

DAY 1: Session - I

Chairperson	: Mr. S. C. Khuntia, Joint Secretary, MHRD, India
Co- Chair	: Ms. Geeta Narayan, National Programme Associate, UNFPA India
Rapporteur	: Dr. Anita Priyadarshini, Dy. Director, NIOS Mr. P. K. Sharma, Expressions India

The Bangladesh Experience...



Mr. Md. Mukhlesur Rahman presenting the status of Adolescence Education in Bangladesh

Mr. Md. Mukhlesur Rahman and Ms. Amena Khatun of the Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) made the presentation on the status of Adolescence Education in Bangladesh.

Mr. Rahman spoke about various problems that the adolescents faced, including lack of knowledge, education and counselling as a result of which they were exposed to risky behaviour. He said that adolescents were vulnerable to unsafe sex, sexual abuse, substance abuse, eating disorders, depression and other problems.

Mr. Rahman presented the demographic characteristics of Bangladesh. He said that according to the Census 2001 data, in

Bangladesh:

- About 28 million i.e. 23% of total population fall into the 10-19 age group comprising of adolescents.
- 53% of the adolescents are male and 47% are female.
- 76% live in rural areas while 24% live in urban areas.
- More than one-third (36.4%) of the girls aged 15-19 were married.
- About 62% of the total adolescents (more than 17 million) remain out-of-school.
- A total of about 1.5 million girls never enrolled in school.
- About 37% of them drop out from the primary education cycle at secondary level. In Bangladesh, this percentage increased to 48%. Enrolment declines as age increases e.g. for 11-13 years it is 44%, for 14-15 years it is 27% and for 16-17 it is 16% only.
- About 32% of the adolescent population is economically active. It is about half the number of out-of-school adolescents.

Mr. Rahman informed that early marriage, discrimination in family and social life, dowry, domestic violence, social isolation, lack of awareness of rights and lack of autonomy in decision-making are some of the major socio-cultural adversities that the adolescent girls were facing in Bangladesh.

He said that a study done by Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) showed how adolescents were ignored in family life and had low or no significant role in decision making process. Family members too had a low awareness about the special treatment to be given to adolescents. Awareness level about the special treatment to be given to adolescents was found to be low amongst family members.

Mr. Rahman called for a realization by all stakeholders for the need to make adolescent development a part of the national development strategy. He also gave details of a case study done by DAM to reach out to adolescents. He also elaborated upon the Junior School Certificate Project (JSC), which was being implemented by Bangladesh Open University (BOU) and Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE).

In conclusion, Mr. Rahman pointed out the challenges facing AE Programme in Bangladesh. He reiterated the need for a concrete educational policy as well as resource mobilization for implementing this new but highly important programme.

The Bhutan Experience...

The presentation for Bhutan was made by Mr. Karma Yeshey, Director of Adult and Higher



Education, Ministry of Education, Bhutan. He gave the demographic background of Bhutan as well as the educational scenario. He said that most children between the ages of 6-18 receive free

education through the formal school system. There are schools established in almost all parts of the country so that children have access to education. As regards adolescent education, Mr. Yeshey informed that a large part of the adolescence education was delivered through formal schooling system in the country. The Department of Youth and Sports within the Ministry of Education takes care of parenting education, guidance and counselling, comprehensive school health and reproductive health programmes in coordination with the Ministry of Health, games and sports, scouting programmes, etc. which are all for the benefit of youth in Bhutan.

Bhutan also has a Non-formal Educational (NFE) Programme that offers basic literacy programme in the national language, Dzongkha. This NFE Programme includes about 25% of learners who are in the age group of 14-24 years. They learn

not only to read and write but are also taught about life skills. The NFE curriculum topics relate to agriculture, environment, forest, related health issues, culture and tradition, etc. that are closely related to their daily lives.

The implementation partners of the programme include NGOs like the Youth Development Fund (YDF), Tarayana Foundation, REWA (meaning 'Hope' in Dzongkha), RENEW (acronym for Respect, Educate, Nurture, and Empower Women) etc. This programme has acquired importance as it forms a part of the population education drive spearheaded by Her Majesty, the Queen Ashi Sangay Choden Wangchuck, the UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador. A major part of her campaign on population education is devoted to addressing pertinent adolescence issues.

Mr. Yeshey pointed out that so far Bhutan was fortunate not to have her adolescents exposed to noticeable situations of exploitation and violence. There are no reported cases of trafficking for prostitution, child marriages, child workers etc. in Bhutan so far.

Mr. Karma Yeshey spoke about the advances made in areas of population and reproductive health. He shared the practical experiences and case studies of some programmes. These include:

- '*Tarayana Foundation*' created by Her Majesty the Queen Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, having its roots in the welfare of the less fortunate population and working for promoting livelihood of the poor through promotion of livelihood skills and cottage industries.
- REWA, which is a rehabilitation center-

cum-support group created by the Youth Development Fund.

- SPEA, which is School based Permanent Education on Adolescence, organized by schools for the parents to support their children to grow up in a healthy manner.

Other programmes include the scouting movement, reproductive health programme, career and general counselling which have helped the system to provide Adolescence Education in more tangible ways.

Mr. Karma Yeshey identified some challenges faced by Bhutan which include:

- Rapid social change.
- Rising cases of substance abuse.
- Growing cases of unwanted and teenage pregnancies.
- Accelerating Rural-Urban migration.
- Comparatively high levels of youth unemployment.
- Rising reported cases of HIV/AIDS infections in the country.

In conclusion, Mr. Yeshey said that Bhutan was exploring strategies for educational interventions for strengthening AEP. These included those for ensuring greater effectiveness and sustainability of the school curriculum and NFE programme as well as appropriate use of print and broadcast media.

