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for Education



**LITERACY INITIATIVE FOR
EMPOWERMENT (LIFE) 2010**
REGIONAL MID-TERM EVALUATION



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Summary
Report

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

APPEAL	Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All	MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
BLCE	Basic Literacy and Continuing Education project, Bangladesh	NFE	Non-Formal Education
BEHTRUWC	Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children Project, Bangladesh	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
CAMPE	Campaign for Popular Education, Bangladesh	NIC	National Informatics Centre, India
CapEFA	Capacity Development for EFA	NILE	National Institute for Lifelong Education, Republic of Korea
CBO	Community-Based Organization	NIRD	National Institute of Rural Development, India
CDAC	Centre for Development of Advanced Computing, India	NPA-EFA	National Plan of Actions for EFA
CLC	Community Learning Centre	PLCEHD	Post-Literacy and Continuing Education for Human Development Project, Bangladesh
CONFINTEA	International Conference on Adult Education	PRI	Panchayat Raj Institution, India
Dalit	Scheduled Caste Group, India and Nepal	ROSC	Reaching Out-of-School Children Project, Bangladesh
DESD	Decade of Education for Sustainable Development	SLMA	State Literacy Mission Authorities, India
EFA	Education for All	TOR	Terms Of Reference
EFA-MDA	Education for All Mid-Decade Assessment	UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
EP	Equivalency Programmes	UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
GMR	Global Monitoring Report	UIS-AIMS	Assessment, Information Systems, Monitoring and Statistics Unit
GPI	Gender Parity Index	UNLD	United Nations Literacy Decade
ICT	Information and Communication Technology		
IDP	International Development Partners		
ILD	International Literacy Day		
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization		
IPAI	Institute of Public Auditors of India		
JICA	Japan International Co-operation Agency		
JSS	Jan Shakshan Sansthans for vocational training and skills development, India		
LEAF	Literacy Education in Afghanistan project of JICA		
LIFE	Literacy Initiative for Empowerment		
LSK	Lok Shiksha Kendra or Adult Education Centres, India		
LSS	Lok Shiksha Samities (People's Education Committee), India		
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals		
MIS	Management Information System		
MOE	Ministry of Education		

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1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the LIFE Initiative

According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011¹, there were an estimated 796 million illiterate adults worldwide in 2008, more than half of them living in South and West Asia. Two thirds are girls and women. Many countries are seeing increases in their literacy rates. In other countries, however, such increases are too small to offset population growth as the absolute number of illiterates continues to rise. Closely linked to illiteracy, there were 67 million school age children out of school in 2008 of whom more than 26 million were in the Asia-Pacific region. Among them, a huge proportion are girls. In the absence of measures to put these out-of-school children into school or provide them alternative educational opportunities, they will grow up to join the ranks of adult illiterates.

Literacy is a basic right, guaranteed under the fundamental right to education enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Literacy is also an important tool to empower people and communities so as to enable them to enjoy their rights such as the right to health, right to information, right to justice and right to freedom. Absence of literacy is strongly correlated with poverty. Those who can use their literacy skills to defend their legal rights have a marked advantage over those who cannot.

Literacy paves the way for social and gender equity as well as broader societal development. Women who have benefited from literacy programmes have noted the sense of empowerment, economic independence and social emancipation that such programmes have brought them. Literate mothers are more likely to send their children to school. Promoting literacy among adults, thus, supports the creation of literate societies and increases the extent to which people play an active role in their personal development and the development of their communities.

1 UNESCO. 2011. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011 – The hidden crisis: Armed Conflict and Education*. Paris, UNESCO.

Realizing this fact, the United Nations launched in 2003 the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD 2003-2012)² to make a determined and sustained effort toward attaining literacy for all in both developing and developed countries.³ The decision to focus on literacy was a response to the major global challenges posed by illiteracy and the need to expand the continuum of learning as a result of rapid development of information and communications technologies⁴. On a deeper level, the push towards universal literacy is based on the belief that literacy is a human right and that “creating literate environments and societies is essential for achieving the goals of eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy.”⁵ UNLD activities target the poorest and most marginalized social groups, including women, and often accompany initiatives to reduce poverty. At the request of the UN General Assembly, UNESCO has been coordinating the UNLD and its international activities.

2 See United Nations Resolution 56/116 for more information on the UNLD. <http://www.un-documents.net/a56r116.htm>

3 The Asia-Pacific regional launch of UNLD took place on 8 September 2003, International Literacy Day, and coincided with the CONFINTEA V Review meeting.

4 See p.6 of *United Nations Literacy Decade: International Strategic Framework for Action*. 2009, p. 6. Paris, UNESCO. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001840/184023e.pdf>

5 United Nations General Assembly: *United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all; International Plan of Action; implementation of General Assembly Resolution 56/116. (A/57/212)*, paragraph 2. New York, United Nations.

The UNLD International Plan of Action⁶ identifies six pillars for literacy activities:

1. Policy change that encourages local participation and links literacy promotion with strategies to reduce poverty;
2. More flexible literacy programmes, adapted to local conditions, that enable learners to move on to more formal learning opportunities;
3. Capacity-building to help literacy instructors, managers and programmes to function more effectively;
4. More empirical research to support policy change (e.g. on the long-term impact of literacy and improved community participation);
5. Community participation and ownership of literacy programmes;
6. Monitoring and evaluation of programmes to determine more reliable indicators of progress, both in terms of numbers of participants and overall impact.

The three strategic objectives⁷ of the second half of the UNLD reflect the outcomes foreseen in the UNLD International Plan of Action and the lessons of the first half of the Decade. They aim at achieving by the end of 2012 the following:

- a) To mobilize stronger commitment to literacy;
- b) To reinforce effective literacy programme delivery;
- c) To harness new resources for literacy.

This evaluation constitutes a part of these efforts to learn from the past in order to recommend priority actions for the future.

6 *Ibid.*

7 UNESCO. 2009. *United Nations Literacy Decade - International Strategic Framework for Action*. Paris, UNESCO. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001840/184023e.pdf>.

1.2 Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE 2006-2015)

In 2005, UNESCO launched the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) programme as a key operational mechanism for achieving the goals and purposes of the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD). It targets countries with the greatest literacy needs: 35 nations with literacy rates of less than 50 percent and/or a population with more than 10 million adult illiterates. LIFE is a strategic framework of action in support of the achievement of UNLD and Education for All (EFA) literacy goals. Currently, 85 percent of the world's population without literacy competencies and skills live in these 35 countries. The majority of them are girls and women.

In Asia and the Pacific, the nine countries participating in the LIFE initiative are: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, People's Republic of China, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nepal, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea. These countries undertook preparatory work during 2005 to produce their respective Country Profiles which included their literacy status.

The main goal of LIFE is to contribute to the achievement of the Dakar (EFA) Goals, in particular Goal 3 (meeting the learning needs of all young people and adults), Goal 4 (a 50 percent improvement in adult literacy rates), and Goal 5 (achieving gender equality in education). This global strategic framework responds to the learning needs of out-of-school children and of adolescents, youth and adults with insufficient literacy skills or none. The focus is on girls, women, and families living below the poverty line, particularly in rural areas. LIFE also supports the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on poverty reduction, women's empowerment, HIV/AIDS and environment conservation.

In order to achieve its goal, LIFE aims to reinforce national and international commitments to literacy, support the articulation of sustainable literacy policies, strengthen national capacities, and enhance countries' innovative initiatives in providing literacy learning opportunities.

To achieve these goals, the key strategies of LIFE implementation are advocacy, policy, capacity development, partnership building and

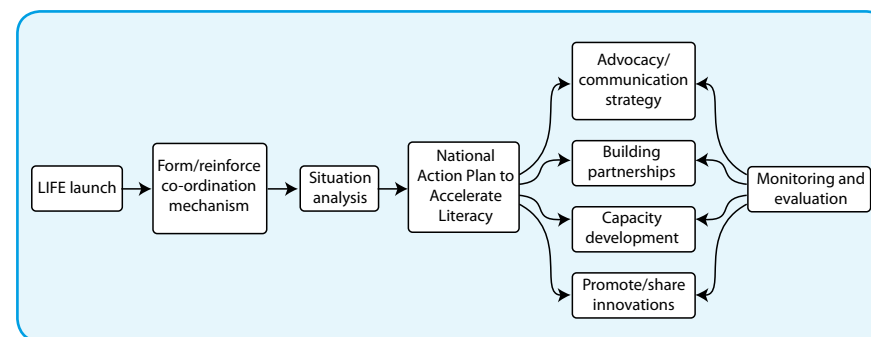
knowledge sharing. With (1) country ownership and diversity; (2) links to national policy; and (3) progressive phasing of UNESCO support as the underlying principles, LIFE will:

- engage in advocacy and communication to create national and international momentum, mobilizing awareness, commitment, partnerships and adequate resources for its expeditious implementation;
- reinforce national capacities to develop appropriate policies and programmes, adequate human resources and institutions, including operational infrastructure;
- support countries in the delivery of programmes that effectively address poverty, gender inequalities and disadvantages related to health and social exclusion; and
- facilitate the sharing of information to improve policies and practice by conducting research, supporting innovative and scalable programmes, promoting good practices, and undertaking monitoring and evaluation for assessing progress.

1.3 LIFE Implementation Process

This LIFE Mid-Term Evaluation reviews the process of implementation of LIFE in the 9 LIFE countries in Asia and the Pacific covering the period 2005 to 2010. Each country had to start the LIFE implementation from a different situation and needed to initiate the LIFE process in its own way. At the Regional Consultation Co-ordination and Planning Meeting which took place in Islamabad, Pakistan in March 2006, the participants were invited to conduct needs assessments, prepare LIFE country action plans and establish LIFE steering or co-ordination committees. In general terms, it was foreseen that the LIFE process would be implemented as depicted in Figure 1 (see also the sample questionnaire in the Annex):

Figure 1: LIFE Implementation Process and Components



However, it soon became clear that effective LIFE processes at the country level could only develop meaningfully if the LIFE framework was promoted in flexible ways and tailored to suit the specific context and needs of the participating countries.

The main objective of this LIFE implementation process is to strengthen partnerships, co-ordination and synergy among literacy stakeholders within a country to develop and update literacy policies, plans and implementation mechanisms. Also on the agenda is co-operation with international development partners to accelerate the improvement of literacy rates and progress towards the UNLD and EFA literacy goals.

LIFE processes are to be country-led. The countries involved in LIFE are expected to assume leadership in organizing actions to implement the components of LIFE as shown in Figure 1.

1.4 Major International and Regional Conferences and Meetings to Promote Literacy

In order to address the LIFE Strategic Objective of “advocacy and communication to make literacy a priority on the agenda of different stakeholders and create a momentum for jointly accelerating literacy efforts”,

and to promote the objectives of the UNLD and LIFE, many international and regional conferences, meetings, seminars and workshops have been organized in recent years. During international conferences, the Asia and Pacific region having the biggest concentration of illiterates, has always been successful in highlighting issues of literacy, some of the conferences which significantly promoted literacy, particularly in the frameworks of UNLD and LIFE, are described below:

1.4.1 White House Conference on Global Literacy

The White House Conference, which underscored the need for sustained global and country level leadership in promoting literacy, was the starting point for a major campaign in support of literacy internationally. Mrs. Laura Bush, former First Lady of the United States of America and Honorary Ambassador for the United Nations Literacy Decade, hosted the first White House Conference on Global Literacy in New York City on 18 September 2006. A number of the world's First Ladies attended the conference.

Through panels and informal discussions, the conference provided practical information about successful programmes that promote literacy as a catalyst to advance social and economic participation, human development and poverty reduction. As a follow-up to this conference, UNESCO initiated a series of Regional Conferences in Support of Global Literacy with the involvement of First Ladies, many of whom attended the White House Conference.

1.4.2 UNESCO Regional Conferences in Support of Global Literacy

As part of a major drive to promote literacy at international and regional levels by initiating a systematic process to prepare for and implement the LIFE framework, UNESCO Regional Conferences in Support of Global Literacy were organized to raise public attention on literacy challenges and to strengthen links among policy makers, civil society, private sector, foundations, academia and prominent personalities.

These conferences built upon the work begun at the White House Conference on Global Literacy and were organized in the framework of the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) and UNESCO's Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE). They addressed literacy challenges specific to each region, advocated for literacy for all and prepared the groundwork for concrete country support. The conferences provided a forum for the exchange of information on effective literacy practices, discussion of challenges, co-operation building among stakeholders, decision-making on new courses of action, and mobilization of partners and resources for concrete interventions at the country level.

Two out of the six regional conferences have taken place in the Asia-Pacific region since the start of UNLD. The first was held in Beijing in 2007 and focused on East Asia, South-East Asia, and the Pacific. The second was held in New Delhi later that year and focused on South, South West, and Central Asia. Descriptions of these regional conferences are as follows:

Literacy Challenges in East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific: Building Partnerships and Promoting Innovative Approaches (Beijing, People's Republic of China, 31 July - 1 August 2007): The Beijing conference focused on literacy challenges and achievements in literacy policies and strategies; costs and financing; monitoring, evaluation and assessment; programme delivery; literacy in a multilingual context; and literacy and rural development. The conference examined effective practices to improve literacy in four thematic fields: mother-child literacy and intergenerational learning; literacy for health; literacy for economic self-sufficiency; and lifelong learning.

Literacy Challenges in South, South West and Central Asia: Building Partnerships and Promoting Innovative Approaches (New Delhi, India, 29-30 November 2007): The New Delhi conference focused on literacy challenges and achievements in literacy policies and strategies; costs and finance; monitoring and evaluation in literacy; programme content and delivery; literacy and gender; and coalition and partnership building for literacy and NFE. The conference also examined effective practices to

improve literacy levels in panels on five thematic fields: family literacy and inter-generational learning; literacy for health; literacy for economic self-sufficiency; ICTs and literacy; and lifelong learning.

In addition, two other important international gatherings of direct relevance to literacy were held in 2009 and 2010 and involved five of the nine LIFE countries in Asia, namely Bangladesh, People's Republic of China, India, Indonesia and Pakistan:

E-9 seminar on Literacy and Adult Learning in Rural Areas (Beijing, People's Republic of China, 26-29 October 2009)⁸: The seminar aimed to promote collaborative implementation of UNESCO's Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) and to develop capacities of the E-9 countries to:

1. Review strategies, progress and challenges in implementing LIFE;
2. To share experience and best practices in promoting literacy and adult learning in rural areas;
3. To generate information and inputs for the workshop focusing on E-9 countries that took place during CONFITEA VI, the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (Belem, Brazil, 1-4 December 2009).

The seminar served as a platform for discussions on common concerns and proposals in preparation for the eighth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting, Nigeria, 2010, and the development of an E-9 collaboration strategy for LIFE and adult learning.

Eighth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting on Education for All - 'Literacy for Development' (Abuja, Nigeria, 21-24 June 2010): Although not held in Asia, this meeting involved five E-9 (and LIFE) countries from Asia in adopting the *Abuja Framework for Action and Cooperation*⁹ in which the leaders of the nine most highly-populated countries of the South (E-9) concluded that the

8 See website: http://www.unesco.org/en/confinteavi/single-view/news/e_9_seminar_on_literacy_and_adult_learning_in_rural_areas_beijing_china_26_29_october_2009/back/5446/cHash/4bf480e97f

9 See Abuja Framework for Action and Cooperation: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001885/188512e.pdf>

EFA Goal 4 of halving illiteracy is at great risk of not being achieved by 2015 by some of the E-9 countries unless urgent action is taken. They adopted an ambitious action agenda to mobilize stronger commitment to literacy, boost effective delivery of literacy programmes, harness new resources and continue their successful teamwork in actively sharing good experience.

All these conferences and meetings aimed at drawing the attention of policy makers, planners and development partners to the importance of literacy and to acknowledge that they have primary responsibility for providing literacy education while supporting the significant role of civil society organizations in this effort. The participants at these conferences, including high level policy makers, again committed themselves to include adult and youth literacy in education sector policies, while addressing gender disparities and targeting marginalized groups. There was consensus that such policies should also emphasize the links between formal schooling for children and non-formal youth and adult learning programmes. There was growing awareness that literacy policies should be based on evidence derived from direct surveys of a continuum of levels of literacy performance, rather than indirect assessment of literacy competence.

