People are generally more aware now of the power and significance of education as a tool for improving life. They also know that education is no longer just something for children. Education is a lifelong and continuing activity. To organize continuing education more relevantly and meaningfully for empowering our people, we should have a vision of what education can achieve.

Learning is not just limited to reading, writing and arithmetic. Learning is about improving one’s knowledge, skills and attitudes to make life easier, fuller, longer and more enjoyable. Learning then has a practical purpose. It can help us to cope with the changing world socially, economically, culturally, physically and spiritually. Learning provides us with practical tools to improve the quality of life or to change it. Our efforts to educate ourselves should not stop after the completion of primary schooling or a basic literacy programme. We should continue these efforts throughout our lives. Continuing education gives us opportunities to engage in lifelong learning.

**Lifelong learning**

In our village, we may find neo-literate adults with basic literacy and numeracy skills. These skills can help them in their daily living. However, in order to improve their quality of life and raise their incomes, they need to continue to develop their knowledge and skills through formal, non-formal and informal education. We may also find adolescents and children who have left school, especially after primary education. They also can benefit from continuing to learn.

Learning which continues throughout life is called lifelong learning. Through continuing education, we can organize appropriate learning activities.

As we know, schools, colleges and universities can cater for only a handful of children, youth and adults. Many others do not have the opportunity for a full education. Lifelong learning is a way of compensating for a lack of full formal schooling, giving opportunities for those who cannot continue their formal education. Education can occur throughout a person’s life through formal, non-formal and informal experiences as shown in the following diagram.
Many people consider that learning is just for gaining knowledge. But the scope of learning is much broader than this. When we engage in lifelong learning, we are learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together. What do we mean by these four kinds of learning?

**Learning to know**

When we read a brochure about growing mushrooms distributed by the agricultural extension section, we know or understand how to grow mushrooms. When we read newspapers, we know what is going on in our country and other places. We learn things to increase our knowledge and understanding. Our efforts in learning are a never-ending process. The world is changing very fast. Consequently, we need to upgrade our knowledge all the time. This type of learning is called *learning to know*.

**Learning to do**

After knowing how to grow mushrooms, we need to actually try growing them. When we acquire new knowledge, we need to put it into practice. We call this type of learning *learning to do*. Our efforts should always be to provide continuing education activities based on things that our learners can actually do, that they can put into practice, that are relevant to their lives.
Effective Implementation of Continuing Education at the Grassroots

Learning to be

Everybody has their own vision of their future. For example, a craftsman may want to become a senior craftsman or an expert; a shop worker may want to set up his or her own small business. If we want to have our own shop for selling mushrooms, we need to acquire some entrepreneurial and management skills. When this happens, we are learning to be an entrepreneur.

When we have a vision, we are motivated to increase our knowledge and skills. We appreciate or see the value of lifelong learning. As a continuing education facilitator, one of our roles is to motivate community people, through continuing education programmes, to raise their aspirations so that they can identify some goals for their lives. The learning that we are trying to achieve is learning to be.

Learning to live together

We are members of a community that is also a part of a broader society. Everybody wants to live in peace and harmony, to have security and respect for each other. Thus we need to promote social equity, justice, peace and harmony through continuing education programmes. For example, when we become entrepreneurs of mushroom production, we may help our friends in the community to acquire skills for growing mushrooms. We may set up a community cooperative to sell mushrooms and other products and share the profits among the members. Some profits can be saved for community welfare, for our family and children. This type of community development may help us to live together peacefully.

To achieve our goals of community development through continuing education, we need to integrate and apply these four types of learning – learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together.
To promote lifelong learning, all agencies in our community should be education providers. When this is the case, our community will become a learning society. Thus the ultimate goal of lifelong learning is to build up a learning society.

A learning society

As a member of our community, we may often dream of a world where everyone lives in peace and harmony, with social equity and justice, where nobody is left in poverty and illiteracy. Everybody would have the opportunity to work as well as engage in learning for personal as well as community prosperity.

A society should be able to respond to the learning needs of each member. In such a society, all agencies should play a role in providing education and training in addition to their own activities. For example, a factory whose primary responsibility is to manufacture goods can also provide training for its employees to upgrade their skills. The factory can have a role in educating the general public about changing technology as well.

Similarly, families, local wisdom, religious institutions, cooperatives, community development groups, universities, government agencies, non-government organizations, factories, private companies and others should play a role in providing education and training to the members of society. When a society is built up in this way, we call it a Learning Society, as shown in the following diagram.

