here is a new sense of hope regarding the future role of non-formal education (NFE) in the development of Africa. This stems partly from disappointment with the formal system of education and its failure to deliver on expectations regarding the provision of quality education for all. Hope also stems from a new realisation of the potential of NFE in terms of the flexibility and responsiveness it offers in relation to the needs and aspirations of learners and their communities. It is in this later sense of the advantages that NFE has to offer, that this newsletter celebrates its versatility and dynamics.

This edition of the newsletter marks an important milestone in the development of the ADEA Working Group on Non-Formal Education (ADEA-NFE-WG). From its early beginnings with a focus on functional adult literacy, the agenda of the working group has evolved to embrace wider concerns of appropriate provisions for different target groups such as nomadic populations, street children and the out-of-school youths. This has invariably led the Working Group to focus on the complementarities between the non-formal and formal systems of education. By revisiting this formal/non-formal discourse, the Working Group has evolved a more challenging agenda that involves not only strengthening all manner of non-formal provisions, but also building links that would help to integrate formal and non-formal provisions within a more holistic system of education.

The nature of this new agenda obliges the Working Group to anchor its strategies and activities in the reality that has to be changed, whilst basing its ideology and philosophy on a new vision of education provision that is yet to be achieved. The key challenge facing the Working Group therefore is to promote this new vision through a strong advocacy campaign, whilst supporting practical measures that would help to overcome the obstacles to change that are so deeply embedded in the current reality of education in Africa. These obstacles are partly to do with conventional wisdom and an unhelpful perception of the differences between formal and non-formal education.

The practice of non-formal education in Africa is still largely characterised by a high degree of ambivalence. On the one hand it is often seen as a positive lifeline to many who would not otherwise have access to education opportunities that are generally only available in the over-stretched formal system. On the other hand it continues to be regarded as an inferior alternative to mainstream education, something of a last resort or a refuge for those who are marginalized and disadvantaged. Because of this ambivalence the true potential of NFE has yet to be unleashed as a constructive force for the empowerment of individuals and the development communities in Africa. The need to overcome this obstacle of ambivalence and a poor image of NFE is one of the strongest challenges in the Working Group’s agenda.

Another critical challenge has to with equitable provision for those in the formal and non-formal systems of education. Governments find it easier to finance and manage the formal system of education, even where the majority of their citizens depend on less formal provisions to acquire literacy and knowledge for living. This official inequality in the distribution of public resources for education hardly raises serious policy challenges, since it can often be justified by the popular perception of formal education as the standard way of providing learning opportunities. Non-formal provisions are therefore sometimes seen as necessary but temporary measures that will become un-necessary once the formal system expands to cater for all those who need access to education. On this basis the burden of supporting non-formal education programmes is often left to voluntarism, community self-help and some grudging complementary input from the public sector. There are very few countries in which budgetary provision for NFE constitutes anything like a significant percentage of the total education budget. The challenge is to move towards more equitable distribution of public resources to support learning, wherever and however it takes place.
Revisiting the dynamics of non-formal education

After a successful all-Africa Symposium on NFE, it is worthwhile to contemplate what dynamics of non-formal education have emerged and how one can move forward. It is also pertinent to discern what the spotlights reveal and what issues are badly in need of being addressed.

The Johannesburg Symposium was significant in that it was held at all, particularly in the context of the ADEA Biennial, and that it attracted so much interest from around the continent and beyond. This gave the distinct impression that perhaps, after many years of marginalisation, non-formal education is back into the limelight, ready to take its rightful place in the education arena. However, while this new interest may be very welcome, it is also pertinent to discern what the spotlights reveal and what issues are badly in need of being addressed.

For years, one of the strands of NFE that was given attention at the symposium, i.e. that of non-formal education as an alternative provision of basic education for children, has not been taken very seriously at the international level as it was relegated to the far corners of the playing field by a heavy primary schooling-for-all agenda. Now that there is a growing recognition of what some African intellectuals have been trying to point out for quite sometime that the conventional western school is not the panacea for EFA on this continent, NFE in its various forms needs to demonstrate what it can contribute to an education reform agenda.

First of all, the symposium confirmed that we know very little about what has been going on in these far-flung NFE corners over several decades of trial and error. Secondly, the present discourse on NFE still seems to reflect much of the thinking that has been customary in this area. Its mode has remained apologetic, submissive, and defeatist, and reflects a continuous suffering from a ‘poor cousin’ (of the dominant system) syndrome. Thirdly, there is not much consensus concerning the deeper relevance of current developments in this field. The latter gives hope because, as the debate becomes more forceful and more intentional explorative work is undertaken, we may yet get to understand more of the potentialities of NFE initiatives in the light of EFA constraints and of an African reform agenda.

The most important gain that appears to be coming through in the present discourse is the attention given to the wider environment within which NFE at the level of initial education has to become meaningful. This environment was touched upon in at least three dimensions: a systemic one (i.e. the wider context of the education ‘system’ as a whole), the pedagogical-cognitive one (i.e. the perspectives of open learning and lifelong learning), and the social dimension (the community and wider socio-economic context). It is increasingly acknowledged that NFE work needs to consciously place itself within these environmental dimensions, and be held accountable for what it can achieve.

Some observations can be made to illustrate the above in relation to presentations and discussions during the symposium:

- There is no apparent consensus regarding the definition and extent of basic formal education as a human right. While it is accepted that all children are entitled to ‘education’, there is no shared opinion on the relevance of ‘minimal learning rights’. Interpretations of the role of NFE at this level vary from the need to offer specific functional skills (literacy, numeracy and life – or practical skills) to the need to press for equivalency of general competencies (with the formal system) so as to facilitate transfer. It seems rare that consciously and effectively, an NFE programme pursues a combination of both!

- The above variants appear to be closely related to the wider ‘mindset’ of implementers and sponsors: on the one hand there is the notion that clients for NFE are not only marginalised but can also be considered to have ‘lost’ the right to the same chances as ‘normal’ children. On the other hand there is the affirmation of this right and a conscious effort to ground such equitable opportunity in the ‘life world’ of the clients. This raises, of course, questions regarding children’s needs and rights (who decides? for what ends?) and about the wider social functions of NFE. Does NFE have a chance to turn from ‘second-rate’ to ‘best-rate’, and adopt its own distinct and visible identity?

- There is a growing interest in the ‘systemic’ location of NFE options. How and on what grounds can NFE find recognition as a parallel provision catering for the needs of children and youths who do not have the same opportunities for participation? While in the discussions various dimensions of ‘linkages’ with the
formal system were raised, clearly much work needs to be done to understand the significance of such linkages in the light of what NFE arrangements are trying to do. Both of these aspects tend to be poorly articulated. As a result there is insufficient appreciation of the merits and de-merits of edging closer to the current structures and provisions of ministries of education.