1.4.3 EFA Mid-Term Policy Review Conferences

The Sub-Regional EFA Mid-Term Policy Review Conferences aimed to translate the EFA Mid-Decade Assessment (MDA) findings into concrete actions by identifying policy gaps and proposing new policies and strategies to reach the unreached groups in education. The subregional conferences used the national EFA-MDA reports, the respective subregional EFA MDA reports and the 2008 EFA Global Monitoring Report as their main references. The conferences were organized by UNESCO Bangkok, in collaboration with EFA partners in the region. In this connection, the **South-East Asia EFA Mid-Term Policy Review Conference** (Jomtien, Thailand, 18-21 February 2008) and the **South Asia EFA Mid-Term Policy Review Conference** (Kathmandu, Nepal, 16-19 June 2008) discussed strategies to translate the policy recommendations into practice. These conferences were attended by high level government officials, ministries, EFA partners, UN agencies and other

stakeholders. In both conferences, LIFE was highlighted as a way to realize the EFA literacy goal.

1.4.4 Regional LIFE Meetings in the Asia-Pacific Region

As mentioned earlier, LIFE is a framework to achieve the UNLD and EFA literacy goals. As part of a systematic process to prepare for and implement such a framework, two regional LIFE meetings were organized:

1) LIFE Consultation, Coordinating and Planning Meeting, Islamabad, Pakistan (20-22 March 2006)

The Asia-Pacific Regional Planning Meeting on LIFE was organized (1) to agree on a LIFE regional follow-up strategy and support mechanism for the implementation of LIFE; and (2) to develop a framework for a needs assessment and a LIFE country paper. This meeting assisted the participating countries to develop their plan for conducting literacy needs assessments, to prepare planning outlines for LIFE programme implementation at the national level and to discuss support for implementing LIFE at national, regional and global levels. Country progress in literacy policies and strategies was reviewed at the meeting, as well as concrete plans to achieve the goals of literacy. The meeting also discussed the framework of support mechanisms and the participating countries developed draft outlines for needs assessments.

2) LIFE meeting, Dhaka, Bangladesh (21-24 January 2008)

The second regional LIFE meeting took place from 21 to 24 January 2008 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It was jointly organized by UNESCO Dhaka, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and UNESCO Bangkok. LIFE focal points from national governments and UNESCO offices reviewed progress, exchanged and learned from prior experiences, discussed the LIFE implementation strategy, and analyzed innovative approaches to literacy and non-formal education (NFE).

The meeting contributed to a deeper understanding of LIFE as a platform for collaborative action putting literacy high on political agendas, mobilizing resources, strengthening capacities and intensifying South-South co-operation. It was emphasized that countries do not have to wait for “their turn” to start their LIFE process or to be selected by UNESCO for extra-budgetary support according to the three phase model laid out in the LIFE Vision and *Strategy Paper*. All LIFE countries were invited to immediately take up the literacy challenge, regardless of resource allocation from UNESCO.

One of the key messages coming out from the series of regional LIFE meetings was that as an overarching framework, instead of being a stand-alone or separate new programme, LIFE should build on existing literacy initiatives in the countries, giving them a larger scope and a new sense of urgency. As a way of making literacy a mainstream issue, LIFE should promote the literacy agenda towards the achievement of the goals of Education for All (EFA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) and the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). As a national platform for renewing literacy efforts, LIFE should bring together key actors from national and local governments, NGOs, civil society organizations, the private sector and local communities. Through networking, twinning arrangements and the sharing of experience and tools, LIFE is also a mechanism for strengthening South-South co-operation.

1.4.5 Asia and Pacific Regional Preparatory Conference for CONFINTEA VI, Seoul, Republic of Korea (6–8 October 2008)

The CONFINTEA VI Preparatory Conference for Asia and the Pacific was organized jointly by the Government of the Republic of Korea, UIL, UNESCO Bangkok, UNESCO Beijing and the National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE) in Seoul, Republic of Korea, to contribute to the agenda for CONFINTEA VI. Over 130 participants attended the conference representing governments from 28 Member States and eight multilateral agencies and international NGOs, as well as experts and stakeholders from the private

sector, universities and the media. The conference was attended by 13 ministers, deputy ministers and secretaries of state.

Through a series of thematic panel presentations the participants discussed key issues in adult learning and education in the region. Similarly, six roundtable sessions served to highlight critical areas of adult learning and education including policy, governance, financing, participation and inclusion for equity. Sustainable development was also a major theme of the meeting. Topics included the quality and relevance of adult education in the learning society; literacy and other key competences to build equitable societies and promote sustainable development; improvement of delivery mechanisms for lifelong learning; and assessment, accreditation and equivalence. The major recommendations included in the conference outcome document were:

- To recommit to the vision of adult learning and education in the framework of lifelong learning, confirming the primary responsibility of governments through appropriate legislation;
- To increase government and development partnership support to mobilize resources for literacy and adult education;
- To encourage participating nations to develop and implement their own action plans and measurable targets that annually increase accessibility and participation in adult learning and education programmes;
- To prioritize adult literacy and women's programmes to achieve the Education for All and Millennium Development Goals;
- To ensure the relevance of content and process in all domains such as training, materials development and curriculum, focusing on the context-specific needs of adult learners, and promoting critical awareness towards the social empowerment of adults; and
- To develop and implement a regional and/or global monitoring and tracking mechanism to ensure the progress of adult learning and education objectives towards a learning society.

1.5 LIFE Mid-Term Evaluation in Asia and the Pacific

It has been foreseen in the LIFE Vision and Strategy Paper¹⁰ that five years after the launch of the LIFE initiative, a mid-term evaluation will be conducted in 2011 to review the progress and impact of literacy initiatives in the Asia-Pacific LIFE countries. A systematic assessment will provide useful information on the status and progress made in literacy, especially for disadvantaged populations including girls and women. It will also inform decisions and actions to buttress policies, strategies, and literacy programme design and delivery, activate resource mobilization for literacy, and strengthen networking and co-ordination among various agencies and stakeholders involved in supporting literacy work.

UNESCO Bangkok, within the framework of the regional Capacity Development for EFA (CapEFA) Project is providing technical and advisory support to countries in the region for designing and implementing effective frameworks and programmes to improve literacy rates. In this connection, UNESCO Bangkok and UIL decided to conduct a formative mid-term evaluation of LIFE implementation in the 9 LIFE countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The major objectives of the evaluation are:

- To assess progress of achieving the EFA literacy goal of 50 percent improvement in adult literacy, elimination of gender gaps in education, and equal opportunities in access to education as they contribute to EFA and MDGs;
- To review country experience in implementing LIFE and to analyze its impact on policies and strategies adopted by the countries to achieve the literacy goals;

¹⁰ See page 38 of the LIFE Vision and Strategy Paper.

- To identify innovative approaches, lessons learned and shortcomings/ gaps in the implementation of LIFE that will inform the way forward;
- To formulate recommendations on how LIFE can make a difference in the 9 LIFE countries during implementation of the second half of the initiative and how best UNESCO can render support.

This evaluation is therefore a mid-term formative evaluation which aims at reviewing what happened and learning lessons from the past five years (2006-2010) of LIFE implementation in Asia and the Pacific, in order to inform LIFE actions in the coming five years, 2011-2015.

1.5.1 Evaluation Methodology

To evaluate the progress, achievements and challenges of LIFE implementation in Asia and the Pacific, the following methodologies have been used:

Desk study

A detailed desk study of existing documents (see references at the end of this report) was undertaken to review the activities of the five years of LIFE implementation in Asia and the Pacific. Country reports, research studies, National Plan of Action for EFA (NPA-EFA), EFA Mid-Decade Assessment reports, national policy frameworks on literacy and NFE and other documents have been analyzed. Country experience in implementing CapEFA projects and the evaluation reports has also been consulted to analyze progress and challenges.

Information collection through questionnaires

A simple LIFE Mid-Term Evaluation Questionnaire (see sample in Annex 1) was sent to the nine LIFE countries in Asia and the Pacific to collect country specific data/information on the progress, issues and prospects regarding LIFE implementation. The questionnaire was designed to capture

information on: (a) strengthening under LIFE of networks, partnerships and co-ordination among various agencies and stakeholders involved in literacy work; (b) development of literacy policies, strategies, programmes and related national capacity; (c) needs assessment and resource mobilization for literacy; and (d) promotion of innovations and applications. Each country was asked to organize a small meeting inviting related departments, network partners and NGOs to discuss the questionnaire itself and to complete the questionnaire collectively. All the nine LIFE countries in Asia and the Pacific completed and returned the LIFE evaluation questionnaire.

Review of relevant cases

The evaluation also drew on case studies from the countries in the Asia-Pacific region in order to supplement and substantiate the responses to the LIFE Mid-Term Evaluation Questionnaire. These cases studies were analyzed for concrete examples of progress, achievements and innovations in literacy and NFE to achieve the LIFE goals.

Report preparation, participatory review, and finalization

Based on the analysis of existing documents and information collected through questionnaires, a first draft of this LIFE evaluation report was prepared with preliminary findings and recommendations for implementing LIFE during the remaining period of 2011-2015. As part of a participatory evaluation approach, this draft report was circulated to the Asia-Pacific LIFE countries for discussion at a Regional LIFE Mid-decade Evaluation Workshop held from 13-15 December 2010 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Eighteen participants represented the nine Asia-Pacific LIFE countries at the workshop. They actively participated in reviewing progress and issues in the implementation of LIFE in their respective countries, particularly with respect to the four strategic action areas under LIFE. Their inputs during the workshop helped to clarify and enriched their responses to the LIFE Mid-term Evaluation Questionnaire. Initial country follow-up action plans were formulated covering aspects of mobilization of political will and resources, partnerships and networks, and delivery and sustainability.

Despite their commitments at the workshop and reminders from UNESCO, very little additional inputs were received from the participants regarding the draft LIFE evaluation report and the country follow-up action plans. This LIFE evaluation report was finalized mainly based on the inputs gathered during the workshop and from UIL.

1.5.2 Evaluation Approach and Criteria

The participatory approach adopted by this evaluation requested the national LIFE focal points to involve key in-country literacy stakeholders in discussions to complete the LIFE Mid-term Evaluation Questionnaire (see Annex 1) and then to participate in reviewing the draft evaluation report at the 2010 Regional LIFE Mid-Term Evaluation Workshop.

An attempt was made to analyze and synthesize the findings gathered from the desk studies, the responses to the LIFE Mid-Term Evaluation Questionnaire and clarifications from the regional workshop, together with supplementary information collected through reviews of relevant cases and CapEFA evaluation reports. The following criteria have been applied to the extent possible in evaluating the implementation of each strategic area of action under LIFE¹¹:

- Relevance
- Efficiency
- Effectiveness
- Impact
- Sustainability

¹¹ See pp. 19, 42-44 of LIFE Vision and Strategy Paper.

These evaluation criteria were recommended by the UNESCO Internal Oversight Service (IOS)¹² and correspond to those adopted by the United Nations system¹³ as well as the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD-DAC)¹⁴.

As a mid-term evaluation of LIFE, this evaluation pays more attention to the aspects of relevance, efficiency and effectiveness than to impact and sustainability for which the key information for a number of LIFE countries will only be available at a later stage. The main aim of this evaluation is formative in nature by attempting to crystallize from the findings some of the lessons learned, as well as insights for accelerating literacy in the coming five years until 2015.

¹² UNESCO. Internal Oversight Service. 2007. *Evaluation Handbook*. Paris, UNESCO. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001557/155748E.pdf>

¹³ United Nations Evaluation Group. 2005. *Norms for Evaluation in the UN System*. New York, United Nations. www.unevaluation.org/unevalnorms

¹⁴ OCED DAC Network on Development Evaluation. *Evaluating Development Co-operation – Summary of key Norms and Standards*. 2nd edn. www.oecd.org/document/49/0,3746,en_2649_34435_45978545_1_1_1_1,00.html

2

LITERACY PROGRESS AND STATUS IN THE WORLD AND IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC LIFE COUNTRIES

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Even though literacy has been making progress worldwide, the Asia and Pacific region is still home to the majority of the world's illiterate population. Out of the total world illiterate adult population of 796 million, 518 million (i.e. more than 65 percent) live in the Asia and Pacific region. Improvements to literacy in this region can therefore make a big difference in the global literacy scenario. This section provides a quick snapshot of the literacy situation in Asia and the Pacific within this context and reviews the situation in the LIFE countries.

2.1 Achieving EFA Goal on Literacy – How far?

Despite marked improvements in global literacy rates over the past decades, an estimated 796 million adults worldwide are illiterate and nearly two-thirds of them (64 percent) are women. The global adult literacy rate was 83 percent in 2008, with an average male literacy rate of 88 percent and a female literacy rate of 79 percent, i.e. a gender gap of 9 percentage points. South and West Asia with an estimated 412 million adult illiterates accounted for more than half of the world total. It is also the subregion with the lowest average adult literacy rate (61.9 percent). East Asia and South-East Asia reached average adult literacy rates of 93.8 percent and 91.9 percent respectively in 2008 (see Table 1).

Gender disparity in literacy was greatest in South and West Asia, where 73 percent of all men but only 51 percent of women had the ability to read and write. The gender parity index (GPI) in this region was just 0.70 compared to a GPI in East Asia of 0.94 and 0.95 in South-East Asia which are close to gender parity.

Regarding youth literacy, 131 million youth aged 15 to 24 years old worldwide lacked basic reading and writing skills in 2008 (Table 2). Among them, 61 percent were female. The global youth literacy rate was 89 percent (92 percent for males and 86 percent for females), with 100 percent literacy in Central Asia and 98 percent in East Asia and the Pacific. Youth literacy rate was 79 percent in South and West Asia, much higher than the

Table 1: Adult Literacy Rates and Number of Illiterate Adults by Region, 2005-2008

Region, country or territory	Adult (15 years and older)					
	Literacy rate				Illiterate population	
	MF	M	F	GPI	MF (000)	% F
World	83	88	79	0.90	796,165	64
Arab States	72	81	63	0.78	60,181	65
Central and Eastern Europe	98	99	96	0.97	7,960	80
Central Asia	99	100	99	1.00	362	67
East Asia and the Pacific	94	96	91	0.94	105,681	71
Latin America and the Caribbean	91	92	90	0.98	36,056	56
North America and Western Europe	99	99	99	1.00	6,292	57
South and West Asia	62	73	51	0.70	412,432	63
Sub-Saharan Africa	62	71	53	0.75	167,200	62

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Data Centre, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org>

corresponding adult literacy rate of 62 percent. But like adults, youth who are unable to read and write are also concentrated in South and West Asia - with 66 million illiterate youth accounting for 50.6 percent of the world total. The global fight against illiteracy must give priority to them.

Gender disparities in literacy were less severe in Asia and the Pacific among the youth population as compared to adults. Central Asia, East Asia and the Pacific can be said to have attained gender parity in youth literacy, with GPIs of respectively 1.00 and 0.98 (Table 2). At 0.86, the GPI for the youth literacy rate in South and West Asia was higher than the GPI of 0.70 for adults, but still much lower than those cited earlier for the other Asia-Pacific subregions. Raising youth literacy especially among girls and young women, who represent 63 percent of youth illiterates in South and West Asia, will be a key strategy for achieving both gender parity as well as real progress in literacy.

Table 2: Youth Literacy Rates and Number of Illiterate Youths by Region, 2005-2008

Region, country or territory	Youth (15 to 24 years)					
	Literacy rate				Illiterate population	
	MF	M	F	GPI	MF (000)	% F
World	89	92	86	0.94	130,584	61
Arab States	87	91	84	0.92	8,650	63
Central and Eastern Europe	99	99	98	0.99	729	66
Central Asia	100	100	100	1.00	59	39
East Asia and the Pacific	98	98	98	1.00	6,444	52
Latin America and the Caribbean	97	97	97	1.01	3,181	45
North America and Western Europe	100	100	100	1.00	297	44
South and West Asia	79	86	73	0.86	66,115	63
Sub-Saharan Africa	71	76	66	0.87	45,109	59

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Data Centre, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org>

2.2 Progress of Adult Literacy in LIFE Countries in the Asia-Pacific Region

Among the nine LIFE countries in Asia and the Pacific, People's Republic of China and Indonesia have reached the highest adult literacy rates of 93.7 percent and 92 percent respectively in 2008 and 2006. At 82.3 percent in 2008, the Islamic Republic of Iran can be said to have acquired the momentum needed to advance to 90 percent literacy or more. Literacy rates remain at low levels of around 60 percent in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Papua New Guinea and Pakistan. The literacy rate in Afghanistan is the lowest among the Asia-Pacific LIFE countries at an estimated 26.2 percent in 2008 (Table 3 and Figure 2).