In a genuine learning society, wherever people go, they will learn something. Learning places can be any place: a corner of a temple, a bus station, under a tree, in the workshop.

In a genuine learning society, all citizens engage in education from birth to death. People themselves initiate their learning for a purpose and then pursue it through any means available in the society.
Flexibility in providing continuing education

Continuing education provides the opportunity to engage in lifelong learning that can be organized through different channels: formal, non-formal and informal.

**Formal education**

Formal education normally describes programmes offered by established educational institutions such as schools, colleges and universities, where a programme of study results in a diploma being granted.

**Non-formal education**

Non-formal education refers to educational programmes, short courses and training programmes offered by different institutions including government and non-government organizations, private enterprise and cooperatives. Universities and colleges also offer some non-formal programmes. Formal educational degrees and diplomas can also be obtained through equivalency programmes (discussed below). One of the major differences between the two approaches is flexibility. For example, the curriculum and reading materials of the literacy courses offered through non-formal education are designed and selected according to the needs of the learners. In addition, the
learners themselves make decisions about time, place and duration of classes according to their needs and convenience. Besides, the teaching-learning process is likely to be less authoritarian and more attuned to learner needs.

**Informal education**

In addition to formal and non-formal education, learning can take place in other ways. A person can also increase his or her knowledge and skills through self-directed learning. An individual can learn through reading, television and radio programmes, or a close observation of activities. Some people describe this type of learning as informal education or self-directed learning.

Regardless of whether knowledge and skills are obtained outside formal schools through non-formal learning and self-directed learning, this learning is most efficient when it is purposeful and planned and meets the needs of recipients.

Continuing education is provided through non-formal as well as informal education. However, continuing education programmes in some countries involve formal educational institutions. For example, a person who participates in a non-formal education equivalency programme needs to pass an examination approved by a formal educational institution. This then provides him or her with a certificate equivalent to that offered by the formal system.

Therefore, continuing education can be provided through non-formal, formal and informal education. Learners themselves decide which channel is the most useful for them. The three types of education should be available in the community or nearby so that people have the opportunity to learn throughout life.
The need for continuing education

We may find that in many villages neo-literate are gradually losing their literacy skills. Dropout children and adolescents have forgotten many of the literacy skills that they acquired during their schooling.

Why are adults, children and adolescents losing their literacy skills? When people acquire new skills, they need to practice them or they may gradually forget these skills. Literacy and numeracy skills in particular fade rapidly if people do not use them. The best way to practice these skills is to use them in ways that relate to daily life.

How do people in these villages practice their reading skills? Their exposure to reading is very limited and even if they occasionally come across some reading materials, they are not likely to read them. Besides, because of low literacy skills, many people in these villages are not in the habit of writing letters to their relatives or friends. Thus, due to the lack of practice, people start to forget their literacy skills.

In most of the rural villages in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in South Asia, we can rarely find a village library or sufficient reading materials available to the public. Even in places with a few books or newspapers, it is not easy for many people to access them.
If we do not help people to find ways to practice and use their skills, then these skills will be lost. The hard work and funds that the community expended to develop literacy and numeracy skills will have been wasted.

Hence communities should provide continuing education programmes to prevent the loss of skills and develop existing skills further to prepare people to face future challenges.

Through continuing education, we can provide learning opportunities that are responsive to the needs and demands of individuals throughout life. Thus, continuing education (CE) is a broad concept that includes all the learning opportunities that all people want or need after completion of a literacy programme and primary education. Some countries in the Asia-Pacific region organize CE for those who have completed literacy programmes. Other programmes are organized for those who have completed primary education or its equivalent through non-formal education approaches. These people can gain new skills and upgrade their knowledge through these CE programmes. The significant characteristic of CE is its flexibility. People can participate in CE programmes at any time and place that is appropriate and convenient for them. Anyone in our community regardless of age, gender, race and caste can join in CE programmes.

Types of continuing education programmes

CE should offer more diversified programmes to cater for a wide range of needs on the part of specific population groups. We should make CE programmes more appropriate for our living conditions and economic life. In other words, CE programmes should be related more closely to economic, social and cultural development.

UNESCO, together with experts in CE from the Asia and Pacific region, developed a set of CE manuals, the APPEAL Training Materials for Continuing Education Personnel (ATLP-CE). The types of CE programmes featured in these manuals and their content were derived from the needs and experiences of the countries in the region, which have been using for more than a decade the approaches highlighted in the manuals.