Closely related to the above are fundamental issues related to diversity and heterogeneity of the clients of basic education. The nature of such diversity in terms of needs and circumstances is increasingly being explored. But the implications for approaches and methodologies are still far from being understood. In this context the Johannesburg symposium was an important follow-up to the earlier NFE workshop that took place in Gaborone (June 1999). More of such intensive interactions will be required.

One problem is that formal systems generally do not want to hear about diversity. Their constraints are such that the pressure is towards enforced assimilation. NFE initiatives that desperately wish to be recognised, if not absorbed into the system, may not dare to respond too eagerly to the challenge of diversity. The ambivalence thus created may only serve to maintain a fuzzy discourse as to what NFE really stands for and prevent effective exploration of alternative pedagogical practices.

These points shift the attention from the systemic dimension of NFE to the pedagogical-cognitive one. Also this important aspect was raised at the symposium; but it remains an agenda waiting to be pursued in a systematic fashion. It touches on the very nature of the learning processes in different social situations and institutional arrangements. We do not know how alternative NFE arrangements actually contribute to the wider process of acquiring knowledge and competencies. There is little clarity of what even a research agenda should look like – dealing with different forms of learning between informal and formal situations – and how NFE could possibly place itself intentionally in this continuum so as to make its contribution authentic. Where there are “boundary jumpers” – as was raised at the symposium – at least we should understand the complementarities and incongruences between different forms of learning before we can happily promote infinite mobility in the pursuit of lifelong learning.

Finally, where the different strands of the symposium touch one another is in the relationships between NFE for children and NFE for adults. The latter discussions raised many questions about the current malaise in adult education and the renewed importance attached to the contextualisation of learning by adults. The contribution of adult learning to empowerment seems extremely pertinent in the context of efforts to situate NFE for children more effectively within the ambit of local communities. It appears that the agenda of community ‘participation’ remains very problematic, as it tends to stagnate around contribution to construction of facilities and to the disciplining of teachers and pupils. Lifelong learning takes on a wider social meaning where purposeful adult learning can promote empowerment and the appropriation of school education by communities, thus raising the chances of meaningful learning by their children.

At this point we can return to the questions at the beginning relating to the dynamics of NFE and what we are going to do with this. My own provisional conclusion is that there are enough ideas on the table – in however rudimentary state – to begin to carve out a ‘reflection and action’ agenda around specific fault-lines and gaps in theory, policy and practice. The concerns about the identity of NFE as alternatives in basic education for children, and the various dimensions of the environment within which such initiatives have to make their contribution, appear to run deep. It is clear that there are many intellectuals, practitioners and policy makers around the continent ready to become engaged in serious work on these issues. It is up to the Working Group and its supporters to take a lead in generating appropriate agendas and in effectively mobilising such persons.

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The World Bank's involvement in adult basic education with literacy goes back to 1968. The historical evidence and the current status of that involvement show that, despite its diffidence in advocating that governments should borrow to support programmes of adult basic education, the World Bank has long been and continues to be prepared to respond positively to requests from its members to do so.

**THE WORLD BANK AND ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (1968-1998)**

The World Bank began lending for educational purposes only in 1963, some 17 years after it had begun lending for the reconstruction of Europe and Japan. Its first focus was on secondary education - general, vocational and technical - as that was the area that most concerned many borrowing member governments. They had recently become independent from colonial powers that had left them severely deficient education systems and grave shortages of trained and skilled personnel. However, in July 1968, the Director General of UNESCO, M. René Maheu, wrote to the President of the World Bank, Mr. Robert McNamara, urging him to broaden and liberalise the Bank's education lending policies to include education for adults, particularly in the framework of UNESCO's own large scale initiative to promote functional and work-oriented literacy. In the same year, a World Bank Staff Paper, "Non-formal Education and Training", proposed that the Bank should begin investing in educating illiterate populations to raise their skills, productivity and standards of living. Mr. McNamara agreed and the World Bank moved into adult basic education, allocating over the next few years US$12 million in support of UNESCO's world-wide Work-Oriented Adult Literacy Programme.

The Bank's 1971 Education Sector Working Paper noted that several local initiatives in adult literacy and education had been successful, as well as comparatively inexpensive, and suggested that such forms of education and training warranted further development.

Alongside that, in an effort to identify and disseminate what would now be called good or even best practice, the Bank commissioned the International Council for Education Development to research and publish a set of case studies of efforts in education and training outside school systems: the volume appeared in 1974 under the title, Attacking Rural Poverty – How Non-formal Education Can Help. It urged strongly that the World Bank should increase its support for adult literacy programs.

**SECOND CHANCE LEARNING THROUGH NON-FORMAL CHANNELS**

Continuing that line of thinking, the Bank's 1974 Education Sector Policy Paper, argued that mass education, particularly for women and rural people, was an economic and social necessity in any development strategy aimed at reducing poverty. It offered guidelines for the design of effective rural education and training. Consistent with this theme, the 1980 Education Sector Policy Paper, six years later, adopted the principle that basic education should be provided for all adults, as well as children. School systems should offer the first opportunities, but second chances should be available through non-formal channels. The paper stated, “To reach out-of-school youth, the Bank will support urban and rural development projects that combine education and training with the daily activities of adults. It will also continue to explore, with interested member countries, non-formal means of providing second-chance learning for those who missed formal schooling earlier” (page 89). Noting that relatively little bilateral aid had gone to out-of-school education, the paper sought to increase the Bank's lending in the area.

**CALLING FOR A CHANGE OF POLICY**

However, by the time the 1995 Education Strategy Paper appeared – and despite supporting the drive for Education for All – the Bank's thinking about adult basic education had
become more cautious. The paper stated, “Programs of adult education are necessary, but such programs have a poor track record. One study showed an effectiveness rate of just 13 percent for adult literacy programs conducted over the past thirty years (Abadzi, 1994), and there has been little research into the costs and benefits of literacy programs” (page 90). Clearly, despite lending to support more than 100 projects with adult basic education components, the Bank had become disenchanted. Even the only free standing program that the Bank had supported for eighteen years in Indonesia had not yielded the kinds of information that could inform general policy. In addition, the World Bank has a fiduciary obligation not to encourage its member governments to increase their debt burdens through unproductive investments; and the countries most in need of adult basic education are among the poorest and most highly indebted.

Nonetheless, the 1995 paper went on to concede that, as new evidence did seem to be emerging from a number of quarters, the Bank would review it and bring out a further paper on the topic. In late 1998, work began on the promised review. The third draft was due at the end of April 2000.

In short, the institution has always been sympathetic in principle, but has lost confidence in the effectiveness of adult educators and administrators. It has supported the ends of adult basic education, but developed doubts about the means. While it has been prepared to lend to governments that have wanted to borrow in support of adult basic education, the Bank has never felt equipped to advocate and press for policies with the same force as it has advocated universal primary education or education for girls. Nevertheless, acknowledging that the 900 million or so people who have not mastered literacy include the poorest in the world, the Bank is now weighing whether the latest evidence demands a change of policy.

