

DAY 1 : Session - III

Chairperson	: Mr. Amod Kanth, Chairperson, Prayas Juvenile AIDS Centre
Co-Chair:	: Mr. Hom Raj Sharma, Consultant, UNFPA Nepal
Rapporteur	: Dr. Mamta Srivastava, Assistant Director, NIOS Mr. Harish Kumar Meena, NCERT, India

The NGO Experience...

In the post-tea session, Prayas, a leading NGO of India and NIOS, India made their presentations. Prayas is one of the active Accredited Institutes (AIs) of NIOS. Ms. Nuzhat Parveen, Senior Programme Manager of Prayas initiated the presentation by defining the term 'adolescence' as a phase of transition from the joyous, immature and carefree period of childhood into the phase of maturity, adulthood, responsibility and emotional stability. Most young people can negotiate the biological, cognitive, emotional, and social transitions of adolescence successfully, if they have some help and support from people around them.

Adolescents symbolize energy, action and creativity, as well as the hope and future of the nation. They are the future, but - more importantly - also the present. They account for one-fifth of India's population; and, within India, the age-group of 12 to 19, constitute 22.8% of the population. This means, approximately 230 million Indians belong to this age group, and as per the projections, their relative percentage in the total population is increasing. Although, the Indian population below poverty line (BPL) is reported to be decreasing, now being less than 26.1%, another official estimate finds nearly 79% of Indians to be 'poor and vulnerable'. In the same ratio, a large proportion of adolescents get affected by difficult circumstances - on account of sheer economic

reasons or poverty, or certain socio-cultural, psychological, legal, or geographical factors and they are left to fend for themselves.

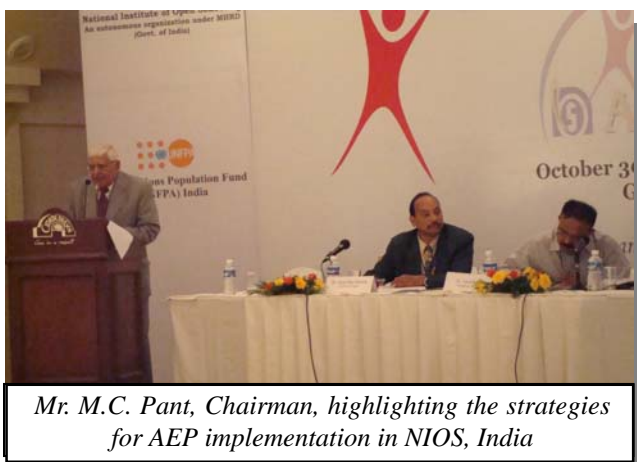
The target group of Prayas comes from the marginalized and disadvantaged section of population. It is a challenging task to impart literacy to this segment of population. They do not want literacy at the cost of bread for the day. Prayas in collaboration with Jan Shiksha Sansthan (JSS) and Prayas Institute of Economic Empowerment (PIEE) is trying to impart literacy with vocational skills. They are also provided life enrichment and Life Skill Education so that they can enjoy literacy with a decent earning and are self-motivated to pursue life-long learning through Open Schooling and Open University. It is only through learning and life skills development that they will be able to retain jobs that they might have got due to their vocational skills. Learning will also help them to grow in life.

Prayas highlighted the success stories where children from difficult circumstances had continued education through alternate mode and completed their 10th and 12th class from NIOS. After the presentation, some delegates voiced their concerns relating to the vulnerable adolescents and wanted to know how their educational needs were being identified by Prayas.

The NIOS Experience...

The second presentation of the session was made by Mr. M. C. Pant, Chairman, NIOS on the Adolescence Education Programme as being implemented in NIOS.

The presentation began with a brief introduction about the NIOS and its courses and programmes, its clientele, inherent flexibility of the system and other salient features. While highlighting education as a life-long process, he expressed concern about the out of school children and adolescents. He informed the key issues that NIOS had focused on under AEP include providing authentic and accurate information regarding adolescence; creating awareness amongst adolescents about the causes and consequences of substance abuse and



Mr. M.C. Pant, Chairman, highlighting the strategies for AEP implementation in NIOS, India

ways of preventing it, enhancing life skills of adolescents and increasing sensitivity towards the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS.

He informed that, in NIOS, integration of AE elements had been carried out in different subjects, capacity building workshops were organized for sensitizing lesson writers, integrating the issues and concerns in self learning materials (SLMs), and designing exercises and activities for evaluation of life skills. NIOS has

adopted the curricular approach, by integrating the AE information in self-learning materials and organizing capacity building workshops for lesson writers. AE was also reflected in the printed support materials like, Open Learning Magazine, Prospectus, Almanac 2007, Graphic Bank, Posters, Advocacy Folders, Bookmarks, Planner 2007, Population Folders, Tutor Training Modules etc.

Support materials in the form of audio/video programme were developed and broadcast from Gyan Vani, the FM Channel. The NIOS/AEP website which has been developed contains a number of interactive games, quiz, articles, FAQs etc. The Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) has also been developed for the adolescent learners. He highlighted the challenges in implementing AEP through distance education and said that lot of work needed to be carried out in this area. After this presentation, Mr. Amod Kanth appreciated the efforts of NIOS.

The session concluded with Mr. Amod Kanth's remarks that open schooling was the most appropriate system for adolescents who were out of school. The open schooling system is flexible enough to cater to the heterogeneous needs of such youths who had a background of different as well as difficult circumstances. He emphasised the need that open schooling may expand its vocational education programme; as such persons needed the stability of a vocation to help them. He concluded by saying that economic empowerment would help such adolescents to rebuild their lives. NIOS should think of special packages on life skills in addition to its academic courses.

Mr. Pant responded to the queries raised by the participants regarding Open Schooling, its quality, equivalency, delivery mechanism and life skills programme.