From the early 2000s to 2008, Bangladesh posted the highest increase in adult literacy rates from 41.1 percent to 55 percent, or an increase of 13.9 percent. This was followed by Nepal with a 9.3 percent increase. Literacy progress has been slow in most other LIFE countries during the same period, with literacy rates increasing by about 5 percentage points or less.

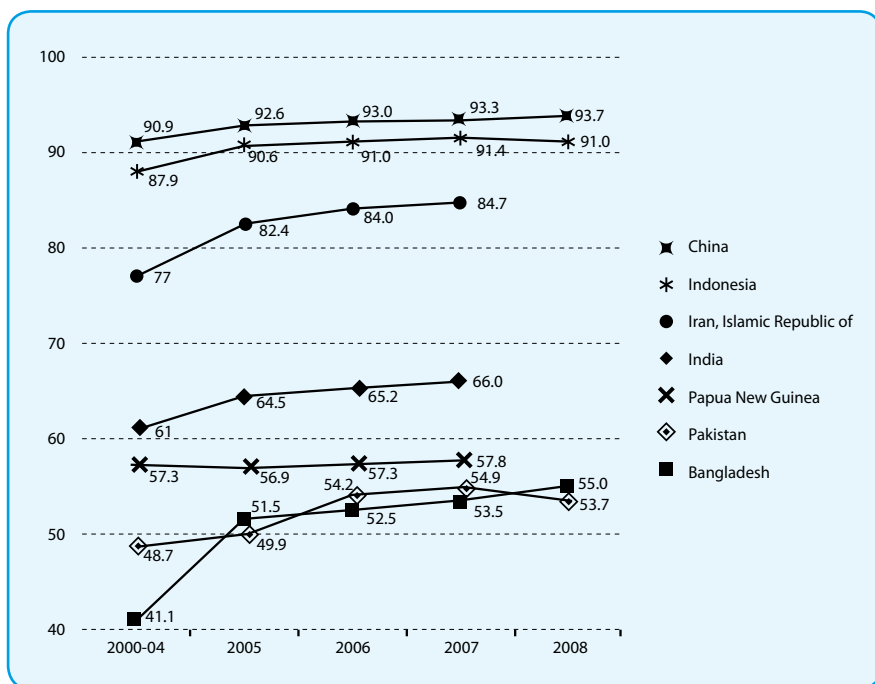
Regarding gender parity in adult literacy rate, only People's Republic of China (GPI 0.94) and Indonesia (GPI 0.93) have shown satisfactory results. Afghanistan has the poorest GPI of 0.32. For the other LIFE countries in Asia and the Pacific, GPI was above 0.80 in Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Papua New Guinea, but only 0.60, 0.64 and 0.68 in respectively Pakistan, Nepal and India.

Table 3: Adult Literacy Rate and Number of Illiterates in LIFE Countries in Asia and the Pacific

Country	Adult Literacy Rate (15 years and over)				% point change between 2 periods	Adult Illiterates (15 years and over) (,000)			
	2000-2004		2008			2000-2004		2008	
	Total	GPI	Total	GPI		Total (000)	% Female	Total (000)	% Female
Afghanistan**	n/a	n/a	26.2	0.32	n/a	n/a	n/a	9,455	58.0
Bangladesh	41.1	0.62	55.0	0.83	13.9	52,209	57.0	48,990	55.2
People's Republic of China	90.9	0.91	93.7	0.94	2.8	87,038	73.0	67,239	73.3
India*	61.0	0.65	62.8	0.68	1.8	267,002	65.0	283,105	65.1
Indonesia*	87.9	0.90	92.0	0.93	4.1	18,432	69.0	12,864	70.2
Islamic Rep. of Iran	77.0	0.84	82.3	0.88	5.3	10,543	64.0	9,402	63.4
Nepal	48.6	0.56	57.9	0.64	9.3	7,308	63.0	7,614	66.6
Pakistan	48.7	0.57	53.7	0.60	5.0	47,577	62.0	51,236	63.0
PNG	57.3	0.80	59.6	0.87	2.3	1,330	56.0	1,592	54.7

Note: * Data refer to 2006. ** From 'National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2007/2008'.
Source: Global Education Digest 2010; EFA GMR 2011.

Figure 2: Progress in Adult Literacy Rates in Asia-Pacific LIFE Countries



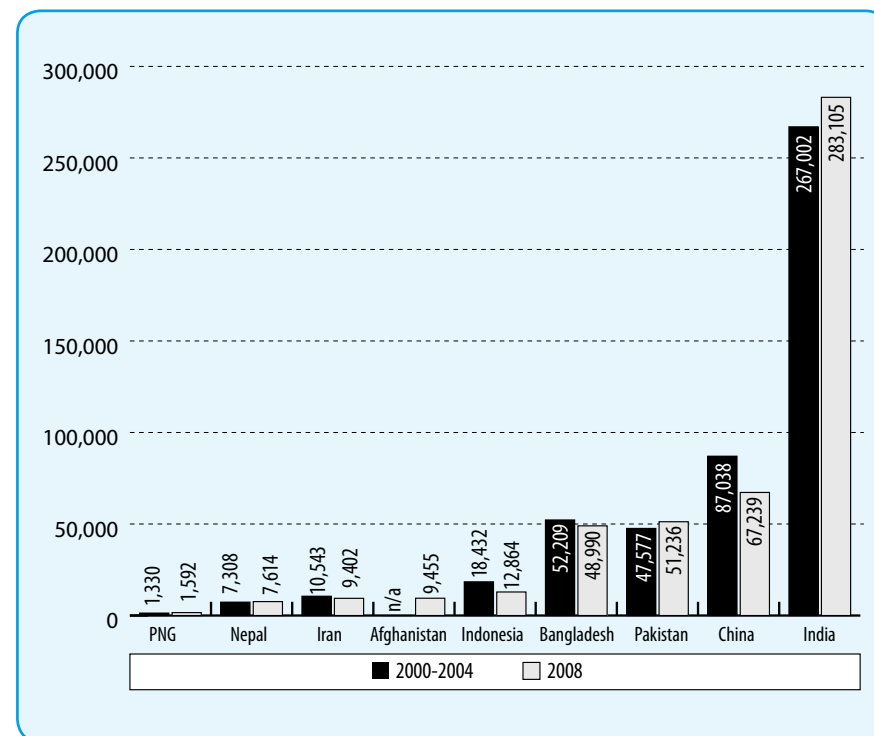
Source: Global Education Digest 2010; EFA GMR 2011

Figure 2 clearly shows that the growth in literacy rate has been rather slow. Most of the Asia-Pacific LIFE countries were able to increase their literacy rate by some 1 percent annually except for Bangladesh and the Islamic Republic of Iran which made greater strides. From 2000-2004 to 2008, Pakistan's literacy rate remained almost the same.

Although adult literacy rates continued to rise in all the Asia-Pacific LIFE countries, only People's Republic of China, Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Islamic Republic of Iran were able to reduce the absolute number of adult illiterates significantly (see Table 1 and Figure 3). From 2000-2004 to 2008, the illiterate adult population in People's Republic of China fell from more

than 87 million to just a little over 67 million. Indonesia was able to reduce its number of adult illiterates by 5.6 million, Bangladesh by 3.2 million and the Islamic Republic of Iran by 1.1 million. But in the remaining Asia-Pacific LIFE countries, the illiterate population continued to expand in absolute size. This clearly shows the need to not only look at increases in adult literacy rates, but also to achieve a real reduction in the absolute number of illiterates.

Figure 3: Adult Illiterate Population in LIFE Countries in the Asia-Pacific Region, 2008 ('000)



Source: Global Education Digest 2010; EFA GMR 2011; National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2007/2008, Afghanistan.

2.3 Prospect for Adult Literacy in LIFE Countries in Asia and the Pacific

Only two countries among the LIFE countries in the region, namely People's Republic of China and Indonesia, are on track to meet the EFA 2015 targets for literacy (Table 5 and Figure 6). With current adult literacy rates of 93.7 percent and 92 percent respectively, People's Republic of China and Indonesia appear to be moving steadily towards a high literacy level of more than 95 percent. Good progress has been made by Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Nepal in recent years. With some additional acceleration, they stand a good chance of achieving the EFA goal of improving literacy by 50 percent by the year 2015. Progress has been slow in India, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and Afghanistan. These Asia-Pacific LIFE countries are at risk of not achieving the EFA literacy goal by 2015 unless major efforts are made to accelerate the spread of literacy in the coming five years.

Table 4: Adult Literacy Prospects for LIFE Countries in the Asia-Pacific Region

High chance of achieving the target by 2015 (moving towards the EFA goal with steady progress)	People's Republic of China; Indonesia
Good chance of achieving the target by 2015 (good progress so far; but need further acceleration)	Bangladesh; Islamic Republic of Iran; Nepal
Serious risk of not achieving the target by 2015 (insufficient progress so far; need major acceleration)	India; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Afghanistan

Source: EFA GMR Regional Overview: East Asia, South and west Asia, Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the Pacific (2008)

2.4 Progress in Youth Literacy in LIFE Countries in the Asia-Pacific Region

Among the Asia-Pacific LIFE countries, People's Republic of China, Indonesia and the Islamic Republic of Iran have reached high youth literacy rates of respectively 99, 96 and 96 percent (Table 5 and Figure 4). Bangladesh and Nepal have also made very good progress in youth literacy rates between

2000-2004 and 2008, with respectively 24.7 and 10.7 percentage point increases. Most of these Asia-Pacific LIFE countries have achieved or are close to achieving a gender parity for the youth literacy rate, except Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In absolute numbers, People's Republic of China has been able to decrease the number of illiterate youth from 2.3 million in 2000-2004 to 1.6 million in 2008. India saw a huge drop in the number of illiterate youth to 40.6 million in 2008, down from 45.7 million in the period 2000-2004. Bangladesh was able to post the biggest decrease in the number of youth illiterates among the Asia-Pacific LIFE countries: from 14.7 million in 2000-2004 to 8.4 million in 2008. The number of youth illiterates also decreased in Nepal.

Data showed that the youth illiterate population increased in Indonesia, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea during the same period: from 0.8 million to 1.3 million in Indonesia and by respectively 504,000 and 83,000 in Pakistan and Papua New Guinea.

The percentage of females in the total illiterate youth population has dropped significantly in most Asia-Pacific LIFE countries during the two reporting periods.

Table 5: Youth Literacy Rate and Number of Illiterates in LIFE Countries in Asia and the Pacific

Country	Youth Literacy Rate (15-24 years)				% point change between 2 periods	Youth Literacy Rate (15-24 years)			
	2000-2004		2008			2000-2004		2008	
	Total	GPI	Total	GPI		Total (000)	% Female	Total (000)	% Female
Afghanistan	n/a	n/a	39.0	0.45	8.9	n/a	n/a	2,827	59.7
Bangladesh	49.7	0.71	74.4	1.03	24.7	14,740	57.0	8,441	47.0
People's Republic of China	98.9	0.99	99.3	0.99	0.4	2,260	63.0	1,610	54.6
India*	76.4	0.8	81.1	0.84	4.7	45,781	65.0	40,682	67.0
Indonesia*	98.0	0.99	96.7	0.99	-1.3	834	62.0	1,387	55.1
The Islamic Republic of Iran	n/a	n/a	96.6	0.98	n/a	n/a	n/a	614	57.2
Nepal	70.1	0.75	80.8	0.87	10.7	1,370	66.0	1,139	63.3
Pakistan	64.5	0.72	68.9	0.74	4.4	11,122	63.0	11,626	64.4
PNG	66.7	0.92	66.5	1.03	-0.2	343	52.0	426	45.8

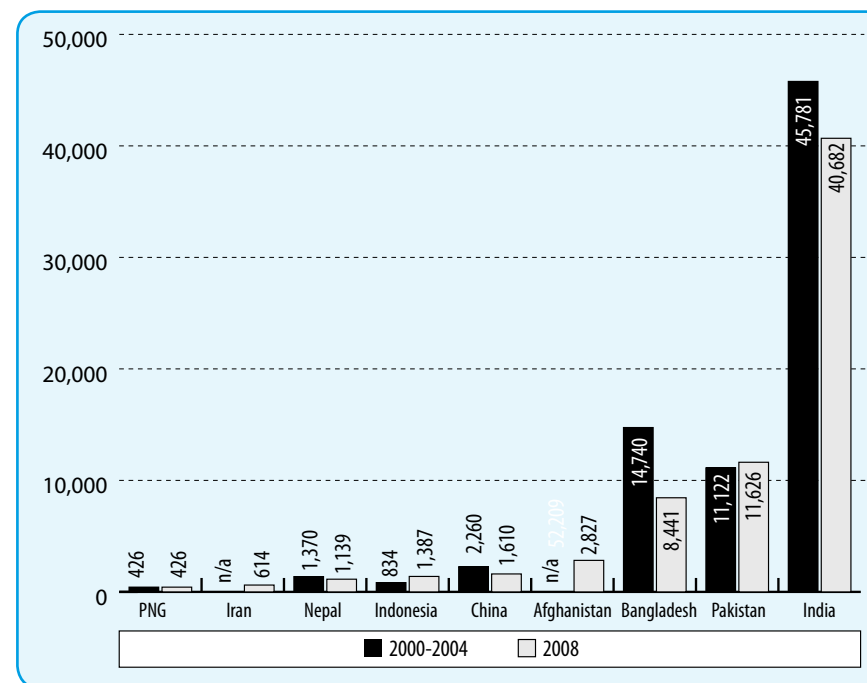
Note: * Data refer to 2006.

Source: Global Education Digest 2010; EFA GMR 2011; National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2007/2008, Afghanistan.

2.5 Out-of-School Children

Even though most Asia-Pacific LIFE countries are doing well with primary education, out-of-school children, which includes children not attending school and early drop-outs, remain the main factor which continues to generate adult illiterates. There were 72 million children out-of-school globally in 2007. This has been in decline. Worldwide, the number of children of primary school age who dropped out of school has also declined by 33

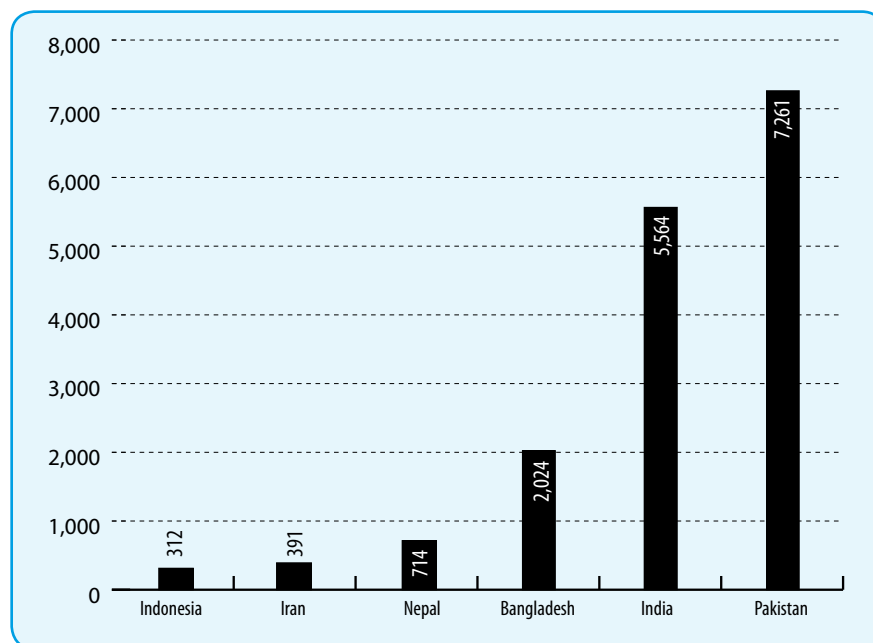
Figure 4: Youth Illiterate Population (15-24) in the Asia-Pacific LIFE Countries (,000)



Source: Global Education Digest 2010; EFA GMR 2011; National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2007/2008, Afghanistan.

million since the World Education Conference in Dakar: from 105 million in 1999 to 72 million in 2007. South and West Asia have been the main contributors to declining out-of-school children rates by halving their number from 39 million in 1999 to 18 million in 2007. Much of the decline took place in India which reported a fall of almost 15 million out-of-school children in the two years following the 2001 launch of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Universal Primary education) programme.