THE WORLD BANK’S LENDING FOR ADULT BASIC EDUCATION WITH LITERACY

How has this ambivalence been reflected in the Bank’s actual lending for this arm of education? Between 1968 and 1999, the World Bank has lent money to assist approximately 100 education projects with components of basic education and training for adults. Between 1971 and 1975, adult literacy featured in every education project in East Africa. Most of these components were relatively minor, with only six attracting more than US$10 million over their lives. Nonetheless, governments in all regions borrowed, with those in East Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Middle East and North Africa attracting the largest proportions. South Asia borrowed least, largely because the country with the highest number of illiterates, India, declined to borrow at all, while Bangladesh was still recovering from its separation from Pakistan. In 1977, the government of Indonesia borrowed in support of a large, separate, free standing program dedicated solely to adult education, the National Non-formal Education Programme and, until 1992, was the only country to do so. The program has now run for 23 years. Even though it has not yet contributed substantially to the general understanding of adult basic education in terms of systematic assessments of learning, evaluations, longitudinal studies and the like, it has been judged sufficiently effective to have attracted successive supporting loans.

Largely because of Indonesia, the share of adult basic education in the Bank’s lending for education rose from 1.3 percent in the early 1970s to 5.2 percent later in the decade. By 1984, however, it had declined to 1.7 percent, very much in line with the average proportions found in the education budgets of its member governments.

Since 1992, a number of governments have begun to borrow from the World Bank for specialised, free standing projects in adult basic education: Ghana (1992), Bangladesh (1994), Senegal (1996), Côte d’Ivoire (1999). Their modes of operation have begun to diversify. Ghana has followed the pattern of Indonesia in running a programme that is totally in the government’s hands, the National Functional Literacy Programme. Senegal, however,
with the encouragement and support of the Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency, decided to capitalise on the resourcefulness of the voluntary sector. It introduced a system of partnership, contracting with nongovernmental bodies to organise learning centres, mainly for women, under a system of supervision and accountability – its title is Projet Alphabétisation Priorité Femmes or faire faire.

Since the Senegal experience has been encouraging, Côte d’Ivoire plans to follow suit. It is also attempting to design a system of monitoring and evaluation that will be more effective and informative than has historically been the case.

**LENDING INSTRUMENTS OF THE BANK: LIL AND APL**

Since 1998, the World Bank has introduced two lending instruments, which should make it easier for governments to borrow for activities in adult basic education. One is the Learning and Innovation Loan (LIL), which, as its name implies, should encourage experimentation and innovation. With a ceiling of US$5 million and an obligatory element for systematic evaluation, a LIL should enable substantial and sound explorations and possibly comparisons of fresh approaches, methods and materials. This is the instrument that the Côte d’Ivoire has selected. The second lending instrument is the Adjustable Programme Loan (APL), which is designed to accommodate sectors like adult basic education, where sticking to prearranged timetables can be difficult and flexibility in accessing funds is important.

However, the World Bank is not wholly restricted to its lending operations. A number of its member governments entrust funds to it for carefully defined purposes. Among these is a trust fund from the Royal Norwegian government, which enabled the Bank in late 1997 to open an initiative with four African governments – Burkina Faso, Chad, the Gambia and Mozambique – to develop Basic Education and Livelihood Opportunities for Illiterate and Semiliterate Young Adults, especially Young Women. That initiative has now widened to include more than a dozen countries in Africa, and has produced, among other things, a nationwide evaluation of several adult basic education programmes in Uganda, which will prove useful for guiding programmes elsewhere.

If the impending review substantiates that such programmes do indeed generate benefits in reducing poverty, especially among women, and raising standards of well being, the World Bank will without doubt rank adult basic education with literacy much higher on its agenda for education.

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1. The International Council for Education Development undertook similar studies for UNICEF. In 1973, it published *New Paths to Learning: an exploration of the potential of what was termed non-formal education.*
2. In 1998, an assessment of the several benefits of the Indonesia programme appeared, along with estimates of costs.
3. In 1971, 66 per cent of India’s population of 560 million were classed as illiterate. Despite the government’s unwillingness either to borrow or to accept external aid for the sector, official and private – often externally funded – efforts in adult basic education were numerous and persistent.
4. I am indebted to Ms. Anzar Uzma for the research she undertook on the World Bank’s experience in adult literacy.
The recent track record of adult basic education programmes, whether run by governments, non-governmental organisations or partnerships of the two, seems to be better in terms of both efficiency and effectiveness. Completion rates of 60-70 per cent appear usual, not exceptional, and majorities of the participants are able to attain or exceed targets in the basic skills of reading, writing and calculating and in absorbing and using information useful for themselves and their families. The benefits of participation in such programmes seem to be long lasting and to permeate into many aspects of family and community life.

The quality of the implementation of local programmes is a key factor in explaining the variability in efficiency and achievements within countries and even within relatively small districts.

Adult basic education programmes attract poor people. In their role as instruments to help reduce poverty, they are self-targeting.

In many societies, demand for adult basic education is strong not only among people who have never been to school, but also among those whose schooling has left them insufficiently equipped with the basic skills. The main driver of demand seems uncomplicated: most simply want to know how to read and write better and to calculate more accurately. Other useful information and opportunities to improve incomes do help sustain motivation, effort and perseverance, but the main reason given by participants in many countries is just the desire to be literate. Where schooling and literacy become more widespread, they may acquire a value in themselves, separate from their potential uses. People who lack them feel at a disadvantage, even though they cannot articulate their practical uses.

Ambitions to pursue education beyond a mastery of the basic skills seem modest, for relatively low proportions of learners tend to enter programmes that lead to formal certification.

In multilingual countries, demand for literacy in a national language is also strong. However, pedagogical methods to enable people to learn simultaneously literacy and a second language appear underdeveloped.

Adults of all ages seem to be able to learn the basic core skills better, in less time, at lower cost and with less trained instructors than can children. In the circumstances of some countries, at least within the limits of simple reading, writing and calculating, adult basic education programmes can be both more efficient and more effective than primary schools.

The usual six to nine months of adult basic education classes are sufficient for the average adult to acquire rudimentary skills, but insufficient to assure mastery. Further, simple continuous participation in a basic education class over several years does not automatically enable adult learners to enhance their skills. Multi-season, progressive and cumulative curricula seem essential.

Adults of all ages seem to learn effectively. Age limits need not be set, even though the curricula for different age groups might well differ.

Adults vary considerably in their capacities to master new skills and to absorb new information. Programmes designed to accommodate such variability are likely to be more successful.

