

## Conference Evaluation

The International Conference on Adolescence Education through Open Learning – The SAARC Experience was organized with a view to share the experiences from a wide array of professionals related to AE in SAARC countries. A large number of conference participants were working at implementation and decision making levels while a few were functioning at the policy making level. The main focus of the conference was to strengthen the desirable practices and suggest pedagogies that are successful in operationalizing/ implementing the AE programmes. The conference provided a common platform to reflect on the concerned issues. The issues were widely debated during the deliberations of the conference and a broad consensus emerged on the concerned issues. The conference was thus fairly successful in meeting its agenda.

The feedback by the delegates at the end of conference (Profomma) documents their personal response to the various aspects of the conference. The Feedback Profoma is at Annexure-IV. The data augments the need for such periodic dialogues considered imperative for successful implementation of AE policies and programmes in the right spirit. A large number of participants (93%) felt that the conference provided them rich information and insights regarding alternative, and innovative strategies and practices, which they would be able to implement in their particular contexts. They opined that experiences shared provided new and useful ideas that expanded their knowledge and skills.

The case studies reported enabled them to identify various bottlenecks in implementation of AE programmes. Increased national and international networking and collaboration was also perceived as a major benefit by majority of the participants.

Needless to say, sharing of experience and the dialogues sensitized the participants and raised their level of awareness. It is hoped that such heightened awareness would provide the needed impetus to operationalization of the AE programmes.

It was indeed encouraging to observe a substantial gain in the knowledge base of the participants on various aspects of the conference. Self reported on a three point scale, it was found that while 86% of the participants had very little knowledge regarding the implementation of AEP in SAARC countries pre-conference, 93% of them acquired sufficient information about its status and implementation post conference. About equal number of participants (86%) who were totally unaware of the innovative practices used for implementation of AE pre-conference reported familiarity with the various innovative strategies and their use for effective implementation of AE later. Likewise, 93% of the participants, who had very little information of open schooling system in SAARC countries and the viability of imparting AE through open learning system, were able to broaden their knowledge and consolidate their views regarding these issues as a consequence of the deliberations in the conference. It was observed that open house session provided participants an opportunity to clarify their doubts. The participants eagerly sought information on concerned issues during this session.

Quite encouraging is the affirmative response of the participants regarding their competence and confidence. 86% of them reported being better equipped to implement adolescence education in their countries post conference. The specific gains reported by participants varied in nature viz. **Policy:** Sensitization of administration; work closely

with Ministry of Education, Department of Higher Learning to initiate such programmes, convincing educational policy makers to focus more on open learning system for reaching the unreached; **Administration and Execution:** organize awareness and training programmes at different levels, integrate life skills in formal and non-formal education system, identify the needs of AEP and implement the programme, inclusion of various tried and tested strategies in SAARC countries; **Collaboration:** Share experiences with various SAARC regions to improve knowledge regarding AE, networking with various international implementing agencies, and **Monitoring:** identify the incoherent components and deliver total package as well as overcome bottlenecks for better output. The resolve to develop e-Magazine and web-pages appears to be a significant gain for implementation of the programme through open learning.

When asked specifically, if the organization of such conferences would make a difference in the quality of implementation at a grass-root level, 86% of the participants responded positively. They opined that the discussion and dialogue provide a strong base to policy makers to reflect/assess the real need at the grassroots level as well as address common issues like poor literacy rate. The sharing of ideas and workable models enabled the participants to develop a better understanding of the adolescents that highlighted the need for innovations for successful implementation of the programme.

The participants expressed a lot of satisfaction with regard to the organizational structure and relevance of conference. They reiterated acquisition of new information, tools, models as well as new insights which would enable them to chisel implementation of the AE programme. All participants were satisfied with the pre-conference

communication and registration procedure while a large number (86%) were satisfied with the arrangements for their presentations as well. The only exception was the time allocation for presentation and discussion. About 40% expressed dissatisfaction on this account and recommended allocation of more time for group activities, presentations, question-answer sessions, sharing of experiences and best practices as well as better time management. They also felt the need for more inputs from implementing agencies with a focus on issues. The participants desired to get a hard copy of each presentation before hand as well as a list of the delegates at the commencement of the conference. A few stressed on the need for timely communication to participating states for better inputs.

All participants were in favour of organization of a follow up workshop/conference on some specific issues/topics. The suggested areas of concern varied from highlighting the significance of adolescence education to its successful implementation. Importance of AE, changes in AE in SAARC countries, role of AE in life and effect of AE on society were the specific topics cited related to its importance. The implementation topics delineated focused on networking of implementing agencies, development of an action plan with the involvement of local community at the grassroots, sharing of best practices and models on AE in the open learning system and planning specific advocacy training monitoring and evaluation of AEPs. One of the participants suggested keeping a count of the adolescent population covered under the programme as well as record the number of opportunities available to them. Most significant amongst the proposed was the 'Consortium for Asian Countries' which would facilitate such dialogues on a continuous basis.