Figure 5: Number of Out-of-School Children in Selected the Asia-Pacific LIFE Countries in 2008 ('000)



Source: EFA GMR 2011.

Figure 5 shows that there are still a huge number of out-of-school children in the LIFE countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Pakistan has the highest number, more than 7 million in 2008. It is followed by India with more than 5.6 million and just over 2 million in Bangladesh in 2008. The situation of out-of-school girls is more serious. In India, out of the total out-of-school children cited above, 68 percent are girls. It is also high in Pakistan and Nepal at 58 percent and 53 percent respectively.

2.6 Regional Variation and Disparities

Although mostly rising, literacy rates can differ considerably between rural and urban areas. Variations can also be seen among geographical regions, ethnic minority populations and linguistic groups in some countries. For example, as Table 6 shows, there is a big gap between urban literacy (77.2 percent) and rural literacy rate (51.1 percent) in Nepal. Similarly, there are also disparities in literacy rates among the ecological zones varying from 46.4 percent in the mountain zone to 51.3 percent in the Terai and to 61.9 percent in the hill zone. One can also observe that the disparities by gender among these zones can be even more severe.

Table 6: Literacy Rate by Gender, Ecological Zones and Location in Nepal

	Literacy rates (15+)		
	Male	Female	Total
All Nepal ecological zones	70.7	43.3	55.6
Mountain	65.0	31.2	46.4
Hill	76.5	50.2	61.9
Terai	66.3	38.9	51.3
Urban	88.1	67.0	77.2
Rural	66.7	38.8	51.1

Source: Nepal Labour Force Survey 2008, CBS.

2.7 Ethnic Variations in Literacy

Asia and the Pacific region is renowned for its great diversity in culture, tradition and languages. Most of the LIFE countries in the region are multicultural and multilingual with many minority ethnic groups. Looking at the literacy situation, small ethnic groups which speak languages other than the state language are most vulnerable to missing educational opportunities. Literacy levels of such groups are often very low and they are not much interested in attending schools using the official state language for teaching.

In Nepal, literacy rates among the higher castes and Nepali-speaking linguistic group is much higher than the national average. But for lower castes and other ethnic groups which speak languages other than the national language, literacy rates can be much lower (Table 7).

Table 7: Differentials in Literacy Rates by Gender, and Caste and Ethnicity (15-49 years) Nepal, 2006

Ethnic Groups	Literacy rate (%)	
	Female	Male
All Nepalese	54.5	81.0
All Brahman/Chhetri	68.6	92.8
Hill Brahman	82.1	96.9
Hill Chhetri	59.4	90.0
Madhesi Brahman/Chhetri	82.5	93.9
Madhesi Other Castes	24.2	72.0
All Dalits (schedule caste)	34.8	59.9
Hill Dalit	46.3	69.0
Madhesi Dalit	17.2	48.5
Newar	74.6	93.5
All Janajatis	56.9	79.6
Muslim	26.5	61.8
All Hill/Mountain Groups	63.4	86.9

Source: Nepal human development report, 2009.

3

REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF LIFE IMPLEMENTATION

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3.1. Advocacy and Communication

3.1.1 LIFE Launch

According to the responses to the LIFE Mid-Term Evaluation Questionnaire, the nine LIFE countries in Asia and the Pacific introduced LIFE to their literacy stakeholders following official commitment at the international launch of LIFE at the 33rd General Conference of UNESCO in 2005.

With regard to guidelines on how to launch LIFE at the national level, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) stated that there were some guidelines, but they were not used after the launch of LIFE in 2006 because they contradicted the principle that LIFE processes should be country-led and tailored to specific contexts. Most of the LIFE countries in Asia and the Pacific organized meetings or workshops to inform representatives of government ministries and departments as well as NGOs about LIFE. LIFE was also introduced during events to celebrate International Literacy Day and Education for All Global Action Week. Nepal involved five regions and 75 districts in the first LIFE workshop. The inclusion in Afghanistan of international development partners in the LIFE launch paved the way for their close involvement and support (see more in the next section).

The participants at the 2010 Regional LIFE Mid-Term Evaluation Meeting clarified that the LIFE launch meetings/workshops in the nine Asia-Pacific LIFE countries were organized by either the designated LIFE focal point or the central government body responsible for literacy such as the Non-formal Education Department. In India, the National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) was responsible for organizing a high level launch of the Saakshar Bharat Programme by the Prime Minister on International Literacy Day in September 2009. CAMPE (Campaign for Popular Education), the consortium of NGOs working for literacy in Bangladesh, organized LIFE information meetings for its networks of NGOs and NFE/literacy providers.

This evaluation found that government leadership is critical to mobilizing partnerships for LIFE, as suggested on p.24 of the LIFE Vision and Strategy

Paper. Involvement of top officials in launching LIFE like the Prime Minister and Chief Minister of State in India, and the Minister of Education in Afghanistan and People's Republic of China seemed to have produced significant impact in building public awareness and rallying partners. These examples also demonstrated that a high profile launch of LIFE can help to attract the participation of high level representatives from the key literacy stakeholders, who in turn can make decisions to support LIFE.

More in-depth evaluation will be needed in each LIFE country as to what extent these national LIFE launch meetings/workshops reached most if not all the key literacy stakeholders in the country; and how influential they were in setting up or reinforcing literacy co-ordination mechanisms in the country, preparing needs assessment¹⁵ and defining country literacy acceleration action plans. These are reviewed in the following sections.

In terms of effectiveness it appears that besides high profile launches in the case of India, Afghanistan and People's Republic of China, signing of MOUs with different stakeholders as in India, Indonesia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, and establishing literacy co-ordination mechanisms (see next section) at both central and decentralized levels can be especially useful for influencing government policies not only within the education sector but also in other sectors. Close involvement of these sectors and agencies can help to extend the reach and impact of literacy programmes, and improve effectiveness especially when it comes to coordinating implementation of literacy work by the decentralized structures under each of these ministries and agencies.

For countries with existing literacy co-ordination mechanisms like Bangladesh, the EFA stakeholders have been informed about LIFE and UNLD on various occasions including meetings organized by the Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE), NGOs and the consortium CAMPE (Campaign for Popular Education). At the same time there were several on-going literacy and NFE programmes in the country namely, Post-Literacy

¹⁵ The LIFE Vision and Strategy Paper refers to the term 'situation analysis' whereas the term 'needs assessment' was used in the first regional LIFE meeting in Islamabad (see Section 1.4 above) and in the LIFE Mid-term Evaluation Questionnaire.

and Continuing Education for Human Development (PLCEHD), Reaching Out-of-School Children (ROSC), Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) and UNESCO's Capacity Development for EFA (CapEFA). Bangladesh considers LIFE as an overall framework of literacy-related activities rather than an operational mechanism or strategy. Similar approaches apply to India, Nepal and Pakistan.

LIFE in Indonesia has been adapted to become an overall national programme called AKRAB (Aksara Agar Berdaya [Literate to be Empowered]). This programme has been publicized through national-level meetings involving: (1) Central Implementation Units at the central level (Coordinating the Ministry for People's Welfare, National Development Planning Agency, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Home Affairs, State Ministry for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, Central Bureau of Statistics, etc.); (2) Heads of Education Offices and/or Heads of Non-Formal and Informal Education Offices at the Provincial/District/City levels; (3) Technical Implementation Units of provincial level Development Agency for Non-Formal and Informal Education (P2PNFI) and Centres for the Development of Non-Formal and Informal Education (BPPNFI); and (4) Community Learning Centres and similar education units, as well as partner literacy education providers. For publicity, leaflets/brochures and related guidelines have been produced and distributed.

The LIFE country launches in the nine LIFE countries in Asia and the Pacific focused more on rallying the key literacy providers in order to draw attention to literacy and to build partnerships and synergy. Once such partnerships are reinforcing national literacy co-ordination and undertaking the needs assessment, more impact can be created through advocacy to rally the support of national and local leaders as well as the general public. In India, People's Republic of China, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Pakistan, this was done during celebrations of the annual International Literacy Day or other events like the the EFA Global Action Week, or during World Teacher's Day.

3.1.2 LIFE Co-Ordination Mechanism and What Difference it Makes

In each country there can be many agencies, bodies and partners contributing directly or indirectly to spreading literacy. These can be government ministries, departments and agencies at central, provincial and local levels, or NGOs and other civil society bodies and their local projects working for various community development objectives including literacy.

LIFE Focal Point

In-country implementation of LIFE begins with the official designation of a national LIFE focal point to initiate action to launch LIFE and to set up or reinforce the national literacy co-ordination mechanism.¹⁶ The designated LIFE focal point in most LIFE countries in Asia and the Pacific is the head of the literacy or non-formal education department of the Ministry of Education, or of equivalent bodies like the National Literacy Mission Authority in India or the National Commission for Human Development in Pakistan.

Appropriate attention may be paid by the LIFE countries to the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the LIFE focal point. It is understood that the national LIFE focal point should be knowledgeable about literacy work and more importantly be in a position to effectively co-ordinate most partner agencies and bodies working for literacy in the country. It is also expected that the LIFE focal point will lead in gathering and reflecting common concerns among the literacy stakeholders in influencing upstream policies, as well as generating synergy among the partners in implementing effective literacy initiatives downstream.

The national LIFE focal point can, for example, play a key role in setting up (or reinforcing) the national literacy co-ordination mechanism, and function as its executive secretary. The choice of the national LIFE focal point and support to the institution he/she is representing in accelerating literacy implementation can be critical. It may also be useful for national LIFE focal

¹⁶ As some countries already have a national literacy co-ordination mechanism, the expression used in this report like 'setting up a LIFE co-ordination mechanism' refers in such country context to 'reinforcing the existing literacy co-ordination mechanism'.

points to share their experience so as to better understand the challenges they face and good practices in planning and implementing actions to accelerate the spread of literacy.

Priority in literacy work will be given in the coming years to identify and reach out to the remaining unreached illiterates. It will be helpful as in the cases of Afghanistan, India and Pakistan to consider designating provincial and local LIFE/literacy focal points for coordinating and energizing literacy actions at decentralized levels, especially in provinces and areas a concentration of illiterate population if not also of various partners delivering programmes which include literacy as a component. These provincial or local LIFE/literacy focal points may be designated or elected from among government or non-governmental persons dedicated to working on literacy.

Reinforcing national LIFE/literacy co-ordination mechanism

It is expected that among various objectives, reinforcing the national LIFE/literacy co-ordination mechanisms will above all contribute to strengthening partnerships with existing and new networks of literacy providers and stakeholders in order to organize concerted actions to improve literacy. It will aim at increasing co-operation and synergy among these partners in planning and implementing literacy initiatives. The LIFE countries in Asia and the Pacific have formed their national LIFE/literacy co-ordination mechanisms by either strengthening existing networks of agencies working in literacy such as Bangladesh and Nepal, or by including other current key players which can help to address illiteracy problems, like Afghanistan and People's Republic of China. Moves are underway to reactivate in Papua New Guinea the National Literacy and Awareness Council (NLAC) – the body consisting of representatives from all the core literacy providers.

Box 1: Literacy Co-Ordination in Afghanistan

The approach adopted in Afghanistan can be considered as one of the most inclusive and structured. The then Education Minister assumed high-profile leadership in designating LIFE as the national literacy framework in Afghanistan in order to contribute to the attainment of national literacy goals set in the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) and in a wider nation-building strategy, the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) in 2007. The Education Minister and the UNESCO Kabul Director chaired the first LIFE Information Meeting which led to the setting up of the LIFE Co-ordination Working Group with a broad representation and agreed TOR which define the background and objectives of LIFE in Afghanistan. The Literacy Department of the Ministry of Education was designated as the national focal point for LIFE in Afghanistan.

Over 30 organizations in Afghanistan have been registered as LIFE partners of the working group. They include the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Women's Affairs, ANAF AE, Cetena-Group, GTZ, Helvetas IIZ/DVV, JICA, NFUAJ, NSDP (MoLSA), UNESCO, UN-Habitat, UNICEF and WFP. The monthly LIFE co-ordination working group meeting has been co-chaired by the Deputy Minister for Literacy of the Afghan Ministry of Education and UNESCO Kabul, and the LIFE steering committee (consisting of the Literacy Department, ANAF AE, JICA, NFUAJ, UNESCO, UN-Habitat) functions as a secretariat for LIFE. Establishment of the LIFE co-ordination working group at the subnational level (province and district) is currently in the preparation stage.

High-level leadership in Afghanistan also facilitated co-ordination with the Education Development Board (EDB) and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). This opened an avenue for literacy to be mainstreamed into the wider education/development agenda of the country. Consequently, the LIFE Co-ordination Working Group in Afghanistan has been designated as a subgroup of the EDB (currently the Human Resource Development Cluster), which enables literacy stakeholders to add their voices to a higher political/nation-building discourse in the country.

In preparation for the major Saakshar Bharat Scheme which covers the period from September 2009 to March 2013 in India, the National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) was reconstituted and made broad based by involving additional literacy partners. The Department of Adult Education was appraised and Technical Support Groups were created under the new NLMA. State Literacy Mission Authorities (SLMAs) were also reconstituted in the same way as the NLMA. District and subdistrict public education committees were revived. State Resource Centres (SRCs) were strengthened and financed, so were Jan Shiksha Sansthan (for vocational training and skills development). Many more implementing structures were developed. The scale of political commitment and resource support given to the Saakshar Bharat Programme is such that “LIFE issues in other countries, like insufficient commitment and low political will and capacities, are considered not relevant in India”¹⁷.

After the initiation of LIFE in the 33rd General Conference of UNESCO in 2005, the Basic Education Department of the Ministry of Education put forward concrete suggestions on LIFE in People's Republic of China. Soon after, the Ministry of Education issued jointly with twelve other sectors The Proposal on Further Strengthening Literacy Implementation which laid stress on relevant parts of LIFE, like literacy for the ethnic minorities and women. The Ministry of Education then involved the State Ethnic Affairs Commission and the All-China Women's Federation in formulating targeted plans for literacy programmes for ethnic minorities and women, as well as literacy consolidation plans within the framework of LIFE.

The LIFE/literacy co-ordination mechanism in People's Republic of China consists of 3 layers: (1) the National LIFE Co-ordination Structure including as members the Ministry of Education, the Publicity Department of CPC Central Committee, the National Development and Reform Commission, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Culture, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, the State Statistics Bureau, the

¹⁷ Oral statement of the representative of the Saakshar Bharat Programme of India at the 2010 LIFE Regional Workshop.

All-China Women's Federation and Youth League of China; (2) an intersectoral joint co-ordination group for national literacy work with representatives from the twelve key government ministerial partners; (3) an inner network within the Ministry of Education composed of the Department of Basic Education, Department of Vocational and Adult Education, Department of Finance, Department of Development and Planning, Secretariat of Chinese National Commission for UNESCO and the Office of National Education Inspectorate.

The LIFE/literacy co-ordination mechanisms in Afghanistan and People's Republic of China can be understood as a broader partners group of relevant government ministries and agencies plus an executive core group around the LIFE focal point. For countries where other bodies are actively involved in delivering literacy, it will be important to examine how, for example, the following categories of partners can best be included and/or actively involved in literacy co-ordination:

- Provincial, district and local governments;
- NGOs and INGOs (national and international non-government organizations);
- Private non-profit or for-profit organizations and civil society bodies;
- Local community bodies;
- International development partners (IDPs).

It can be seen above that the range of partners for literacy can be diverse in nature, objectives, working modalities and locations. The question is therefore how best to include, involve and co-ordinate them in order to generate maximum synergy and impact in meeting the EFA literacy goal.

In response to the LIFE Mid-Term Evaluation Questionnaire, Bangladesh reported that consultation fora for key stakeholders of non-formal education (NFE) have been organized, e.g. the Committee for Developing NFE Implementation Strategic Actions. These fora were organized not particularly for LIFE but for the NFE subsector including literacy, ECCE and continuing education, under the co-ordination of the Bureau of Non-formal

Education (BNFE). A LIFE Committee was recently established and it is proposed to have regular quarterly meetings co-ordinated by the Director-General of BNFE as the LIFE focal point of the country.

