quality assurance mechanisms and standards for literacy programs
- Learn from effective best practices, analyze literacy practices and identify factors that make the program effective

A Resource Pack on Creating and Sustaining Literate Environments Handbook (UNESCO APPEAL). As an offshoot of the Regional Education Forum, the Research and Studies Unit (RSU) of SEAMEO INNOTECH provided technical assistance to UNESCO APPEAL in the preparation of the Resource Pack on Creating and Sustaining Literate Environments. The pack was envisioned to provide guides and tips to the national and local government officials, literacy implementers, non-formal education practitioners and materials developers in Asia Pacific countries. The Resource Pack is a compilation of publications, documents and materials relevant to the creation and development of literate environments. Through this resource pack, the region may be able to develop concrete plans of actions in creating, developing and sustaining rich and dynamic literate environments. SEAMEO INNOTECH convened a regional forum on Defining, Creating and Sustaining Literate Environments to validate and finalize the resource guide.

Basic Learning Needs Survey (BLNS) in the Philippines. The BLNs survey aims to develop a national profile of non-school based organizations involved in the provision of functional literacy programs for Filipino people. It aims to identify providers, programs and activities, clientele, resources, and geographical distribution and document issues, challenges and best practices related to programs addressing basic learning needs.

RSU Policy Research Forum 1st Quarter 2009: Basic Learning Needs, Literacy and Lifelong Learning: Towards Education for All. This is a research dissemination forum participated by members of the National Education for All Committee, the Literacy Coordinating Council and the academe. The forum focused on the need to clarify definitions of the EFA terminologies and indicators for basic learning needs, literacy (Basic and functional) and lifelong learning.

Study Visit on Non-Formal and Mobile Teaching Programs for LAO PDR Officials. SEAMEO INNOTECH through its Research and Studies Unit (RSU) assisted UNESCO Bangkok and the Ministry of Education of Lao PDR to strengthen the capacities of Lao NFE officials in managing the primary and nonformal education system. The Lao PDR MOE officials and UNESCO Bangkok were given 1 2-day training on how nonformal education assessment and equivalency is operationalized and implemented in the Philippines. Some nonformal education programs visited involved literacy practices initiated by the Department of Education in partnership with the local government and non-government organizations. The delegates visited the Literacy Hall of Fame winners such as Agoon, La Union; Plaridel, Bulacan; Balanga, Bataan and Baguio City. The Lao officials were able to enhance their knowledge and skills in developing essential NFE plans and programs focused on access to education for women, children and the disadvantaged.