Mr. Yeshey appreciated the efforts of NIOS in the field of Open Schooling and said that Bhutan had a lot to learn from NIOS.

The Nepal Experience...

Mr. Homraj Sharma, Consultant, UNFPA, Mr. Ima Narain Shreshta, Technical Officer, Ministry



Delegates from Nepal listening to the presentations

of Education and Sports and Ms Sumana Rana, Programme Officer Family Planning Association of Nepal jointly presented the status paper of Nepal. The presentation focused on the national Adolescent Health and Development Strategy (AHDS) outlining the role of National Centre for Education Development including Open School Programme and Youth Information Centre (YIC).

The first presenter, Mr. Homraj Sharma spoke about the state of adolescents in the country. He said that 23.6% of the population comprised of adolescents. He informed that 18.9% of maternal deaths occurred in the adolescent age group due to teen pregnancy.

In Nepal, the adolescent age group was defined as 10-19 years. Outlining the major adolescent health problems, Mr. Homraj Sharma stated that there was lack of information regarding adolescent health, early marriage and child bearing issues, STD, HIV/AIDS,

nutrition and substance abuse. Factors such as low education status, low employability, sexual violence, child labour, gender discrimination etc. were also issues of concern. He said that the goal of the AHDS was to improve the health and socio-economic status of adolescents by promoting health, education and socially responsible behaviour. The main objective of the programme was to increase access to information, improve the level of education and skills, increase access to and utilization of services including counselling and create a safe and supportive environment.

Some of the interventions outlined through this programme related to providing information and skills, health services, counselling, provision of safe and supportive environment, youth participation, inter-sectoral collaboration and co-operation etc. Mr. Homraj Sharma explained that the programme was implemented in a decentralized manner through joint efforts of the Government and NGOs.

The second half of the presentation was made by Mr. Ima Narain Shreshta. He spoke about the programme being run by National Centre for Education Development (NCED). He gave details of the Secondary Teacher Training Programme, under which Health, Population and Environment (HPE) was a core subject. He spoke about the Life Skills Based Health Education training (LSBE), which was started in Nepal in 2002, as a joint initiative of UNICEF and Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES). This programme helps young persons to develop life

skills for healthy living, preventing HIV/AIDS and drug use. However, Mr. Shreshtra stated that there remained a challenge related to training skills in regular classroom practice.

Mr. Shreshta gave details about the Open School Programme of Nepal, which is a pilot programme launched in certain districts of the country. Under this programme, five open schools have been established in different regions and these provide academic support to learners who have passed grade eight. Such learners are prepared for the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination. The challenge of the Open School is that at present there is no separate curriculum and also there is a need to expand this programme to other parts of the country.

Mr. Shreshta also spoke about the Reproductive Health Education Related Programme conducted by Non-formal Education Centre (NFEC). This project is engaged in revising existing NFE training modules on Reproductive Health (RH) and including ARSH issues in them. There is also a great deal of focus on training of instructors on RH issues. He informed the delegates about the progress and achievements of this project and said that though a lot had been achieved, there was a need to develop strategies for sustaining AE Programmes.

The third presenter, Ms Sumana Rana, spoke about the Youth Information Centres (YIC), which have been set up especially for young people. She said that there was a lack of information amongst young people and hence FPAN (Family Planning Association of Nepal) had

adopted a modern strategy for reaching out to such people.

Ms. Rana said that the YIC used a three pronged approach viz through library, training halls and providing services. The major activities at the YIC included providing reading materials, and organizing puppet shows, ARSH games, song competition, film shows, and street dramas. These centers also provide services such as counselling services on ARSH issues, supply of condoms and provide pills and referral services for STI / RTI.

Ms. Rana emphasized the need for a supportive environment. She said that there was a need to ensure that the services available at YIC are used more effectively.

During the open forum following the presentation by Nepal, the delegates inquired about the working of the Open School, Nepal with specific respect to adolescents. It was informed that the Open School was preparing learners for the school leaving certificate (SLC) examination.

In her concluding remarks, Ms. Geeta Narayan said that all the presentations of the three countries showed that there was a recognition of the fact that adolescents were a critical mass, who had to be given special focus to overcome their problems. In Bangladesh, the main focus was on providing livelihood training, while in Bhutan there was a strong advocacy programme which was being personally led by the Queen herself. In the case of Nepal, the challenge was to ensure that AE issues were brought into the mainstream and integrated in all subjects ensuring access to all.

The session chairperson, Mr. S.C. Khuntia in his observations stated that there was a common

thread across the SAARC countries. He said that issues of gender discrimination were common and there was a need to bridge the gender divide. The curriculum and materials had to be designed with great care and sensitivity. Mr. Khuntia observed that the Open Learning System (OLS) was a complete system in itself and hence OLS must have its own curriculum and materials catering to the special target group of OLS. He urged all countries to consider the possibility of initiating Open Schools in their respective countries. He said that Open Schools should also cater to such adolescents who drop out of school after a particular level and do not want to pursue secondary education. Such learners should be provided with special packages through Open Schooling. He mentioned that the learners of Open Schools were generally young adults who are mature and can be given information to help them lead healthier lives. In his observations, Mr. Khuntia identified peer

group education as an important issue that needed to be explored in the Open Schooling teaching by learning process. He said that the mechanism of Personal Contact Programmes (PCPs) should be strengthened for this purpose.

Mr. Khuntia recommended that SAARC countries should formulate their own national strategies for promoting the Open Schooling Programme for adolescents that would keep their development and cultural contexts in mind. A strong advocacy programme could be initiated to promote this concept of Open Schooling.

The ensuing discussion enriched the conference output by raising pertinent issues and suggesting appropriate direction and action, which were summarized by the Chair.

The session ended with thanks to all the presenters and the Chair.