In the case of Pakistan, it was reported that a 20 member LIFE Core Group was formed by the Ministry of Education with representation of major stakeholders, including provinces and NGOs. A few meetings of the LIFE Core Group were held at national and provincial levels. The last meeting was convened in 2008. This co-ordination structure does not seem to be fully supported by the federal and provincial governments and it remains weak. However, their meetings helped to improve co-ordination amongst literacy and non-formal education partners to a reasonable extent. These experiences in Pakistan and perhaps other countries beg the questions:

- a. How should such national literacy co-ordination mechanisms function in order to be effective?
- b. Can initial joint work among the members in needs assessment plus country literacy action planning, and subsequent systematic co-ordination of implementation and joint monitoring and evaluation lend more weight to this mechanism and strengthen its role and impact?

Information from the Asia-Pacific LIFE countries only offer preliminary answers to these questions, as described in this report. Further sharing of country experiences can help to better answer these and similar questions.

No specific mention of the formation under LIFE of a national literacy co-ordination mechanism was given by Nepal apart from the existence of more than 100 literacy providers and a new provider's working system. Papua New Guinea indicated in its response to the LIFE evaluation questionnaire that: "The previous co-ordination structure consisted of the National Literacy and Awareness Council (NLAC) - the body consisting of representatives from all the core literacy providers. This body is also recognized as the highest policy-making body. However, the NLAC has been defunct over the last few years and in its place Secretary for Education established a National Task Force for Literacy and tasked it to review the Literacy Policy and develop the

legal framework for the establishment of National Literacy and Awareness Institute. Moves are under way to reactivate the NLAC." Avoiding duplication between the existing literacy co-ordination mechanism and a new LIFE/literacy co-ordination mechanism deserves attention. The question here is: **Can LIFE and the forming of a national LIFE co-ordination mechanism help to trigger true revitalization and reinforcement of existing national literacy co-ordination bodies? If yes, how can this be achieved?**

It was understood from Indonesia's response to the LIFE evaluation survey that under the Presidential Instruction No. 5 Year 2006 on the National Movement to Accelerate Completion of the Nine Years Compulsory Basic Education, Indonesia has established a well defined multilevel literacy and basic education implementation co-ordination structure from central national level down to the local village level (see also Sections 3.1.1 and 3.2.2).

It is clear that each country will have to assess and take into account the situation, needs and the range of literacy stakeholders in order to clearly determine the size, composition and structure of the national co-ordination mechanism as well as its working modalities such as TORs, substructures, priorities, action plans, budget, staff, activities, rules and procedures, monitoring and evaluation. For literacy, it is clear that a dynamic and participatory co-ordination mechanism which will not be affected by changes in the institutions and persons involved will be crucial for effectively promoting and sustaining co-ordinated literacy efforts across the country. The experience of Afghanistan in organizing its LIFE co-ordination working group and defining clear terms of reference (TOR) can be a useful reference for other countries.

Defining terms of reference (TOR) for literacy co-ordination and partnerships

Clearly defining the terms of reference (TOR) of national LIFE/literacy co-ordination mechanism can help all members and eventually the direct and indirect partners as well as all relevant stakeholders to better understand

its purpose, priorities and working methods; and for everybody to more effectively co-operate with its operational procedures and practices. Drawing from the experiences of Afghanistan and other countries, the TOR may in the first place specify the mission, main objectives and tasks of the national LIFE/literacy co-ordination mechanism, which may include among others the following:

- Strengthening partnerships and programmes in order to accelerate the spread of literacy within the country to meet the UNLD and EFA literacy goals;
- Networking literacy providers to create synergy in planning and implementation;
- Participatory input into literacy policies, strategies and plans;
- Activate and co-ordinate resource mobilization for literacy;
- Support literacy programme implementation by promoting innovations and sharing of literacy resources, experiences and good practices;
- Joint monitoring and evaluation of progress, gaps, challenges and issues in literacy;
- Collaborative implementation of LIFE advocacy and communication strategies including UNLD, ILD and EFA events to inform and mobilize policy makers, the general public and new partners.

Additional specifications about the structure and substructures of the co-ordination mechanism may be added, together with definition of the roles, responsibilities and duties of the members, as well as the procedures and regulations governing its operations and practices.

Learning from past experiences, it may be advisable to define and organize a small and lean core literacy co-ordination mechanism with only key members who can actively energize and influence other networks or groups of literacy providers. For countries which already have existing co-ordination mechanisms for literacy, some may be streamlined and upgraded to become associated with LIFE, as in India and Bangladesh, or simply a new unified literacy co-ordination mechanism under LIFE and UNLD as in People's Republic of China.

3.1.3 Advocacy and Communication Strategy

The first and foremost strategic area of action of LIFE is advocacy and communication, which aims at making literacy a priority among traditional partners and puts literacy on the agenda of non-traditional partners (see page 20 of LIFE Vision and Strategy Paper). It will be the mandate of the national LIFE/literacy co-ordination mechanism to define a literacy advocacy and communication strategy and to support its members and networks to implement this strategy across the country to raise awareness and support - from top policy makers down to local community members. Procedures may also be established for joint monitoring and evaluation of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of such literacy advocacy and communication strategies.

Among various advocacy and communication approaches, LIFE in Afghanistan puts strong emphasis on the International Literacy Day (ILD) as an important opportunity to advocate the significance of literacy and to mobilize national commitment to literacy education among the government and society. Through technical and financial contributions from LIFE partners, global and national ILD posters were distributed and broadcasts were made through national television and radio channels in 2008. In 2009, a literacy campaign week was organized from 2nd to 9th September and a large gathering took place in Kabul where the Afghan Vice President, Minister of Education as well as representatives from UNICEF and UNESCO emphasized their commitment to promoting literacy education in the country. The Power of Literacy, a book containing personal stories from literacy learners from across the country, was published to give authentic voices to learners on how literacy has improved their lives. Currently, a LIFE website is under development which would further advocate literacy as well as call for more collaborative efforts among literacy stakeholders.

In a similar way, advocacy for adult literacy has been integrated in Bangladesh into the EFA Global Action Week in April and the International Literacy Day in September each year. Events at national and subnational levels were organized including rallies, seminars and TV programmes to mobilize the interests of policy makers, practitioners and civil society in promoting

literacy and EFA. Promotion materials such as posters and booklets were produced and distributed. Capacity-building training programmes were also conducted for NFE managers of government and non-government organizations.

The literacy advocacy and communication strategy of Indonesia included:

- a. A road show to the provinces and districts/cities led by the Minister of National Education to strengthen co-ordination and division of responsibilities through signing of MoUs among the central, provincial, and district/city governments.
- b. Strengthening of socialization through meetings involving government and non-government parties.
- c. Dissemination of information through print and electronic mass media, leaflets, brochures, and other similar media. In addition, information is disseminated through development of various guidelines.

Under the Saakshar Bharat Programme in India, social motivation and mobilization campaigns are organized adopting multiple strategies, multilevel approaches and varied messages and media to create and sustain demand for literacy. Such advocacy communications included a talk by a Nobel Prize laureate; seminars and ILD celebrations involving literacy partners and stakeholders; interactive meetings with State Literacy Mission Authorities (SLMAs) and Lok Shiksha Samities (LSS); oath-taking among district officials; local earmarking of funding; and use of ICT, publications and other media activities. In addition, a series of consultative meetings, seminars and workshops are organized from time to time to publicize and increase commitment among stakeholders to the Saakshar Bharat Programme.

In Pakistan, no specific LIFE or literacy advocacy and communication strategy has yet been developed. However the National Commission on Human Development (NCHD) as a member of the LIFE Core Group, organized and launched certain advocacy initiatives including posters and a media campaign. The NCHD has also established a media cell for advocacy

and communication. Pakistan celebrated 2010 as National Literacy Year. A number of activities focusing on advocacy for literacy were planned including meetings of the Parliamentarians Forum and media forums to mobilize political support for literacy. The Prime Minister of Pakistan and Chief Ministers of provinces were approached to mobilize more resources for literacy. In Sindh province, advocacy seminars involving a large number of stakeholders at provincial and district levels were organized as part of the provincial EFA and literacy drive.

Nepal counts on literacy providers to advocate for literacy throughout the country and on an education journalist group who works with FM radio and television. No advocacy and communication strategy has been established in Papua New Guinea to reinforce commitment to literacy. The absence of a strategy is seen as one of the main causes of literacy not being given the special attention it deserves.

Much can be learned from the variety of advocacy actions taken so far in the LIFE countries in Asia and the Pacific. Different communication approaches may be used to maximize the effectiveness and impact on different target audiences, from high level policy makers, managers and personnel of literacy programmes to the local community people and potential learners. To the extent possible, the advocacy and communication strategy should include provisions for sustaining such actions over time.

3.1.4 Building Partnerships

Priority is given under LIFE to strengthen partnerships among existing literacy providers and to expand links and co-operation with broader groups of literacy-related stakeholders in other sectors and at decentralized levels.

Having included a broad representation of key literacy partners as members, the National LIFE Co-ordination Working Group in Afghanistan was designated as a subgroup under the wider Human Resource Development Cluster chaired by the Minister of Education. Through this link, LIFE has had a robust channel to make its approach felt to a wider

audience and to push for mainstreaming literacy into wider development discourses and programmes. It can be noted that Afghanistan's LIFE Action Plan 2010 has been collaboratively developed by the LIFE partners who prioritized thematic areas and activities to focus effort in a more co-ordinated and collaborative way. The Action Plan identifies five thematic areas and major activities in: (1) co-ordination; (2) advocacy; (3) campaign and public awareness; (4) capacity development and quality improvement; and (5) resource mobilization, some of which are under implementation whilst resources are being mobilized for the others. The emphasis given to advocacy and the campaign for public awareness in this action plan is particularly noteworthy.

Partnerships have been strengthened in Indonesia among the Ministry of National Education, Ministry for People's Welfare, Ministry of Trade, State Ministry for the Empowerment of Women and Child Protection and with the provincial and district/city governments under the Presidential Instruction No. 5/2006. This Instruction made the Illiteracy Eradication programme a National Movement. Co-ordination and support have also increased through meetings of the concerned ministries/government agencies, as well as between the government and legislative party – specifically with Commission X of the Indonesian Legislative Assembly that manages education, and the Budget Committee. The effectiveness of the road show and signing of MOUs with decentralized bodies mentioned in Section 3.1.3 in building partnerships can be studied further. Also noteworthy is the co-operation with Save the Children in increasing the participation of females with poor literacy skills.

In a similar manner, through frequent communication and co-operation with the other twelve sectors involved in literacy, the main objectives and priorities for adult literacy have been clearly included in China's National Plan Outline for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020). The efficiency and effectiveness of the co-operation among these key partners in implementing the objectives will be subject to regular monitoring and assessment in the coming years. The Islamic Republic of Iran stresses the importance of creating a policy and legal framework for

optimal use of capacity among literacy providers. As in Indonesia, signing MOUs at national and provincial level is considered as one of the strategies to build partnerships.

The Saakshar Bharat Programme of India gives strong focus to partnership building by developing alliances at national and subnational levels: public-public, public-private, with NGOs, open universities, the National Informatics Centre (NIC), National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Institute of Public Auditors of India (IPAI), Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC), the TATA Consultancy, media and ad agencies, and international partnerships. It is expected that many more partnerships will be built when literacy programmes get into full swing at local levels.

It is interesting to note that in Bangladesh, whilst LIFE constitutes an overall framework for literacy promotion, partnerships and alliances have been explored and expanded especially through the CAMPE network and operational project activities such as PLCEHD, ROSC, BEHTRUWC and CapEFA (see also Section 3.1.1 and Acronyms). Good practices and tangible outputs from these projects such as pilot Community Learning Centres (CLCs), NFE Mapping and NFE-MIS are used as tools for mobilizing political support and further resources.

In Nepal, LIFE partnerships have been developed with INGOs, NGOs and also with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) through the existing system of four-level committees of which the highest is headed by the Prime Minister and those at the local level by local dignitaries or political institutions. Civic society, political leaders and women's organization are members of these partnership committees. These bodies have been guiding and overseeing the co-ordination of literacy work at each level.

A variety of strategies and actions have been taken in Pakistan to develop partnerships and to mobilize political and financial support for literacy:

- i. Parliamentarian's Caucus for literacy has been formed and its first meeting held;
- ii. Meetings of the Parliamentarians Forum were arranged to mobilize political support for literacy;

- iii. Media Forums for Literacy were held;
- iv. The Prime Minister of Pakistan and Chief Ministers of provinces were approached to mobilize more resources for literacy.

The above cases demonstrate how the introduction of LIFE contributes to broadening partnerships and positioning literacy within broader political and policy arenas and networks. India, Indonesia and the Islamic Republic of Iran also show how partnerships with implementing agents at decentralized levels can be strengthened. These experiences point to the need to pay attention to building partnerships in order to raise both the ranking of literacy among national development priorities as well as the level of collaboration and mutual support among the stakeholders. It can be useful to document and disseminate detailed information on the good practices and the do's and don'ts in building partnerships for literacy, especially at decentralized levels, so as to advance literacy within provincial and local development agendas in places where illiteracy remains high.

3.2. Policy for Sustainable Literacy

3.2.1 LIFE Impact on Literacy Policies

Strengthening of partnerships and co-ordination under LIFE are expected to help nations develop more up-to-date and credible literacy policies and plans which can accelerate literacy implementation and mobilize both in-country and international support.

Since the launch of LIFE in Afghanistan, two important documents have been developed through initiatives of the Literacy Department in close collaboration with LIFE partners: (1) The Needs Assessment Report reviewed and analyzed the literacy situation in Afghanistan to identify gaps and priority areas for future literacy intervention; and (2) the National Literacy Action Plan (NLAP 2010-2014) based on the Needs Assessment Report, which provides the government, donors and all other literacy stakeholders with a common vision, guiding principles and a sound national strategy

for the effective implementation of literacy programmes in Afghanistan. The vision and targets in the NLAP were integrated into the recent National Education Strategic Plan II (NESP II) for 2010-2014.

The Saakshar Bharat Programme of India was designed through an elaborate process of extensive in-house and external review and evaluation of previous literacy programmes. A series of consultative meetings were held across the country with the relevant government organizations, NGOs, literacy practitioners, managers, administrators, SRCs, universities, social activists and other stakeholders. The resulting broad strategy for literacy in India was discussed with the education secretaries of all States. Through this process, reviews of literacy trends, policy provisions and critical analysis of earlier programmes enabled the design of the Saakshar Bharat Programme as a new literacy initiative for bridging gaps and ensuring sustainable literacy and empowerment. This new programme strategically targets females irrespective of caste, class and regional diversity. It also added reformed teaching training components, equivalency and continuing education, use of ICT, and updated skill development.

In Bangladesh and based on the National Policy on NFE of 2006, the scope and actions suggested in LIFE have provided inputs to the process of formulating the NFE Policy Implementation: Strategic Action (2010-2014) in such areas as advocacy, delivery, capacity development and monitoring and evaluation. This Strategic Action was approved by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) in April 2010.

In People's Republic of China, twelve ministries lead by the Ministry of Education issued in 2007 the Proposal on Further Strengthening Literacy Implementation which defined literacy for ethnic minorities and women as a priority. In 2010, targets for literacy were included in China's National Plan Outline for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020).

LIFE has become one of the reasons for the inclusion of a literacy programme as one of the national education development priority agendas in Indonesia. Reference to LIFE is found in the National Medium Term Development Plan

2004-2009 and the National Strategic Education Development Plan 2010-2015, which integrate literacy education programmes in the economic, social and cultural life of the nation and people.

Nepal adopted LIFE for its literacy campaign which is part of the Non-formal Education Policy adopted in 2006. The latest literacy campaign programme in Nepal started in 2009 and continues in 2011. In Pakistan, literacy issues were highlighted particularly through the LIFE framework in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper II (PRSP-II), the National Education Policy 2009, and National and provincial 5-year Literacy Plans (2010-15). Literacy issues were given prominence in Papua New Guinea in the: (1) National Education Plan (2004-2014); (2) Universal Basic Education Plan (2009); (3) Medium Term Development Strategy (2004-2010) and PNG Vision 2050 Plan, but it is not clear how LIFE contributed to this prominence of literacy in national policies. Likewise for Nepal, as some of the literacy policies preceded LIFE.