In terms of gaining new ‘functional’ knowledge, forming new attitudes and adopting new practices, participants in basic education programmes do make gains in comparison with non-participants. However, the differences between participants and non-participants are often not great. On some aspects only majorities of the participants are able to show any learning. Acquiring new knowledge does not necessarily lead to developing new attitudes, and developing new attitudes does not necessarily lead to reformed behaviours. In other words, programmes of adult basic education can help people add to their information, but do not guarantee dramatic changes of attitude or behaviour in all or even majorities of their participants. Nonetheless, information does of course at least carry the seeds of change.

The informational content of adult basic education programmes seems to be less important for efficiency and effectiveness than the motivation of the learners and the skill of the instructors in holding the interest of the learners and helping them to feel that they are achieving their goals.

The question remains open whether one teaching method is more effective overall than another. Is systematic and unimpeachable research seems available on the point.

Are volunteers more effective than paid personnel? What level of schooling, if any, do they need to be potentially effective facilitators or instructors? What kind and duration of further training do they require, before they start trying to help adults, younger and older, to learn? The evidence is mixed and conflicting.

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1. This observation is no argument for substituting adult basic education for primary schooling. The primary school curriculum covers much more than most adult basic education programmes attempt, while the ‘hidden curriculum’ of disciplined, systematic, continuous and long term learning is quite possibly a major source of the social and economic benefits of schooling.
Being asked to take part in a panel discussion on using literacy and NFE for community empowerment was for me a statement of the obvious. I was obliged to ask the question: to what other ends will education (non-formal or formal) serve? Perhaps there were some other uses for NFE, which has escaped those in grassroots development practice.

The quality of case studies was impressive. These were enriched by hands on experience within the context of the site visits to some townships in Johannesburg and reinforced by the interface with the Asian experience.

I then started having serious concerns as to whether this was going to be another ‘talk-shop’ with very little in terms of how to move forward. Fortunately, I was pleasantly surprised. Detailed steps were ironed out with action items. What was lacking were a timeline and the assignment of tasks and commitment to the achievement of those tasks.

The intellectual discourse and the diversity of alternative forms of learning and transfer of knowledge impressed me to a large extent. Of course, there were innovative elements, convergent elements, divergent elements and interesting lessons learnt.

All the while I wondered at the quality of discussions, which could be going on within the working group for formal education if this was going on within the context of non-formal education!

In all this the underpinning reality is that literacy is basic for human development and confirms the notion that literacy is fundamental for the empowerment of any community.

Change agents like NGOs should be at the forefront of the empowerment process. They are necessarily the “clearing house” for the translation of alternative forms of learning into practical reality, aimed at improving lives of people through the reduction of poverty.

Ultimately, what we variously term as functional literacy, skills transfer, capacity building should be directed at supporting communities to assess their situation, make strategic decisions and undertake activities for improving the socio-economic value of their lives.

If we consider the enormity of challenges facing grassroots populations in Africa on issues of food security, sustainable natural resource management, health (HIV/AIDS), good governance, etc. – in effect, the sum total required for a dignified existence on this planet – then it is imperative that visible, tangible change occurs now.

It was very evident during the deliberations at the symposium that all stakeholders are concerned about the slow pace of change.

- What are the forces militating against the attainment of a self-sustaining development process based on our own value systems?
- Why are we unable to define our own models of education?
- Why are results so difficult to attain in our development process despite the continuous inflows of overseas development assistance?

Is it because our governments have not put in place well-structured alternative and flexible forms of education that can capture all those who fall out of or are unable to participate in the formal school system?

What is the way forward? There is no doubt that alliance between civil society, governments and other stakeholders are fundamental for progress. The question is how and through what mechanism?

The concept of Country Working Groups, country level collaboration between all stakeholders, international co-ordination and regional co-ordination are laudable, but how do we get the process moving beyond the commissioning of studies to real grassroots activities? Who will be the catalyst for this? Will it be government, academia or civil society organisations?

The answer is quite clear.

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What do we conclude about NFE after the pre-biennial symposium?

Benin’s National Working Group (NWG) represented by its President, took part in the pre-biennial symposium in the same way as other representatives of NWGs from 10 or so countries. On the conclusion of the meeting a process of debriefing began for the benefit of the officers of the Steering Committee of Benin’s NWG. This process is to be extended to all the other members for the sake of sharing with them the many advances achieved and undertaking strategic reflection on the dynamics of NFE in the country.

In the light of the proceedings in Johannesburg and the exchanges that took place in Cotonou, some critical reflection and feedback regarding the results of the meeting came forth.

**A DECISIVE STAGE IN THE WG-NFE PROGRAMME**

For anyone attending the symposium, the meeting was justified on more than one count. First, it was an ideal opportunity for most of the National Working Groups needing to compare their experiences with those of other countries regarding NFE in order to draw conclusions and improve current practices. Then the papers and the debates on particular topics enabled the various categories of actors (NGOs, technical agencies, and bilateral and multilateral funding institutions) to review past practices and examine the present state of literacy work and NFE. Strengths and weaknesses, together with the opportunities and threats to do with their environment, were identified for the sake of suitable strategies to invigorate the sector as a whole. Finally, field visits and group work gave a practical and lively character to the activities conducted during the meeting, which, as the participants saw, was a marked success.

On the basis of the diagnosis and the analysis of the state of literacy work and NFE, what can be concluded, over and above the conceptual and methodological advances, is the need for all the actors concerned to work towards the genuine integration of non-formal and formal education. A new agenda is therefore required: what types of learning does a nation need in order to create and/or strengthen democratic governance so as to make citizens genuine economic actors capable of taking on the major challenges of development?

It is all the more necessary to answer this question since there is no African perspective in the field of NFE. One of the concerns of the ADEA Working Group on Non Formal Education is or should be the marshalling of and provision of support for national resources and capacities with a view to developing and administering an African approach of literacy work and NFE. In this context, and on the basis of the discussions conducted during the debriefing in Cotonou, the gains of the meeting are substantial and undeniable. They are nevertheless open to improvement and a systematic assessment at the close of the proceedings would have enabled participants to give their impressions on the spot as to what was good and what was bad or just about acceptable. Such an impromptu assessment could have rekindled the discussion and given every one an opportunity to see where they stand regarding this new agenda.

Furthermore, sub-regional meetings could have been organised as preparatory stages facilitating the choice and treatment in greater depth of some fairly precise themes (e.g. From literacy to lifelong education: the creation of learning societies. For an integrated and diversified approach: linking formal and non-formal education, etc.) which, for want of time, were not properly amplified.

In short, the symposium could have prepared the ground better for a more responsible version of non-formal education serving development. It is therefore urgent that countries like Benin where sectoral studies (situational or reference studies and case studies) have not yet been conducted should be supported in this respect in order to lend greater visibility and provide more standards of comparison for the dynamics of NFE both sub-regionally and internationally.

