

Valedictory Session

Mr. Bist, Secretary, NIOS welcomed the chief guest of the valedictory session, Mr. Nessim Tumkaya, and said that the conference provided a unique platform for all the SAARC nations.



Mr. D.S. Bist, Secretary, NIOS welcoming the chief guest Mr. Nessim Tumkaya and the delegates

He stated that the presence of all the SAARC nations (except Maldives), to deliberate upon an issue of great concern and exchange experiences and best practices was a positive sign. This showed the commitment of the nations as well as UNFPA, towards developing healthy adolescents by addressing their issues and concerns. Mr. Bist emphasized the role of advocacy in the successful implementation of AE. SAARC nations had similar cultural contexts and faced similar concerns in the implementation of AE. In such cases advocacy helped to mobilize positive opinion and the success of a programme was directly proportionate to the advocacy undertaken. Bhutan presented an excellent model of advocacy with commitment to AE coming from the Queen of Bhutan herself. He mentioned that the Chairman, NIOS, while recognizing the fact that open schooling would be a viable option for reaching geographically distanced learners in Bhutan,

promised all possible assistance i.e., at the government level and by way of learning materials from NIOS.

Mr. Bist further said that there could be a fruitful collaborations between the SAARC nations both in terms of human resources and materials. He said that more such collaborative initiatives could be taken up with other SAARC nations.

During his address, he shared a 'best practice' that may be fruitfully replicated in other nations. He informed that NIOS had initiated programmes through its Minority Cell for advocating open schooling amongst minority groups in India. This had resulted in partnership with madaras, thereby leading to greater educational access for minorities especially girls.

Mr. Bist concluded by expressing the hope that there would be more such opportunities for the SAARC nations to interact, leading to continued development of education in all the SAARC nations.

Mr. M.C. Pant, Chairman, NIOS, then presented the recommendations of the conference. Some of the major recommendations were that AE should be accorded high priority and action be initiated in the mission mode to ensure that every adolescent becomes ready to positively participate and benefit from the emerging opportunities; a common platform to share experiences and insights be established; research on adolescent concerns be carried out which will enable policy makers in implementation of the programme. UNFPA may support the creation and maintenance of a knowledge management system, which can be used by all *dramatis personae* of AE. UNFPA may also support appropriate learning design for behavioural

change and development of content, as well as an ICT enabled delivery system, which can be accessed by adolescents from any of the SAARC countries and, NIOS may act as the nodal institution where the above initiatives may be located and implemented over the next 4-5 years.

Mr. Pant then presented the Interim Report to Mr. Nessim Tumkaya. Ms. Geeta Narayan presented the highlights of the conference, for the benefit of the chief guest.

Ms. Geeta Narayan began by congratulating the Chairman, NIOS and his entire team. She stated that the present International Conference was the first of its kind in which all the SAARC nations were brought on a common platform to share experiences related to Adolescence Education and Open Learning.

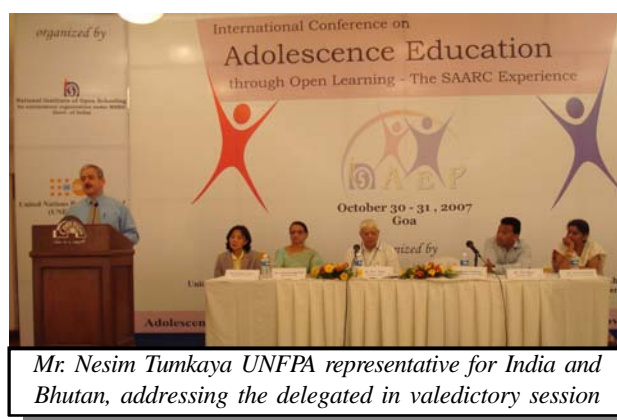
Ms. Narayan briefly highlighted the inputs provided by the eminent presenters which included the statement provided by the former Chief Minister Mr. Luizinho Faleiro, the welcome address by Mr. Pant, inaugural address by the Joint Secretary, Mr. Khuntia and the presentations given by participants for SAARC nations. The need to ensure that no child was deprived of basic education and the fact that life skills may act as a medium to impart appropriate and relevant information was emphasized.

Followed by this, the underlined aspects of the presentations were given by her. She stated that Bangladesh accentuated the need of Adolescence Education and appropriate skills to face the challenges of life. Similarly, Bhutan and Nepal stated the role of Youth Information Centres, NGOs and media to sustain AEP. Ms. Narayan also gave a brief account of the first session of the conference. Similar presentations were made by other SAARC Nations where Afghanistan emphasized the role of literacy and vocational

inputs to raise the standard of adolescence education. The highlights of the conference were brief and pertinent for that moment as it provided an insight for the whole programme.

In his valedictory address, Mr. Tumkaya expressed his anguish over the declining sex ratio in most SAARC nations. He said that while girls and boys were born the same, they grew up to become products of the values prevalent in the society. He emphasized that values and culture were dynamic in nature and kept changing rapidly. There were other rapid changes taking place around adolescents for which they need to be equipped with life skills, particularly the soft, sociological skills to be successful in life. These life skills were necessary for establishing fruitful relationships with parents, teachers, peers and the society at large.

Mr. Tumkaya spoke about the power of technology, particularly information communication technologies, that could have positive as well as negative impact. On the positive side, ICT could be used in a proactive manner to develop life skills in adolescents. He said that he was pained by the fact that technology was being used for sex determination tests resulting in the death of unborn female children.



Mr. Tumkaya reiterated the fact that adolescents form a very large portion of the population in all

SAARC nations. These managers, leaders, entrepreneurs and teachers of tomorrow need to be suitably equipped with life skills to forge successful relationships with others for the nations to prosper. He said that taking steps to merely provide information is not sufficient and need to be augmented with follow-up programmes to reinforce the message.

The most appropriate way to accomplish this was to use culturally sensitive ways that do not offend sensibilities and to co-opt the social agencies and work with them. Mr. Tumkaya advocated the adoption of the two-way proactive communication system that allows the adolescents an opportunity to ask questions and obtain authentic information from reliable sources.

Mr. Tumkaya was of the opinion that involving NGOs in the task would prove fruitful since government agencies may not be able to take up

sensitive issues but may be able to support and co-operate with NGOs working in the field. He concluded by saying that just as we take care to smoothen the entry of a newborn into the world, we must equip the adolescents with appropriate skills to deal with the new and bewildering world that they were entering.

The session ended with a vote of thanks being proposed by Dr. Anita Priyadarshini, Deputy Director, NIOS. On behalf of NIOS, she expressed gratitude to MHRD and UNFPA for making the event possible. She thanked Mr. Tumkaya for taking time out of his busy schedule and being a part of the valedictory ceremony. She thanked all the delegates for presenting the status papers of their respective countries and their active participation throughout the sessions. She thanked the efforts of the officials of NIOS for helping in the successful organization of the conference.



United we stay... Delegates of SAARC nations at the conclusion of the conference

Rapporteur : Dr. Sandhya Kumar, Assistant Director, NIOS

Compere : Ms. Asheema Singh, Project Officer (AEP), NIOS