It therefore appears that various literacy policies and plans have been adopted in the LIFE countries in Asia and the Pacific following the World Conference on EFA in 2000. It will be helpful to assess to what extent these literacy policies and plans address the empowerment of literacy learners, teachers and providers. More importantly, attention may be paid to how LIFE can help to further update and upgrade national literacy policies, develop more effective country literacy plans, and to build national capacities to better manage, monitor and evaluate the implementation of these literacy policies and plans. Actions under current and future UNESCO CapEFA18 projects must include capacity-building in literacy policies, planning and management as priorities.

3.2.2 Actions to Strengthen Capacities for Policies

More and more countries seem to have begun developing and adopting policies and plans for literacy and non-formal education especially since the launch of UNLD and LIFE. UNESCO's CapEFA project support to selected

18 See www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/capacity-development

countries gives priority to strengthening national capacities in literacy policy-making and planning. Some existing literacy policies and plans also need to be re-assessed and upgraded based on the progress achieved so far and emerging challenges. It is expected that such policy and planning work will increase in the future especially as we approach the EFA target year of 2015. There is a need to strengthen and spread capacity for related policy analysis, research, formulation and strategic planning not only for central level education administrators but also among the relevant stakeholders in different sectors. This is particularly true for decentralized levels so that they can more effectively contribute to literacy implementation if not also to more effective decentralized literacy targeting and action planning processes.

Several efforts were made by different stakeholders in Afghanistan to strengthen capacities for literacy policy development. Notably, UNESCO has started supporting the development of a literacy/non-formal education information management system (Lit/NFE-MIS) and preparations for conducting the Afghanistan Literacy Assessment Survey (ALAS). Both actions aim to augment the capability for situation analysis and accurate strategic planning of literacy interventions. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has started its four year programme to build knowledge base planning capacities of the Literacy Department by enhancing the monitoring and supervision system. UN-Habitat's efforts to establish national learners/teachers qualification standards and the Literacy Teachers Training Institute are also significant contributions to develop policies regarding high quality literacy interventions based on common standards. In addition, co-ordination with the National Qualification Framework strengthens capacities for integrating literacy policies into wider national development policies to make literacy more sustainable and more relevant in the Afghan context.

The Non-Formal Education (NFE) Policy 2006 and Strategic Actions 2010 of Bangladesh have the vision of developing continuing education and lifelong learning to sustain literacy by linking with life skills and quality of life improvement. To support these visions, the CapEFA and PLCEHD projects

(see Section 3.1.1 and Acronyms) have supported capacity development activities for government and NGO personnel working in NFE. Similar advocacy work has been carried out for policy makers, development partners and civil society.

The formulation of literacy policies and strategies for ethnic minorities and women in People's Republic of China, as well as of literacy consolidation programmes, have closely informed and involved the relevant sectors and strengthened their capacity to support implementation of literacy priorities. Meanwhile, UNESCO continues to contribute to capacity development for reaching the goal of the Chinese government to build a learning society together with a system of lifelong education for all, as proposed in the documents of the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China as well as in the National Plan Outline for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020).

Co-ordination meetings organized regularly in Indonesia with all literacy-related ministries, the Central Bureau of Statistics, and literacy education implementing partner organizations, helped to improve their understanding of literacy issues and encourage collaboration. Implementation of the Annual Evaluation of the Eradication of Illiteracy involving all Heads of Education Offices and/or Heads of Non-Formal and Informal Education Offices throughout Indonesia as well as Provincial Development Planning Agencies, Provincial Bureaus of Statistics plus selected districts, have been instrumental in strengthening capacities across the country to monitor and manage literacy work. Co-operation with UNESCO in conducting a situational analysis of literacy in Indonesia and in developing the Mid-Decade Assessment report on EFA also provided good opportunities to reinforce capacities in literacy information management and policy analysis.

Many activities are carried out frequently in Nepal to strengthen the management capacity of literacy stakeholders and members of Village Development Committees (VDC) and District Development Committees (DDC), especially in implementing the literacy campaign. Attention has also been given to building the capacities of NGOs participating in literacy monitoring and data collection.

In Pakistan, the Punjab province has institutionalized organizational structure and financial mechanisms for literacy programmes and established Literacy Resource Centres. Education Committees were formed at district, subdistrict, union council and village levels to combat illiteracy. An NGOs' Literacy Forum was formed. So was the Pakistan Education Watch with 80 members. In Sindh, posts of District Education Officers-DEO (Literacy) have been created. District EFA Units have also been established. The Sindh Literacy Professional Development Centre was established in Karachi, as well as the National Literacy Resource Centre in NCHD and the Literacy Resource Centre at RITE (Peshawar). New posts have been created in the Directorate of Literacy and NFE in Baluchistan. A separate Directorate in Literacy and NFBE Department (Lahore) has been approved by the Government of Punjab for professional development of literacy personnel. The National Education Foundation (NEF) has established administrative units in 50 districts.

The biggest challenge for Papua New Guinea is the development of a new policy for NFE and literacy. It is believed that such a new literacy policy can generate commitments among the relevant government departments and other stakeholder to support literacy programmes. The lead agency tasked to co-ordinate literacy activities, NLAS, is understaffed and lacks adequate resources to carry out its functions properly. Furthermore, it is uncertain which government agency is the lead agency responsible for coordinating NFE/literacy activities. This problem has led to literacy programmes not being co-ordinated properly.

The above illustrate the different initiatives and approaches adopted by the LIFE countries to build capacities for policy. Whilst, for example, abilities for information search, policy analysis and research, strategic planning, dialogue with partners, monitoring and evaluation can be some of the prerequisites, further answers are sought regarding:

- a. How effective and impactful were the cited approaches in building capacities for literacy policy?
- b. What other competencies and capacities are needed for literacy policy-making and planning?
- c. What else can and should be done in order to strengthen policy/planning capacities under LIFE?

3.3. Actions to Strengthen Capacities for Programme Delivery

In order to accelerate progress to meet the EFA goal of improving literacy rates by 50 percent, LIFE proposes to strengthen and expand partnerships among the literacy providers to buttress capacities among the ministries, departments, agencies, NGOs, centres, bodies and people involved in literacy work. Besides policy analysis, formulation and strategic planning, both institutional and individual capacities will be needed for the detailed design, planning and delivery of effective literacy programmes, management for results, inclusion of vulnerable population groups, networking and involvement of private sector, local communities and other partners, monitoring and evaluation including literacy assessment, to name but a few.

Taking stock of existing needs versus capacities to deliver is a very important step to identify the strengths, gaps and priorities especially in capacity-building under LIFE. Responses to the LIFE Mid-Term Evaluation Questionnaire showed that a number of LIFE countries in Asia and the Pacific have carried out a situation analysis or needs assessment with regard to literacy (Table 8).

Table 8: Literacy Situation Analysis, Needs Assessment and Finance

Country	Literacy situation analysis	Changes in financing of literacy
Afghanistan	Situation Analysis 2008 Needs Assessment Report	Very significant increase since 2005. Several large scale literacy interventions started by international agencies such as UNESCO, UN-Habitat, UNICEF and JICA etc. Modest increase of literacy budget within government's core budget.
Bangladesh	- Baseline Survey of PLCEHD 2004. - Literacy Assessment Survey 2008. - Mapping of NFE Activities 2008	Significant increase (CapEFA project of UNESCO and the proposed BLCE in addition to the PLCEHD which commenced prior to LIFE)

People's Republic of China	Situation Analysis 2009 (completed 2010) Has relevant assessment framework on literacy but not especially for LIFE.	Very significant increase
India	Extensive in-house and external review and evaluation of previous literacy programmes under Saakshar Bharat	Very significant increase: Almost 5-fold increase in govt budget allocations to adult literacy, to US\$1.075 billion for 3 years (2009-2012)
Indonesia	- Situational Analysis of Literacy Education in Indonesia, 2005-2009 developed in co-operation with UNESCO. - An academic analysis of the 'Literate to be Empowered' (AKRAB) programme.	Very significant increase from 2005 to 2007 and 2009, but reduced in 2010.
The Islamic Republic of Iran	Situation analysis 2009 (completed 2010) and different kinds of needs assessment through scientific research, and the results have been used to develop literacy programmes.	Literacy budget increases significantly every year according to educational needs and inflation.
Nepal	Situation analysis in 2008 and there were many studies commissioned by UNESCO in preparation for the national policy.	Very significant increase.
Pakistan	Situation analysis in 2008. Need Assessment studies for Literacy have been conducted in all the four provinces and areas.	A little significant increase. Only in some provinces. NCHD budget for literacy increased. Second highest priority assigned to literacy and NFBE under One-UN Programme.
Papua New Guinea	Situation analysis in 2008. "CapEFA Project is taking care of needs assessment and identification of gaps."	Financial allocation for LIFE declined over the years.

The importance of literacy situation analysis has been stressed in the LIFE vision and strategy and repeatedly during various LIFE meetings at global and regional levels. Questions may be asked as to:

- a. How up-to-date and comprehensive were these existing literacy situation analyses?
- b. Have these analyses included disaggregated data which identified where and who are the illiterates within the country?
- c. How effectively has each of these analyses identified the literacy gaps, issues and priorities?
- d. To what extent have the findings of these analyses been used in policy-making and planning?

Such updates to literacy needs assessment may give special attention to identifying where and who are the illiterates and their socio-economic-cultural characteristics, so as to identify patterns and develop more effective ways to help them become literate. To the extent possible, the latest data collected by the National Statistics Offices during the year 2010 round of national population censuses and from recent household surveys can be used as benchmarks to analyze the identity and whereabouts of illiterates, so as to better target and plan literacy efforts.

3.3.1 Financing of Literacy

Seven of the nine LIFE countries in Asia and the Pacific reported significant to very significant increases in government funding for literacy (Table 8). These countries included Afghanistan, Bangladesh, People's Republic of China, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, and Nepal. This is evidence of national policy makers beginning to fulfil their commitments to EFA and UNLD. Pakistan indicated only a little increase in some provinces. Government financial allocation for literacy have been on the decline over the years in Papua New Guinea where the budget for the National Literacy and Awareness Secretariat which is tasked to co-ordinate literacy activities has remained at 3 to 4 percent annually of the Department of Education budget.

The level of funding for literacy work depends on the scale of the tasks to eradicate illiteracy and to continue to raise post-literacy competencies. Such actions vary from country to country and in different local areas. It is therefore difficult to evaluate whether a reported increase is truly significant or not, especially in relation to the tasks at hand. It may be more helpful to find answers to the following questions:

- a. Has the funding been adequate for implementing the planned literacy actions?
- b. How effectively have past and present funds for literacy been spent?
- c. What are the remaining funding gaps for achieving the goal of increasing literacy by 50 percent by the year 2015?
- d. How should future funding for literacy be targeted and spent?

3.3.2 Human Resources for Literacy

Government decisions to increase literacy staff was reported by Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal and Pakistan. It is worth noting that most such increases extend from central down to local and CLC level. Additional information is needed regarding what triggered such decisions and how the scale of increases was determined so as to see in what way LIFE can contribute to further improving the effectiveness of such literacy staffing decisions (Table 9).

Except India and the mention in Pakistan of "Professional development is being addressed in various literacy plans that are being prepared by federal and provincial governments", none of the other Asia-Pacific LIFE countries reported any explicit human resource development plan for literacy. Only project-based capacity-building of literacy managers and teachers has been carried out in both Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Box 2: Comprehensive Human Resources Development for Literacy in India

The Saakshar Bharat Programme in India has a clear human resource development plan which includes the following:

Training of trainers, literacy facilitators and supervisors using learner-centred, learning-by-doing, participatory techniques.

- TQM (Total Quality Management) emphasizes quality of literacy workers and literacy educators.
- Volunteer teachers given intensive pre- and in-service training in andragogy in local languages.
- Cascade approach in training of literacy personnel.
- Model manuals and resource books with participatory training techniques distributed for adaptation at SRCs and SLMAs.
- Ongoing training of key resource persons at district level.
- Orientation and managerial training for literacy managers.
- Various workshops organized by different bodies for different target literacy personnel.

The number of literacy personnel in India increased during 2010 at state, district, block and Grama Panchayat levels as well as expansion of recruitment and deployment of volunteer teachers.

Human resources development covers recruitment of new literacy personnel (both full time and part time), training, deployment, on the job support, evaluation, career development, etc. It will be useful to address the following questions:

- What are the remaining gaps and needs in literacy personnel across the country?
- What are the constraints in strengthening literacy personnel in terms of quantity and quality?

- What has been done to strengthen the capacity of literacy personnel? What innovations have been experimented with? What lessons have been learned?
- What kind of human resources development plan for literacy be put in place for the future?
- In what way can such plans be developed and implemented effectively?

Table 9: Human Resources Development Plan for Literacy and Changes in Literacy Staff

Country	Existence of Human Resources Development Plan for Literacy	Changes in literacy staff
Afghanistan	No	The number of literacy-related officials at provincial and district level has been increased. Also professionals and managers at provincial and district levels.
Bangladesh	- PLCEHD 2 nd phase - Basic Literacy and Continuing Education Project 1 and 2 (2009) - NFE Policy Implementation: Strategic Action 2010	- Project posts funded under PLCEHD 2 nd phase: - Ministry: 1 Project Director, 3 Deputy Directors - 6 Assistant Directors (administration, planning, implementation, M&E, logistics and finance) - Province/districts: 1 Project Officer and 1 Assistant Project Officer in 29 districts - Local/grassroots level: facilitators and supervisors - Others: Technical staff deployed from NGOs
People's Republic of China	No	None
India	Yes, under the Saakshar Bharat Programme	At state, district, block and Grama Panchayat levels under the Saakshar Bharat Programme

Country	Existence of Human Resources Development Plan for Literacy	Changes in literacy staff
Indonesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report on the Quality Enhancement of Learning Literacy Education - Report on the Capacity Enhancement of Literacy Education Institutions - Report on the Increase of Literacy Education Innovations - Report on Technical Orientation for Literacy Education Grant Recipients - Technical Guidelines on Literacy Education, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MOE: Professional staff (Implementation Units), administrative staff, and technical/operational staff - Province/District: At the Provincial level: professional, administrative and technical/operational staff - At the District/City level: administrative and technical/operational staff - Local: Professional staff (tutors, resource persons), managers/administrators, and technical/operational staff
The Islamic Republic of Iran	No	None
Nepal	When 'Non-formal Education Centre to be upgraded as a Non-formal education department'	Yes in Non-formal Education Centre, districts, Community learning centres, facilitators part time, supervisors part time
Pakistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No national or provincial level human resource development plan prepared as yet. However, project based interventions have been planned and being implemented for capacity-building of literacy managers and teachers, etc. - Professional development is being addressed in various literacy plans that are being prepared by federal and provincial governments - Research and Training Centres for literacy and non-formal education/Literacy Resource Centres are being established for training and capacity-building of literacy teachers and managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provincial: 155 Posts of District Literacy Officers and Social Mobilizers created in Punjab (46 new posts at the secretariat level) - In Sindh, 23 new posts of Assistant Field Officers created - In Baluchistan, 9 new posts (officers/officials) created. - In National Education Foundation (NEF), new posts of teachers, administrators and managers were created

Country	Existence of Human Resources Development Plan for Literacy	Changes in literacy staff
Papua New Guinea	No	Staff numbers for National Literacy and Awareness Secretariat (NLAS) have not increased. Positions of Provincial Literacy Coordinators (PLC) have been practically abolished by merging this function with TVET. Currently there are only 5 provinces with active PLCs

3.4. Innovations and Good Practices

3.4.1 How Was LIFE Used to Identify and Promote Innovations?

With regard to the promotion of innovations in literacy under LIFE, the monthly LIFE Co-ordination Meeting in Afghanistan acts as a forum for sharing information, knowledge and good practices through presentations and discussions. The minutes of the discussions are also circulated to other LIFE partners. Information on the progress of different programmes such as Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan (ELA) of UNESCO, Learning for Community Empowerment Programme (LCEP-II) of UN-Habitat, the Literacy Education in Afghanistan (LEAF) of JICA, literacy for police/army training, etc. were shared at the monthly LIFE Co-ordination Working Group Meeting. In addition, the forthcoming LIFE website in Afghanistan aims to promote innovations and disseminate good practices of LIFE partners to wider audiences.

In Bangladesh, national experience and innovations in literacy capacity development and delivery, for example in CLCs, NFE Mapping and NFE-MIS, have been documented during preparations for UNLD/LIFE related fora and publications. Intercountry forums, publications and websites were found to be useful for sharing knowledge and experience with other countries. The latest results of the NFE Mapping in Bangladesh were distributed through publications, CDs and websites.