**TOWARDS MORE RESPONSIBLE EDUCATION**

In our view, responsible education is nothing more than the educational processes and arrangements set in place in a concerted manner by people mindful of their respective responsibilities and committed to assuming them through an approach that is both inclusive and assimilative, which conditions make for effective and sustainable action. The crux of the matter is to recognise education, whether formal or non-formal, as a right rather than a privilege. The requirement henceforth will be to institutionalise and enhance the necessary complementarity between the various forms of education.

Education seen as a prerequisite for development should concern all social
categories, individuals or groups and take account of their institutions, their skills and their forms of social organisation, all within a particular physical and economic environment. On that basis people will be able to examine together the development dynamics and challenges peculiar to their group and think in terms of activities by means of which they can meet the challenges of development in the short, medium and long term.

Taking up these challenges means working for the advent of a consolidated world in which the grassroots populations possess real power to organise and control their education and their activities. They can defend their interests and stand up for their rights, have a hand and a voice in community affairs, and contribute significantly to building and maintaining peaceful relations generally. That is the real socio-political and educational project offering the prospect of beneficial change, and its success depends on how far educational supply and demand are matched.

CONCLUSION AND PROSPECTS

The symposium provided an excellent opportunity for the National Working Groups to get to know one another, to learn from one another and to exchange their experiences, in both African and Asian terms. The field visits and exhibitions also served as a basis for discussions on specific subjects and placed most of the participants in the real context of non-formal educational activities in all their diversity.

Observations and analysis of different situations were effected, as a result of which conclusions were drawn and/or new questions and hypotheses were formulated regarding the philosophy, methods and activities applied in the NFE sector. The importance and role of such education coming in for greater recognition and reaffirmation than in the past were also reflected upon. As far as can be judged, what is required is to build a bridge between the two sectors so that they can operate with enhanced interaction and in symbiosis. In this sense, governments and non-governmental actors all have responsibilities to shoulder in creating the right environment for such a policy.

These results and the constructive exchanges that occurred during the debriefing session among the members of the Steering Committee of Benin NFE-WG, indicate that it is essential to capitalise on and derive practical utility from the experiences for the sake of any adaptation needed in the context of Benin. The members of the Benin Working Group have a particular interest in this since one of the main strategies endorsed is optimum use of the benefits deriving from the participation of representatives of the group in meetings of this kind.

Similarly, the last visit for exchanges of experience with the Burkina Faso NFE-WG, held from 8 to 14 April 2000, afforded the Benin NFE-WG a broader view and critical assessment of the machinery to be established for developing programmes with a beneficial impact on NFE. It is therefore intended to organise a process of decentralised debriefing (i.e. for each territorial department) for members after the latter visit which will be extended to the organisations involved in the field of activity in order to capitalise on all the gains from the two visits. Such a process may lend fresh impetus to the reflection and action of all partners in non-formal education, who will take account of successes and failures and of the experiences observed in various contexts for the sake of devising suitable and effective approaches in the sector.

What is more, the outcome of this process will lead to educational approaches based on demand rather than supply (for in the latter case the results are fairly patent) and to initiatives reinforcing the capacities of partners in NFE, and identifying similar programmes responding to the real needs of the poor.

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The University Village Association (UNIVA) is a unique experience of partnership between the University Communities and the Village people. It demonstrates the link between the home, the community and school enrolment, as well as the formal and non-formal influences and interactions. Based on confidence building, UNIVA ensures ownership of literacy and community developments by the people. Local traditions and cultures are also respected, and the result has been the adoption of cultural approaches to learning and to the promotion of literacy.

THE UNIVA EXPERIENCE

UNIVA literacy programme began in 1989 in Ido Local Government Area of Oyo State with only five literacy centres. It started with 175 adult learners in 1989, and had by 1976, a total of 1,213 adult learners. Today there are 67 centres spread over 97 villages. The people of Akuto, Alapata, Araromi, Orirginde, Gbekuba and Olomo, just to mention a few communities, have taken the initiative with enthusiasm and translated it into collective action.

UNIVA metamorphosed from the erstwhile Community Development, Health and Literacy Project (CDLHP) established in rural communities to address educational needs of rural dwellers. It has been discovered over the years, that for literacy to have significant impact on the people, it has to be work-oriented and relevant to the needs of the focus group and must serve as an empowering agent of change. Formerly, promoters of literacy failed because it had always been traditional without reference to work or vocation or to environmental needs of the people. Thus UNIVA - an NGO with a mission - armed with the principles of work-oriented, work-based and workplace literacy embarked on a literacy programme that focuses on improving the standard of living of rural populace. It also employs the partnership between the University and the Village Communities to assist the poor and the marginalized population towards sustainable development, through innovative intervention strategies involving literacy, economic ventures, health and civic education.

The UNIVA experience amply illustrates how a project can be transformed into a community-owned, people-driven programme that ensures sustainability. In embarking on the project the usual needs assessment survey, through which the individual, group and community needs of the inaugural villages were established, was carried out. This afforded UNIVA first hand information on the demands, level of literacy vocations as well as dominant occupations of these communities. A major import of the assessment was that it helped to fashion the appropriate approaches, methods and relevant instructional materials for the programme. The innovation came early with the adoption of the unique approach dubbed AFFRELA. This is an acronym for African Freirean and Laubach strategies involving the respect for African method of leisurely learning and for the cultural dimension of learning, the consciousness awakening method popularized by the late Freire, and the use of the each-one-teach-one approach encouraged by Laubach.

CATERING TO THE DEMAND

As clientele from various walks and works of life enrol in literacy classes, their vocational or occupational needs are addressed. This is the pivot of work-oriented literacy approach of the Experimental World Literacy programme as well as the core of the British Work-based literacy and the American workplace literacy.

The content of the curriculum and the didactic instructional materials that emanate from it depend on the findings from the baseline survey. Adults are encouraged to take their fortune in their hands and are involved in the assessment of their needs, identification of their problems and prioritisation for positive solutions to them. Experience has shown that adult learners enjoy learning about themselves and the world around them. Since they are at

Foreign visitor at one of the UNIVA Literacy Centres.
the centre of learning, they identify the subjects and themes that include occupational and vocational items based on life-skills and income generation. The curricula consequently comprehends: farming, weaving, palm oil processing and kernel extracting, health, religion, governance, environment, technical, language skills, family life, craft, culture/taboos/social life, economics, history/story telling, current affairs, computation/calculation accounts/record keeping, peace and good neighbourliness. Contents as well as instructional materials were developed to suit their needs in line with the themes listed above. This was done following the principles of participatory and collaborative approaches encompassing Freirean conscientization as well as non-normalisation of adult literacy of Alan Rogers. In the literacy programme, the learning materials are current and relevant as they are subjected to regular up dating in line with the level and type of literacy programme, demanded by the adult learners.

**IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME ON THE LIFE OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

The strength of the project was derived from active community involvement at every stage of project identification, planning, execution and monitoring. This approach gave the community leaders identified early, confidence and control of the process of project development. Nothing was dictated from outside. The supporting partners, especially the International Foundation for Education and Self-Help (IFESH), the Laubach Literacy International, the British Council, the University of Ibadan and UNICEF allowed the project free hands. A few political leaders and market women leaders made voluntary contribution to the programme through their initial donation of money for payment of honoraria to facilitators, space for classroom interaction, and the release of women by their husbands. On the part of the participants, they invested their time, which would have otherwise been spent on economic and social activities. The traditional heads of these villages also embarked on visits and advocacy in ensuring that their people responded positively to the project demands.

When the space provided by the formal classrooms were no longer adequate, learners voluntarily donated land space where multipurpose buildings were erected. The project contributed roofing sheets, cement, and planks to complete the buildings in the six zones of the project.

At each turn of events the project ensured that the functionality of literacy was evident. The farmers among them received support through the seed loan provided by UNIVA. Through this, they were able to cultivate more hectares of land, thus increasing their productivity as well as improving their standard of living. The provision of labour saving machine (cassava processing machine) in the various villages also reduced the rural-urban movement. Rather than taking the raw materials to town, the people from the town began to come to the villages to buy the products.

Participants were encouraged to take an active interest in the political process with the return to democratic rule. The more literate ones profited from this additional interest introduced to the project, as they were sponsored into elective posts. Some of them who have displayed admirable skill of writing and reading were subsequently elected into important positions.

**GRADUATION**

All graduands of the literacy programme past or present have always expressed their gratitude to the organisers who enabled them to meet with foreign visitors as well as university professors, teachers and researchers during graduation ceremonies which are always held in the University. They contend that if the little education they got can lead them to meeting with this category of people in the University they must ensure that their children attend school. Information gathered from primary schools around these communities revealed an upsurge in school enrolments, high rate of attendance at health centres and improved environmental hygiene. Another major achievement of the programme is that some of the participants who excelled in their performances were appointed as instructors after self-enrichment training programme. One of them was quoted as saying: “to be literate is to liberate oneself from the dishonesty of opportunists in the community and to be able to lead your people in developmental process”.

Another participant was quoted as saying: “through the UNIVA literacy programme, I was able to write my name on the payment voucher and complete my saving and withdrawal forms in banks. I can now keep my secret, secret.”

A local government tax collector, after under going the literacy programme expressed shock at his past performance on tax reading and exclaimed: “so we have long been deceived by tax readers who will show us any coloured receipt as tax receipt. That era is gone for ever as I can now identify the year, amount and name on the tax receipt”.

The participation of the community members has widened their horizon and improved their networking activities. The majority of them have registered with co-operative societies thereby improving and sustaining their economic empowerment. Although different community initiatives are going on in all parts of the country, our field experience has shown that, the earlier NGO’s involved in community education adopt the strategy of collaboration and participation as practised by UNIVA, the better for future literacy advancement in Nigeria.

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National Development in sub-Saharan Africa in the 21st Century: How Non-formal Education can Help

A brief overview of the literature on NFE and National Development in the last three decades leads the author to strongly support the outcome of the December 1999 Pre-Biennial Symposium of the ADEA Working Group on Non Formal Education.

In order to answer the question as to how NFE can help in national development, the effective and potential contributions of each form of education to the Education For All (EFA) goals, need to be clearly established. Beyond this first level of analytical comparison we need to move to a higher level of programmatic analysis to determine the interlinkages and the complementarity of various forms of education in their various and numerous types of interfacing in the national development process. Both education and national development are multidimensional concepts in the sense of having more than one component involved in their operational definitions. When we speak of education we need to make theoretical distinctions between Formal Education (FE), non-formal Education (NFE), Informal Education (IFE) and even Self-Education (SE). National Development is defined in terms of economic, political, social, cultural and even spiritual components.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT REVISITED

Let us revisit some of the operational definitions we have been working with for the last 20 years. Education as a simple concept is understood as the process by which individuals are prepared to play an effective role in the life of their society. It involves the transmission of a range of basic skills, abilities, attitudes and knowledge and provides for creative self-expression (Taylor and Lowe, 1983). However, as a multidimensional concept it comprises:

- Formal Education, which refers to schooling from pre-primary all the way to higher education in Universities and beyond. This is the most institutionalized and the most hierarchically structured form of education;
- Non-formal Education is defined by Coombs and Manzoor (1974) as any organised, systematic learning activity carried on outside the framework of the formal school system and designed to provide specific types of skills and knowledge to a specific target group within a limited time frame;
- Informal Education occurs through daily experiences, interactions and exposure to the environment, family, peer groups, media etc. (Paulston and Le Roy, 1982); since Jomtien, it is referred to as third channel education;
- Self-Education which is according to Znaniecki (1930) the process by which individuals, who have already partly learned under the guidance of others, continue to prepare themselves and further their knowledge on their own initiative and by their own efforts.

National Development, on the other hand, is generally conceived of as the process by which nations-states achieve progress in fulfilling the rights of their citizens to basic socio-economic services and satisfaction of their basic needs, including political participation and spiritual gratification. However the concept of Development is being broken down here into:

- Economic development in terms of the combination of growth in GNP (Gross National Product) and increase in the PQLI (Physical Quality of Life Index). In other words, economic development is broadly understood to include progress, not only in production and productivity, but also in the quality of the distribution of the goods generated;
- Political Development in terms of the level of participation, the quality of the leadership provided and the extent to which democracy prevails (Bagayoko, 1987);
- The socio-cultural component of National Development includes modernization as a social change and improvement in the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of social service. It also includes technology transfer as a development strategy and as means for cultural enhancement. Finally it includes spiritual growth in terms of the capacity of various religious institutions to promote peace and security.

FORMAL SCHOOLING AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, THE STORY OF AN UNFULFILLED DREAM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The historical evolution of FE in sub-Saharan Africa before and since independence has been constantly and repeatedly marked by high expectations for a better socio-economic living condition for all. However, and unfortunately but not surprisingly, these expectations translated gradually into disenchantment and progressive loss of faith in schooling. African-States failed to reform so as to improve on key aspects of socio-economic and cultural relevance of FE. Subsequently we found ourselves trapped between the “Iron Law of the Ever Rising Costs” and the lack of relevance of school curricula and curricula materials for both the individual learner’s needs and their Countries’ development imperatives.
The discrepancy between the Supply of and the Demand for Formal Education resulted in a lowered enrolment ratio, mostly for girls and children living in hard-to-reach areas. According to the 1999 Johannesburg EFA meeting report on sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 41 million school age African children are out-of-school and 56% of them are girls. The report also acknowledges that between 20% and 29% of those enrolled in schools repeat one or more classes, and that the number of dropouts is increasing.