With support from UNESCO, Bangladesh together with Afghanistan and Papua New Guinea are carrying out literacy environment assessments, implementing the Literacy Planning and Management Manual (with Pakistan and Papua New Guinea), promoting literacy material development with the Arab States, and developing CLCs in the Arab States in particular as part of the Morocco LIFE project.

A notable innovation is Indonesia's AKRAB Implementation Guideline, following which programmes and budgeting for literacy education have been reorganized through development of schemes to support:

- Independent entrepreneurial literacy;
- Local cultural art literacy;
- Folk based literacy;
- Peace literacy;
- Enhancement of a culture of writing through newspapers for mothers;
- Family literacy education;
- Gender based family education;
- Community reading park.

In addition, within the AKRAB Implementation Guideline, basic literacy programmes are not only implemented with a conventional approach for six months, they can also be implemented using other strategies such as the Innova-32 Model which is a basic literacy education programme for 32 days that was developed in Karawang District and adopted in West Nusa Tenggara Province. The Family Literacy and Independent Entrepreneurial Literacy Education Programme which is a follow-up to the Functional Literacy Programme in Indonesia, has been shared as literacy innovation. Designed to meet the learning needs of citizens who are illiterate and those who are newly literate, this programme integrates the learning of reading-writing-arithmetic with skills that would be useful in improving the quality of life and standard of living of the learner, as well as in empowering the families and surrounding communities.

Innovations in Nepal include the use of local language books and literacy programmes related to local skills for income generation. Literacy classes have been conducted with grandmother and grandchildren learning together. A majority of learners in literacy classes are women: up to 82 percent. Besides launching a major three month literacy campaign across 43,059 centres in the country, Nepal also initiated an Income Generating Programme for Woman in the entire country. Special literacy programmes in prison are also running.

Similar to Afghanistan, the meetings of the LIFE Core Group and seminars in Pakistan are used to promote and disseminate literacy innovations. The National Literacy Curriculum 2007 was developed under the LIFE Framework. A website for LIFE has been developed. A number of studies on best practices in literacy were conducted. Documentaries and CDs on innovations in literacy have been produced. Literacy resource centres/CLCs have been established, inventory and documentation of literacy material produced in Pakistan have been made, and study visits to other countries were conducted. At the CONFINTEA-VI in Brazil, the 8th E-9 Meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, and in various international literacy fora, Pakistan shared two significant innovative programmes: (a) National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) programme of opening of adult literacy centres; and (b) National Education Foundation (NEF) programmes of opening of Non-formal Basic Education Schools presently called Basic Education Community (BEC) Schools.

The Saakshar Bharat Programme of India introduced major innovations including a project fund flow and accounting system aimed at providing access to funds up to the village level enhancing transparency and accountability and empowering Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) by allowing them financial autonomy. A national curriculum framework for adult literacy has been developed for the first time to sustain adult education. Literacy camps using ICT have been organized in collaboration with the TATA Consultancy. A new web portal has come online for viewing progress made by JSSs (Jan Shakshan Sansthan for vocational training and skills development).

People's Republic of China reported in responding to the LIFE Evaluation Questionnaire that literacy programmes for the disabled and the rural-to-urban migrant population were initiated in some regions and that significant achievements were obtained. It was also reported that People's Republic of China submitted these practices and experiences to UNESCO for the UNESCO International Literacy Prize.

The examples and experiences given above indicate that LIFE can promote literacy innovations in many ways, for example:

- Institutional organization such as community learning centres, literacy resources centres, etc;
- Networking of agencies, centres and literacy practitioners in sharing of knowhow and resources;
- Literacy programme content and design;
- Programme delivery modes, mechanisms and methods;
- Mobilization of expertise and technical support;
- Production, dissemination and use of literacy materials;
- Training and deployment of literacy personnel;
- Helping illiterates to access and complete literacy classes;
- Assessment of literacy outcomes;
- Mobilization of local government and community support.

It will be useful for national LIFE/literacy co-ordination mechanisms to systematically collect, document, review and disseminate these types of literacy innovations and to co-operate with UNESCO to publicize and disseminate them at the international level.

4

**ACHIEVEMENTS
AND IMPACT**

From the above analysis it appears that the nine Asia-Pacific LIFE countries are at different stages of LIFE implementation. They can be distinguished first by the degree of political and policy commitment to literacy, secondly in terms of the scope and strength of co-ordination and partnerships, and thirdly by the resources allocated and actions taken to develop capacities to deliver literacy.

Among the nine Asia-Pacific LIFE countries, Indonesia seems to have put in place the necessary literacy policy, plan, decree, co-ordination mechanisms and implementation capacity at all levels. The impact of LIFE on the implementation of literacy policies in Indonesia includes:

- a. Issuance of Presidential Instruction No. 5/2006 on the National Movement to Accelerate Completion of the Nine-Year Compulsory Basic Education and Eradication of Illiteracy, followed by Decree of the Minister of National Education No. 35 Year 2007 on Guidelines for Implementation of the National Movement to Accelerate Completion of the Nine-Year Compulsory Basic Education and Eradication of Illiteracy, and Letter of Decision of the Director-General for Non-Formal and Informal Education No. 258/2009 on the structure of the literacy education programme.
- b. Establishment of Main Performance Indicators and Key Performance Indicators to measure progress in completing the eradication of illiteracy within the framework of the National Strategic Plan for the Development of Education, and Strategic Plan of the Ministry of National Education 2010-2014.
- c. Improvements in gender equity and gender equality as evidenced from a decrease in gender disparities among the illiterate population and from the development of a Gender Mainstreaming Programme in the Field of Education.

It is interesting to note that evaluation of AKRAB is conducted in Indonesia during national meetings which specifically discuss results, challenges and constraints in implementing the literacy education programme. This forum involves all provincial governments (usually represented by the Heads of

Non-Formal and Informal Education Offices), and the central government. This includes the National Development Planning Agency, the Central Bureau of Statistics, and the Ministry of National Education. Significant achievements can be seen from decreases in illiteracy rates and increases in budgetary allocation to literacy approved by the Indonesian Legislative Assembly.

Afghanistan has made good progress in organizing a high-profile launch of LIFE, policy commitment, a well-represented co-ordination mechanism, needs assessment, literacy action planning, and is setting up implementation capacity at the decentralized level as well as advocacy and communication strategy including the development of a literacy website. These actions have already generated considerable government commitments, public awareness and additional funding for literacy work. The most remarkable achievements of LIFE in Afghanistan include: (1) completion of Needs Assessment; (2) development of National Literacy Action Plan; (3) designation of LIFE working group as a subgroup of the Human Resource Development Cluster; and (4) formulation of the National LIFE Action Plan (2010). The preliminary impact of LIFE on national policies was observed when literacy was identified as one of the priorities for reconstruction within the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) which is the most important education policy in the country. Under LIFE partnership, the vision and strategy of the National Literacy Action Plan (NLAP) were fully reflected in the more recent NESP II. These major plans helped all literacy stakeholders in Afghanistan to share a common literacy vision and goals, strengthened ownership of literacy policy, and enhanced understanding of the necessity for more collaborative/collective efforts in planning/implementing literacy interventions.

People's Republic of China has anchored literacy for ethnic minorities and women into national policies and the education strategy 2010-2020. The Directives on Further Strengthening Literacy Education highlights literacy for women and ethnic minority populations. Establishing effective co-ordination with the relevant ministries and ensuring that appropriate actions are jointly planned and implemented by the concerned partners

will be key to the impact of LIFE in People's Republic of China. China intends to use the 2010 population census results to assess needs and plan targeted literacy action.

Launched in 2009, India's Saakshar Bharat Scheme is in its early stage. So far it has developed and begun implementation of a decentralization system in the management of broad-based literacy programmes, with web-based management and fund flow mechanisms to track financial updates and the progress of adult learners. Another major achievement is the development of a core curricular framework for literacy programmes which includes ICT-enabled teaching-learning and camp-based literacy programmes with ICT inputs. The rationale of Saakshar Bharat has been widely publicized and accepted in promoting literacy for empowerment through emancipation and inclusion of women and other disadvantaged groups. Many LSKs (Lok Shiksha Kendra) or Adult Education Centres have been created in Village Panchayats. National and local development issues have been incorporated in teaching-learning materials for programmes offering relevant basic, post-literacy and continuing education in a single continuum for lifelong learning, which includes entrepreneurial training and linkages with micro-credit support groups. The use of ICT in online submission of literacy project proposals, monitoring, financing and web-based data systems, as well as pilot camp-based IT-enabled literacy teaching-learning, are infusing new dynamism into the literacy movement in India.

In Bangladesh, the actions suggested under LIFE have contributed to the approval in April 2010 of the NFE Policy Implementation: Strategic Action (2010-2014). A LIFE Co-ordination Committee was recently established and it is proposed to have regular quarterly meetings co-ordinated by the Director-General, Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE) who is the LIFE focal point. The LIFE Committee will attempt to consolidate existing co-ordination among literacy and NFE stakeholders, projects and activities by handling issues concerning the NFE subsector e.g. NFE-MIS, capacity development and flexible delivery with the participation of government, NGOs, academic institutions and development partners. With needs assessment completed and human and financial resources increased,

literacy has become an important government agenda in line with the international movement and advocacy for literacy through UNLD, EFA and LIFE. Accordingly, a new Basic Literacy and Continuing Education (BLCE) project has been formulated which aims to achieve the government's commitment to be an illiteracy-free country by 2014. Resource mobilization efforts have been underway from government internal budget and also external assistance of development partners based on the outcomes of CapEFA including frameworks on NFE teachers, equivalence education, and NFE delivery mechanism. These initiatives have paved the way to strong political will for mobilizing co-ordinated actions and support for literacy.

In a demonstration of political commitment, the President of Pakistan announced the formation of the National Literacy Council and the Federal Cabinet decided to observe 2010 as National Literacy Year. The Prime Minister of Pakistan launched the National Literacy Programme on the occasion of International Literacy Day on 8th September 2009 in Peshawar. Under this programme, around 100,000 adult literacy centres will be established throughout the country in the next three years. Out of these, 20,000 centres have already been completed especially centres for females. Prizes and certificates were awarded to outstanding literacy teachers and supervisors by the President of Pakistan. The number of non-formal basic education schools increased and 50 district NFBE offices have been established by the National Education Foundation (NEF). A 20-member LIFE Core Group was formed by the Ministry of Education with representation of the major stakeholders including provinces and NGOs. National and provincial five year (2010-15) literacy plans have been formulated, accompanied by an increase in government literacy staff at provincial and district levels, especially in Punjab and Sindh provinces. Literacy projects have been supported by Pakistan's National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) and donors. Essential conditions for a major concerted literacy drive in Pakistan seem to be in place. In Baluchistan, a separate Minister for Literacy and Non-formal Education has been appointed. The scope of the literacy programme in Punjab has expanded with four new development projects launched and six under implementation together with the development of a Literacy and Non-formal Education Information Management System (LitMIS). A Literacy

Scheme has been approved in Sindh province, and the Khyber Pakhtun Khwa has increased its literacy budget. It was observed that more civil society bodies are becoming involved in promoting literacy across Pakistan.

Nepal adopted LIFE through a national literacy campaign which is a part of the Non-formal Education Policy in the country. It may be understood that the literacy campaign in Nepal represents an ongoing priority. Its implementation processes can generate opportunities for assessing remaining literacy needs and defining future literacy and post-literacy actions. Among LIFE's impacts it is interesting to note that political parties are presently engaged in campaigning for literacy and Village Development Committees, District Development Committees and municipalities expanded their budgets for literacy. Women's literacy increased three times faster than literacy amongst men. In Nepal, 72 percent of literacy facilitators and supervisors are women who cater to the needs of women in literacy classes who make up 82 percent of all learners. The demand for housewife open school is increasing day by day, as are demands for more CLCs.

With a situational analysis and needs assessment prepared in July 2008¹⁹, Papua New Guinea has yet to adopt a new policy to revive its literacy co-ordination mechanism in order to implement full-scale literacy policy formulation and national action planning and implementation. It is understood that the current CapEFA project in PNG will help the authorities to address these gaps. In Papua New Guinea, the government is now beginning to recognise the importance of literacy and has made a commitment to increase the NLAS budget in 2011. Efforts are being made through the CapEFA Project to develop a policy on NFE and literacy. A combined NLAS and CapEFA Project information paper on the Literacy Situation in PNG was presented during the annual Senior Education Officers Conference. As an immediate result of this, the Director of Education has asked NLAS to prepare a submission to increase its budget by three times.

¹⁹ National Literacy and Awareness Secretariat and Literacy Taskforce. 2008. *Literacy Initiative For Empowerment (LIFE) – Situational Analysis Papua New Guinea*. Port Moresby, Department of Education.

The Islamic Republic of Iran reported that more than 400 simple literacy booklets have been produced and implemented in various fields.

The LIFE implementation experiences reviewed thus far clearly demonstrate the importance of literacy policies, literacy needs assessment, literacy action plan and strategies, strong co-ordination and delivery capacities as prerequisites for mobilizing government, community and donor support for literacy. It is crucial for all the LIFE countries to fulfil these prerequisites in the very near future so as to build the momentum for accelerating progress in the UNLD and EFA literacy goals by 2015. As stated in Section 1.5.2 and Papua New Guinea's response to the LIFE Evaluation Questionnaire, it is difficult to assess at this stage the true impact of LIFE on literacy policy and implementation in the LIFE countries. Often, it is not clear if a particular literacy policy/plan/programme/activity was the direct result of the introduction of the LIFE Vision and Strategy by UNESCO, or of earlier policies and plans. Nonetheless, this evaluation revealed many positive developments on the literacy front in the nine Asia-Pacific LIFE countries since UNESCO's launch of the LIFE initiative. It remains to be seen whether such new developments are sufficient for these countries to accelerate progress towards the UNLD and EFA literacy goals by the year 2015.

5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

Some of the key findings from the above analysis can be summarized as follows:

- a. Progress has been made in most Asia-Pacific LIFE countries in honouring their commitment to EFA and UNLD literacy goals by adopting new literacy policies and plans and increasing government budgets and human resources for literacy;
- b. National literacy co-ordination mechanisms have been established/ reinforced and partnerships to support literacy are being further strengthened;
- c. Advocacy and communication for literacy are becoming increasingly active and systematic in reaching more stakeholders and involving broader audiences to raise awareness and generate support;
- d. National capacities have improved in literacy situation analysis and policy and planning. More effort is needed in the development of capacities at both central and decentralized levels for implementation, namely the management of literacy delivery, innovations, networking, advocacy and monitoring and evaluation.

In terms of the evaluation criteria given in Section 1.5.2, country participants at all three Asia-Pacific Regional LIFE Meetings confirmed the relevance of LIFE and the choice of LIFE countries in Asia and the Pacific. There is a shared understanding that in order for the UNLD and EFA literacy goals to be attained, solutions must be found in order to address key bottlenecks and issues such as the lack of political will and commitment to literacy, limited government budgetary allocations and human resources, the existence of a multiplicity of literacy providers and programmes, low capacity and low-quality literacy delivery, and above all weak co-ordination and inadequate mutual support among literacy stakeholders.

The priority actions proposed under LIFE to co-ordinate literacy stakeholders, build partnerships, advocate for policy and resources support, strengthen delivery capacities, and promote and share innovations were considered to be relevant measures to spread awareness and to accelerate progress

towards the EFA and UNLD literacy goals if implemented efficiently and effectively.

The information in Section 4 shows that LIFE has had an impact in a good number of Asia-Pacific LIFE countries. Systematic monitoring and evaluation in the coming years will help to further assess the impact and sustainability of LIFE actions.

Overall, the LIFE initiative and related UNESCO actions in Asia and the Pacific can be said to have contributed to the progress, achievements and impact described in this report. This participatory evaluation also revealed some of the remaining needs and tasks such as:

- i. Need to further update literacy policies and plans and reinforce their implementation starting with assessing and phasing the tasks ahead and the allocation and use of budgetary and human resources;
- ii. To strengthen institutional networks and capacities among literacy providers;
- iii. To mobilize adequate resources at national, subnational and international levels for achieving the country's EFA literacy goals;
- iv. To reinforce management capacities for ensuring quality literacy delivery at all levels;
- v. To improve literacy co-ordination, advocacy and communication especially at the subnational level;
- vi. To promote wider sharing and dissemination of literacy innovations ;
- vii. To develop systematic monitoring and evaluation of literacy work and outcomes;
- viii. To generate greater awareness and support among literacy stakeholders and the general public.