Coombs (1968) was the first to acknowledge the failure of FE in developing nations. This was in the '70s and '80s followed by an increased awareness about the limitations of FE towards achieving Universal Primary Education. In the 90s, a consensus was finally reached amongst educationalists, politicians, developmentalists, donor agencies, multilateral, bilateral partners, NGOs and the communities about the inadequacy of existing formal education systems to achieve EFA in the developing world and more so in sub-Saharan African nations. Hence, accordingly, the Jomtien conference advocated for a combination of various and complementary approaches to improve access to Basic Education. Therefore, it was recommended that existing formal school system be improved and alternative NFE and third channel approaches be promoted.

The failure of the existing formal school system to meet basic developmental needs has been recognized by all and expressed in terms of:

- Limited access particularly for girls and children in remote geographical areas;
- Low retention, performance and promotion rates, particularly for the girl child;
- Internal/External inefficiency;
- Shortage of funding;
- Limited community participation;
- Poor governance and low accountability;
- Increasing number of out-of-school youth and children;
- Increasing illiteracy ratio;
- Unemployment among school leavers etc.

In addition to all these factors, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is killing thousands of teachers and producing several thousands more orphans everyday who are leaving schools for child labour or for street life.

Considering all these negative factors, how realistic is it for us to assume that Africa will undoubtedly achieve its major EFA goals in two, three or more decades? The political will is there in almost all countries, judging from the Johannesburg Declaration (1999) in which sub-Saharan ministers of education, in conjunction with civil society and international agencies’ representatives, reaffirmed that “Education is a basic right and a basic need for all African children, youths and adults, including the disadvantaged and those with disabilities as stated in the international instruments, including the Charter on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child”. However, we need to be aware of the fact that the spreading poverty, the devastation of HIV/AIDS, and the inherent limitations of existing formal systems, political wills and political commitments shall not be enough to reach our goals. A neo-realism in educational development planning, implementation and policy making is becoming more and more of an imperative. This clearly is a call for increased attention to alternative/complementary approaches including Non-Formal Education. In this regards the ADEA NFE Working Group is an ideal instrument to help Africa meet the challenges of EFA.

**The 21st Century National Development Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa**

The late ADEA-NFE-WG Pre-Biennial Symposium (Johannesburg, 1999) reset the momentum for greater recognition and acceptance of NFE as an alternative/complementary Strategy for National Development in sub-Saharan Africa. The Symposium, which was attended by representatives from Governments, NGOs, Civil Society, Universities, multi-lateral and bilateral agencies, came up with the following conclusions and recommendations:

- Governments must give more attention to the development of NFE as a positive and complementary alternative to FE if EFA objectives are to be achieved at all. NFE must be one of the national priorities when planning and budgeting for education.
- Governments should facilitate the linkages and the interfacing between NFE and FE as two complementary approaches to Education for Development.
- Governments must recognise the critical role of NGOs/CBOs in the provision of NFE at the grass-root level and promote the most comprehensive and effective collaboration and partnership among all players and stakeholders.
- More efforts must be made towards effective community participation in project preparation and implementation.
- There is a pressing need to disseminate the concept of NFE among FE teachers and managers so as to increase their level of understanding and acceptance of the approach.
- Though voluntarism could be envisaged for a short time and it should not be considered as a strategy for the elimination of illiteracy.
- Using NFE as a strategy to tackle child labour and provide alternative chances for CNSPs in general has proven successful in Bangladesh. Other countries could learn from that experience.
In an attempt to solve the world educational crisis, Coombs (1968) advocated for the adoption of NFE programmes and practices as a substitute or a complementary approach to permit developing countries to "catch up, keep up and get ahead" by: (1) reaching the maximum of people with applicable knowledge and skills, (2) upgrading the competence of partially qualified individuals, and (3) salvaging the investment in primary and secondary unqualified and unskilled school-leavers.

As for Ahmed (1975) NFE is an instrument of social policy because it costs less and its curricula relate directly to the daily lives of people. More reasons militating in favor of NFE as a positive and complementary strategy for National Development were put forward by Bock and Papagiannis (1983) in the sense that NFE (1) is cost effective and educationally promising (2) the relative success of NFE (1973), Nyere (1976), Milton and Papagiannis (1983) on the social and cultural development dimension of National Development.

Harbison identified three major functions to be performed through NFE activities: (1) developing the skills and knowledge of those already employed (2) preparing youth for job entry and (3) developing skills, knowledge, and understanding which transcend the world of work. Moreover he added that (4) NFE may be one means of countervailing some of the distortions created by formal schooling - providing for instance, the means for competent but uncredentialled people to gain access to higher-level jobs in the economy and (5) NFE often provides greater opportunity for innovation.

Paulo Freire was very precise in terms of the positive role of NFE in political development, as he advocated that a conscientization process through NFE channels such as literacy will bring cultural revolution to end class stratification and exploitation promoted by formal education.

Bagayoko, on the other hand, contended that a well-targeted and carefully designed NFE program could be a perfect complement to FE, if not a more appropriate tool for political socialization, recruitment and integration as far as third world countries are concerned. According to Labelle, NFE could be supportive of social change with respect to five basic principles: (1) understanding the needs of client populations, (2) involving clients in their own learning, (3) facilitating the transfer and application of new behaviour to the environment, (4) establishing linkages between the programme and the components of the wider system and (5) attending to incentives both internal and external to the program.

Milton and Papagiannis, taking a modernization standpoint, affirmed that as far as society and social changes are concerned, NFE seems to be an efficient low-cost strategy to instill modern values while providing opportunities for technical training, literacy, numeracy, and modern information in agriculture, family planning and health.

**INTERFACING: MAXIMISING EDUCATION CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

As far as Kenya is concerned, progress has been realised in relation to the interfacing between NFE and FE on the one hand and the linking of NFE with both FE and informal education.

The major achievements in this regard include:

- Development of a standardised NFE curricula and curricula materials in accordance with three levels encompassing eight years of formal education.
- The Development of NFE Teachers' Guide and Learners' materials on the basis of the new curriculum in 18 subject matters.
- The elaboration of National Policy Guidelines on NFE.
- The Social Marketing of NFE as a positive and complementary alternative for out-of-school children through one national and three provincial workshops to disseminate the concept of NFE to top regional educational managers and administrators.
- Extensive capacity building of NFE centres through delivery of basic learning materials and equipment as well as the provision of essential tools for marketable skills development.

However, there is still a lot to be done
considering the fact that 54% of Kenyan school age children and youth are out-of-school. The interfacing must take new dimensions of non-formalising some aspects of Formal Education as well as maximizing the use of third channel education in both Formal and NFE. The most important strategies as far as interfacing is concerned would include:

- Mainstreaming of NFE as a positive complementary alternative for EFA
- Intensive and extensive social marketing for NFE at all levels, particularly among parents and formal schoolteachers and administrators.
- Establishing a national consensus on the boundaries of NFE in relation to FE and IFE.
- Standardization of NFE curriculum, curricula materials, teachers guide and learning materials at least up to the level of learning achievement.
- Establishing programmatic as well as conceptual linkages between education projects and various national development programmes.

**CONCLUSION**

NFE’s contribution to sub-Saharan Africa

Development shall depend on its quality, its relevance, its acceptance and above all, the nature of the interface with other forms of education. We need to address EFA objectives from Human Rights perspectives. In doing so, we shall identify our individual roles as nations-states, parents, educationalists and developmentalists in terms of our duties and our obligation to respect, protect, facilitate and fulfill the rights to education for all children, at all times and everywhere. As we use the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Woman (CEDAW) in educational planning, programming and implementation, we shall do away with major hindrances to the achievement of EFA goals. These hindrances include all kinds of discrimination particularly on gender, geographical ethnicity or religion bases.

As far as the implementation of NFE projects is concerned, Coombs (1974) cautioned about two fundamental aspects

1. the support of the recipient population, and
2. the linkage to other national development programs. In terms of the support of the target population, Coombs insisted on taking into consideration existing cultural patterns and value systems, attitudes and beliefs, for, to him the cooperation of the clientele is a key requisite for successful implementation. He also underlined the necessity to link NFE programs to integrated national development policy and planning.

However, the final word here is about the extent to which we as “educationalists” are capable and willing to upgrade ourselves to become “developmentalists”. As developmentalists, we cannot afford to overlook any forms of education whereas as educationalists, the risk of equating Education with Schooling is greater.

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Eligible school age children enrolled (1997/98) - frightening figures of what poverty has done. More than 50% of primary entrants never complete school; only 12% of poor in rural areas completed secondary school.

Alternative Approaches to Basic Education in Kenya

equity, access, retention, completion and learning achievement, were the recurring themes which characterised the discussions during the ‘Stakeholders’ Forum on Non Formal Education - Alternative Approaches to Basic Education’, in Maralal, Samburu District from 7th to 9th March 2000. The Forum was attended by over 50 participants drawn from learners and teachers, community leaders and members, local, national and international providers and sponsors of NFE - AABE, including Samburu NGOs and CBOs. The Forum adopted a number of recommendation including the formation of a National Working Group on Non Formal Education.

Samburu district is one of the poorest districts in Kenya. The population is predominantly nomadic – pastoralists, 84% whom live below the national poverty line. Primary school enrolment is low with less than 40% of the eligible school age children enrolled (1997/98 figures). Dropout and completion rates are low and gender disparities are wide.

The situation in Samburu is part of a national scenario that is characterised by declining enrolment, and low completion rates in primary education of less than 50% over the last decade. Transition rates from one sub-sector to the other are also low. It is reported for example, that 246,313 of the 454,544 students who sat for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examination in 1999, missed secondary school places. In a recent statement on the effects of poverty on education the Minister of Finance (Daily Nation, 16 March 2000) gave the following “frightening figures of what poverty has done. 13% of poor never attend school; in rural areas, 29% cannot afford to go to school; more than 50% of primary entrants never complete school; only 12% of poor in rural areas completed secondary school”.

Mindful of the need to contribute to equitable and sustainable provision of educational opportunities of quality, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) and the Department of Adult Education (DAE), in collaboration with Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Program Support Unit, and German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ), organised a Stakeholders’ Forum on NFE-AABE to:
• Examine conceptual and operational issues in NFE - AABE;
• Discuss policy initiatives for NFE - AABE;
• Profile the NFE - AABE providers in Samburu;
• Analyse methods and modes of delivery in NFE - AABE;
• Discuss the need for a supportive programme framework with focus on education for the girl child;
• Do an action plan on the way forward with regard to partnership in NFE - AABE.

FORMAL - NON FORMAL - INFORMAL INTERFACES

Interfaces between the formal, non-formal and informal education sub-sectors were discussed in the context of widening access, facilitating retention and accelerating completion. The role of alternative approaches (other possible modes of delivery) was explained as the following figure indicates

It was emphasised that a system of education, which gives parity of esteem to both the formal and non-formal sub-sectors, was needed in order to facilitate access and transition between the sectors.

Non-formal schools should not be stigmatised as “schools for the poor”. Non-formal education is an alternative (in contrast to the normative) form of education that has tremendous potential to reform the formal with its rigidity and conservative ethos. Flexibility of non-formal education in facilitating the acquisition of learning skills, life skills and transitional skills was identified as its greatest strength. Flexibility was seen in terms of the learning environment, teaching - learning transaction, attendance, duration and the curriculum which is truly learner-centred and responsive to the physical and social environment in which learning takes place. The theory and practice of multi-grade and multi-shift modes of learning were examined in terms of their effectiveness and efficiency in facilitating access. Open learning, feeder schools, mobile schools and polyvalence in the training of the teachers were also discussed.

Non formal schools are the results of the sustained efforts of the communities who felt the need for learning opportunities for the out-of-school children and youth, and took action to fulfill the need. On their initiative, they embarked on a process to establish Lchekuti (shepherd schools) which are
It is in the ideological and cultural arenas that the Working Group is likely to meet with its strongest challenges. Formal education systems that are largely controlled and financed by governments provide a vehicle for influencing the educational process in line with prevailing ideologies and policies for nation building. Most governments try to use this in a positive manner, but there are bound to be controversies with liberal ideologies that see education as a liberating force that unleashes human potential for its own sake. Problematic issues arising include language of instruction (local or foreign/international); status of indigenous knowledge in relation to what constitutes valid knowledge for education; and role of local communities as distinct from central governments/international agencies in the development and control of education.

These controversies often result in unconstructive tensions that further widen the gap between formal and non-formal education provisions. There are countries in which those NGOs and voluntary groups that do support NFE come into conflict with the governments that seem to be concerned only with the formal education system. This takes the form of suspicion of motives, queries about external sources of funding and the benefits to learners involved with NFE programmes.

Contributions in this newsletter reflect the scope and depth of the new NFE agenda as well as the controversies and challenges facing the Working Group. The case for NFE as a major contributor to community empowerment for development is forcefully made from a pan-African NGO perspective by Adams. This is substantiated by a more practical case example from Nigeria provided by M. Omolewa, T. Fadeyi and R. Adeniyi. From Kenya, M. Bagayoko offers an insightful review of the NFE literature laced with practical references to case studies supported by E. Thompson, to make the case for the role of NFE in national development in Africa. W. Hoppers on the other hand takes a more reflective, analytical viewpoint to explore how far we have progressed with the agenda and what needs to be done in terms of theory, policy and practical action. A. Atidegla brings us to the reality of what all this means for grass-roots NGOs involved in promoting NFE activities in Benin. We learn from J. Oxenham’s contribution that following a long period of diffidence and low priority for NFE, the World Bank is now seriously considering the option of responding more positively to country requests for more intensive involvement in and support for Adult Basic Education and Literacy. All of these contributions illustrate the exciting new sense of hope, but also highlight the complexities and the daunting nature of the challenges facing non-formal education.