Regarding international support to literacy in the Asia-Pacific LIFE countries, UNESCO has:

- i. Organized since 2006 a large number of global and regional conferences, meetings and workshops to promote country commitment to literacy, the UNLD and LIFE (see Section 1.4);
- ii. Provided direct technical and financial support for the preparation of new country literacy situation analysis and action plans in the Asia-Pacific LIFE countries;
- iii. Implemented CapEFA projects in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and mobilized multidonor support to literacy in Afghanistan which directly contributed to strengthening literacy work in these countries under the LIFE framework.²⁰

The approach adopted in bringing together policy makers and key government officials responsible for literacy to share experiences and discuss actions at conferences and meetings has been instrumental in heightening awareness of the need to accelerate support for literacy. This has resulted in country-led preparation of literacy policies and situation analysis during 2008-2010 to serve as the basis for forward action planning.

It was, however, noticed that country participation and representation in the series of Asia-Pacific regional LIFE meetings have not been consistent. This has affected considerably the continuity and effectiveness of joint work during follow-ups to the meetings. For example, it was agreed at the end of the recent December 2010 LIFE Mid-Term Evaluation Workshop that the country participants would provide written inputs for finalizing this evaluation report plus their finalized national follow-up action plans. Very little input was received despite repeated UNESCO reminders. UNESCO may in the future draw the attention of the National Commissions for UNESCO and the country's top policy maker to such a lack of follow-up action.

For this evaluation and as stated in Section 4, it was not completely clear whether certain achievements and impact of LIFE reported in response to the LIFE Mid-Term Evaluation Questionnaire could truly be attributed to

LIFE, or rather to some previous or separate literacy initiatives. Secondly, it appears that some of the realities encountered by the countries in implementing LIFE were not mentioned especially regarding salient challenges and issues. Thirdly, it is believed that many direct and indirect links and interaction among various in-country literacy stakeholders which affected LIFE implementation were not explicitly described. During the Regional LIFE Mid-Term Evaluation Workshop, candid expressions of views and experience from those who have been directly involved in different aspects of LIFE implementation helped considerably to evaluate more reliably the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of LIFE actions.

When interpreting the findings and the ensuing recommendations, readers may also bear in mind some of the inherent limitations of this evaluation approach, in that it takes into account the views of only some of those persons directly involved in organizing and implementing LIFE in their countries. In order to prepare responses to the LIFE evaluation questionnaire, the national LIFE focal points were encouraged by UNESCO Bangkok to bring together key stakeholders (or members of the National LIFE Co-ordination Group/Team) to discuss and consolidate the response to each question. It is understood that the extent to which this is followed varied from country to country. The same applies to the completeness and representativeness of the responses provided. Changes of the national LIFE focal point or the country representatives taking part in this series of Regional LIFE Meetings also affected the quality of inputs during this participatory evaluation process. In addition, information should be systematically collected in the future from the partner literacy providers and the direct and indirect beneficiaries including those persons who went through the literacy programmes, in order to further gauge the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of LIFE actions.

Nonetheless, this LIFE mid-term formative evaluation gives rise to a number of insights and recommendations which can guide future LIFE implementation.

²⁰ See UNESCO. 2010. *Capacity Development for EFA Programme 2009-2010 – Regional Progress Report No. 25* Bangkok, UNESCO.

6.1 Country-Level Actions 45
6.2 Support from UNESCO and Other International Partners. 46

6

RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of recommendations can be drawn from the findings of this LIFE mid-term evaluation and put forward for the LIFE countries, UNESCO and LIFE partners. These recommendations echo those adopted in previous major international conferences and meetings (see Section 1.4), this time focusing on the key priorities in the present context.

6.1 Country-Level Actions

Based on the findings and lessons learned during this LIFE Mid-Term Evaluation, it is recommended that additional action be speedily taken to contribute to literacy within both national and international contexts. This will ensure that the LIFE countries can fulfil what they set out to achieve under UNLD and EFA. Such efforts at the country level would include:

- a. Establish or further reinforce literacy co-ordination at national and decentralized levels to build on existing networks and to involve a broader range of literacy providers and stakeholders;
- b. Promote the inclusion of adult literacy learners, teachers and providers in major national policy frameworks and co-ordination mechanisms;
- c. Update literacy situation analysis to set more realistic benchmarks and targets for literacy policies, planning and monitoring;
- d. Formulate country literacy acceleration plans (CLAPs) and integrate them into national and subnational development plans and strategies;
- e. Design and actively implement advocacy and communication strategy for literacy;
- f. Mobilize adequate funding for literacy within government budgets and from other sources;
- g. Develop capacities for literacy policy research and for literacy programme delivery especially at the local level by expanding the network of community learning centres and improving their quality;
- h. Increase post-literacy and continuing education programmes to sustain literacy skills;

- i. Establish systematic monitoring and evaluation of progress in literacy implementation;
- j. Regularly disseminate information to stakeholders on literacy achievements, impact, issues, innovations, good practices, challenges, issues, needs etc;
- k. Discuss literacy and empowerment issues and actions frequently in provincial, district and local development councils;
- l. Further increase international advocacy and communication to spread awareness and mobilize support for literacy.

It can be noted that most of the Asia-Pacific LIFE countries are moving from the advocacy and policy stage to strengthening action-oriented partnerships and implementation. More concrete collaborative actions like the following examples envisaged by Indonesia, can offer good ideas on what the other LIFE countries can consider as priority implementation actions:

- Implement literacy education programmes in phases prioritizing areas with the highest illiterate population;
- Develop specific policies and programmes to reach the hard-to-reach illiterate population;
- Widen intersectoral co-operation;
- Strengthen co-operation with universities, out-of-school education implementation bodies, and various NGOs and community social organizations;
- Make use of various resources available in the country and in the community to support implementation of literacy programmes;
- Strengthen literacy education programmes that are integrated with life skills and poverty alleviation programmes;
- Introduce quality assurance at learning group level to ensure quality learning processes;
- Develop valid and accountable literacy education assessment measuring tools based on well-defined literacy competency standards; and

- Sustain literacy capacities by providing community reading park/centre facilities at villages/sub-districts which have been declared fully literate.

In relation to the first point above, a specific recommendation concerns the use of data from the latest 2010 round of national population censuses (and from household surveys) to map the current geographical distribution of illiterates and their characteristics. This will enable better targeting and scheduling of the delivery of more adapted and effective literacy programmes in the next five years. The use of forthcoming household surveys as well as systematic application of literacy programme information management and assessment processes can help to closely monitor changes in the illiterate population, literacy environment and literacy programme performance. This will continue to guide timely adjustments to the country literacy acceleration plan, targets, priorities and programmes.

6.2 Support from UNESCO and Other International Partners

The LIFE countries in Asia and the Pacific unanimously agreed that UNESCO support is vital for LIFE to accelerate efforts to achieve the UNLD and EFA literacy goals. Considering UNESCO's strength and weaknesses, this evaluation recommends that UNESCO further reinforce its specific roles in supporting literacy including:

- International advocacy:** Continue to take actions to generate greater commitment to literacy among national and international partners, and to remind policy makers of their commitments and the need to quickly translate commitments into concrete and effective actions.
- Technical assistance:** Provide expertise and technical assistance in areas of need such as in-country literacy needs assessment, policy analysis, strategic planning, capacity development, monitoring and evaluation in collaboration with existing expert networks, especially those in Asia and the Pacific such as the APPEAL Resource and Training Consortium (ARTC), Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE), Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU), etc.

- Networking:** Promote sharing and dissemination of salient experience and good practice among the LIFE countries and with UNESCO's networks under APPEAL and EFA Co-ordination.

- Help to mobilize support to in-country literacy initiatives and LIFE actions:** Advocacy with national policy makers, key agencies, development partners, etc.

A good number of countries recommended that UNESCO further expand its support specifically to in-country LIFE implementation by:

- Continuing to advise high level policy makers and education administrators on the importance of literacy and the need for them to put literacy high on the policy agenda and commit to supporting related actions;
- Widely stressing the need to build partnerships and mutual support among literacy stakeholders to increase synergy in literacy actions;
- Disseminating LIFE experiences, knowhow and resources from other countries, and mobilizing both international and in-country support to effective literacy delivery under LIFE, with special emphasis on South-South co-operation;
- Strengthening capabilities of literacy and NFE planners and managers in conducting literacy needs assessment, policy analysis and formulation, strategic planning, building partnerships, coordinating networks, promoting innovations, facilitating sharing of experience and resources, monitoring and evaluation.
- Helping central agencies to build capacities of decentralized level education administrators and literacy managers to co-ordinate the planning and implementation of literacy activities in their respective provinces and local areas.

It was also suggested in the country responses to the LIFE Evaluation Questionnaire that UNESCO should help to minimize redundancy and duplication of literacy programmes by better articulating the overlaps among existing international programmes relating to literacy including Education for All (EFA), UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG), UN International Literacy Decade (UNLD 2003-2012) and LIFE (2006-2015).

7

CONCLUSION

At the present juncture, the key question that all the LIFE countries should try to answer is:

Are all the past and current actions in favour of literacy (under or beyond LIFE) adequate for achieving the UNLD and EFA literacy goals by the year 2015?

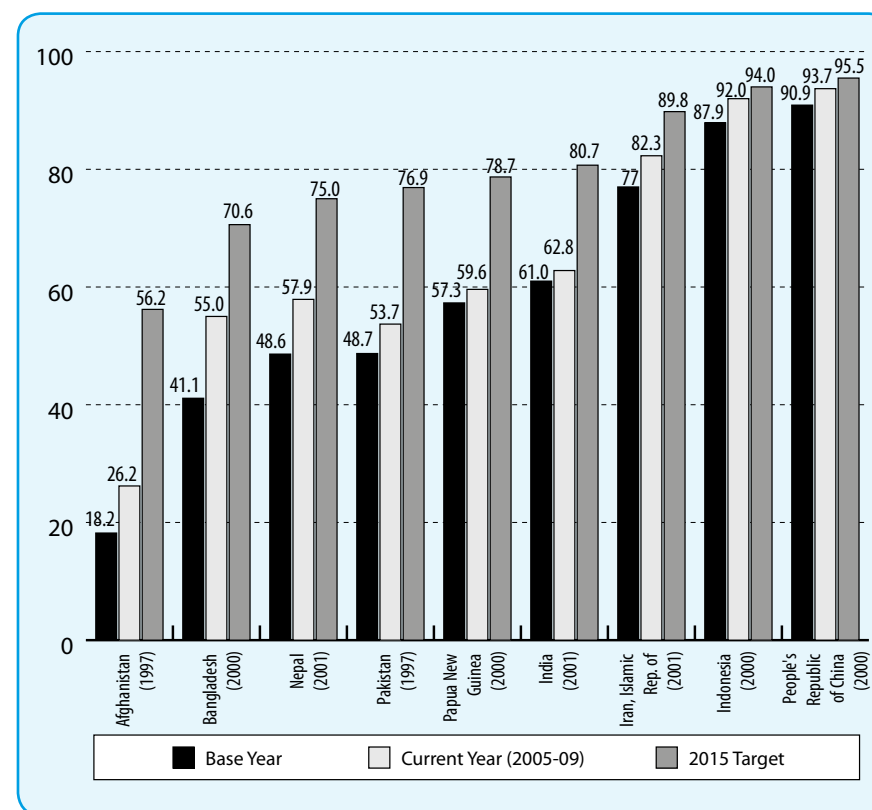
And if the answer to this question is “NO”, what should be done in the coming years?

It may be useful at this point to take a look at Figure 6 and Table 2 which show for each of the Asia-Pacific LIFE countries the latest estimated target adult literacy rate to reach by 2015 (based on EFA Goal 4: Improving literacy by 50 percent) compared to the literacy rates around 2000 (or the indicated base year) and around 2008.

It can be seen in Figure 6 that People's Republic of China and Indonesia have made good progress in increasing adult literacy rates during 2000-2008 and are on track to achieve their respective EFA literacy goals of improving literacy by 50 percent. Significant advances in literacy can be observed in Bangladesh, Nepal and the Islamic Republic of Iran. With some acceleration in the coming years, these three countries can expect to reach the EFA goal 4 by the year 2015.

Insufficient progress in increasing adult literacy rates has been observed in the remaining four Asia-Pacific LIFE countries: Afghanistan, India, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea. They risk not reaching the EFA literacy goals by 2015 unless large-scale efforts are made immediately.

Figure 6: Progress Towards EFA Literacy Goal in 9 Asia-Pacific LIFE Countries



Source: UIS-AIMS estimates based on UIS database and country data.

It may be argued that LIFE will become a missed opportunity in seven out of nine LIFE countries in Asia and the Pacific if determined efforts are not made to implement the crucial recommendations given above. This is especially true for putting forward an up-to-date situation analysis, defining a well targeted and feasible CLAP (country literacy acceleration plan), and mobilizing all partners and stakeholders to help put in place adequate

implementation capacity. With well organized and dynamic literacy coordination at the national level, such preparations can be completed with relatively minor effort but can generate major support from central, provincial and local governments, not to mention from local communities and external donors. UNESCO's CapEFA projects may strategically envisage strengthening technical support to such upstream work.

Despite the constraints, it must be acknowledged that positive progress has been made in most LIFE countries in terms of political will in favour of literacy. It is believed that if implementation is put on the fast track, LIFE can decisively contribute to achieving the UNLD and EFA literacy goals in most if not all Asia-Pacific LIFE countries.

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ANNEX

Sample of LIFE Mid-Term Evaluation Questionnaire

1. Awareness and visibility of LIFE in your country

How was LIFE launched and publicized?

- Workshop Information during meetings
 Other Please specify.....

Did the workshop/meeting allow you and the key stakeholders to understand and to use LIFE as an operational mechanism or strategy of implementation of the Literacy Decade? Please also provide reasons.

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Please explain how LIFE has been used to bring the literacy issue more prominence in the national policy agenda in your country. Please list the reference documents, if any.

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Did you create a co-ordination structure for LIFE? Who is participating in this and how is this structure working?

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What difference has the creation of the co-ordination structure made to literacy work in your country?

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2. Advocacy and communication

Did you develop an advocacy and communication strategy around LIFE to reinforce national commitment to literacy?

If yes, how does it work?

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If not, how to create one?

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What are the strategies and activities that you utilized to develop partnerships or an alliances around LIFE at the country level to mobilize political and financial support for literacy?

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2. Policy for sustainable and empowering literacy

What are the concrete actions for strengthening capacities for the development of policies for sustainable literacy begun by different stakeholders (e.g. government, civil society, private sector, bilateral and multilateral donors, etc.)?

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3. Delivery of empowering literacy programmes/extent of national ownership

In your country, has there been an assessment of needs, technical support requirements, and identification of capacity gaps to design, manage and implement LIFE-related programmes?

Yes No

If yes, provide the list of relevant documents

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Does your country have a human resource development plan for LIFE-related programmes?

Yes No

If yes, please provide the list of document

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Did the financial allocation to LIFE-related activities increase since 2005?

Yes No

If yes, how significant is it?

A little significance Significance Very significance

Did your country increase staff for LIFE-related activities since 2005?

Yes No

If yes, where and what kind of staff have been increased?

	Kind of staffs (professional, administrators/managers, technical/implementers)
Ministry/departments	
Provincial/districts	
Local/grassroots level	
Others	

What is the impact of LIFE in the implementation of literacy policy? State some examples of some aspects (e.g. with regard to political impact, resource mobilization, gender equality, etc.)?

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4. Innovation

How has LIFE been used to identify, document, and share knowledge and inspire innovations?

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5. How do you evaluate the contribution and results of LIFE as a catalyst for action and partnerships around the literacy and non-formal education strategies? (At the political level, at the level of literacy and non-formal education strategies?)

What are the achievements?

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What are the difficulties/challenges in the implementation of LIFE related works?

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Have any programmes from your country been shared as example of effective practice? If yes, which ones and on what occasions?

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6. What evaluation do you make of the support of the UNESCO for LIFE? What would you propose for its improvement?

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7. Are there upcoming opportunities in your country in which LIFE can be further promoted? Please provide details.

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8. How can LIFE position itself better to play its role in your country, as a platform for strengthening partnerships, as a catalyst to further promote literacy in your country?

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