There are six types of CE programmes described in the APPEAL Training Materials for Continuing Education Personnel:

- Post Literacy Programmes (PLPs)
- Equivalency Programmes (EPs)
- Quality of Life Improvement Programmes (QLIPs)
- Income-generating Programmes (IGPs)
- Individual Interest Programmes (IIPs)
- Future Oriented Programmes (FOPs)
Post Literacy Programmes (PLPs)

These programmes aim at maintaining and improving basic literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills, giving individuals sufficient general basic working skills, and enabling them to function effectively in their societies. In every village, we may come across people who have completed literacy courses and become neo-literates or semi-literates. We may also find some school dropouts. Both groups need to maintain and improve the skills they have acquired so that they do not regress into illiteracy.

The main objectives of PLPs are to:

- maintain literacy skills and prevent learners from relapsing into illiteracy by continuously practicing reading, writing and numeracy skills
- improve literacy skills by acquiring higher levels of literacy
- apply skills in daily life for the purpose of individual or community development, such as writing letters or for a village newspaper, reading newspapers or magazines, and calculating the expenditures for a household or for community activities.

The duration of a PLP course varies from country to country. A PLP can be provided for a period of six months, nine months or a year. The period depends on the needs, time, literacy skills and learning capacity of the learners in a community.

Equivalency Programmes (EPs)

These programmes are designed as alternative ways to gain a formal or vocational qualification. The EPs are usually structured in more flexible ways than those used in the formal school system.

In our community, there are school dropouts and literate youth and adults who want to continue their study to obtain educational and vocational certificates and diplomas equivalent to those awarded by formal schools. We can help them to undertake an EP through distance education or evening classes.

Some primary schools in our community or nearby organize evening equivalency classes for youth and adults who have completed primary education or its equivalent. EPs recognize the prior learning of the learners and their experiences (including life skills). Therefore, the duration of study for these equivalence classes is normally shorter than that in formal schools. For example, Ms. Meena completed her primary education more than ten years ago. After completing primary school, she started working. Later, she continued her study at the lower secondary level. Because of her previous learning and work experience, she only needed to attend a course for one and a half years to get a lower secondary education certificate equivalent to that awarded by formal schools. If Ms Meena wants, she can continue her study in formal schools. EP courses and their timeframe provide flexibility suited to the needs of learners.
The cases of Philippines and Korea in Chapter Three give us more ideas and detailed information on how these countries organize EPs from lower secondary education up to university through non-formal education and self-directed learning.

**Quality of Life Improvement Programmes (QLIPs)**

These programmes aim at equipping learners with essential knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to enable them to improve the quality of life as individuals and as members of a community. The quality of life refers to the level of well being of a community and the degree of satisfaction in meeting basic needs.

QLIPs focus on community development. There may be negative factors that affect the quality of people’s life in our community:

- lack of proper health and sanitation facilities,
- no clean water,
- poor quality parenting,
- absence of cultural activities,
- weak enforcement of the laws

To help people improve the quality of life in our community, QLIPs can offer several short training/orientation courses that address these problems. For example, there might be a two-to-three-month course on family planning and parenting, a two-week course on health and nutrition, or weekly sessions on environmental protection. Some countries integrate QLIPs into all curricula and activities of continuing education programmes.

**Income-Generating Programmes (IGPs)**

IGPs help learners to acquire or upgrade their vocational skills to enable them to apply in their daily lives, conduct income-generating activities. Such skills may help them to change their vocation, improve their current career prospects, or set up a small business in the community. IGPs can initiate income-generating activities such as sewing, radio repair, candle and soap making, fish farming, or gardening to help these people achieve their goals.

We should encourage unemployed people to join vocational training courses to gain new skills to start various income-generating activities in the community. With such skills, people will become more independent and flexible in how they earn money. For instance, they may decide to work at home.

To help learners to become self-employed, IGPs should focus on entrepreneurial skills, including how to conduct a market survey, plan a small business, and handle marketing and accounting. We can invite local wisdom or experts from schools or technical colleges to conduct training courses in our community. We may organize study visits to observe successful IGP from other villages. We can also arrange counseling programmes to advise learners of the ways and means of setting up small-scale businesses and obtaining credit and loan such as saving scheme and micro-credit programmes after they complete the courses.
Individual Interest Promotion Programmes (IIPs)

This type of programme provides opportunities for individuals to learn about and appreciate their social, cultural, spiritual, health, physical and artistic interests.

The aim is to promote leisure activities, life improvement and personal development. The programme activities can be categorized into various types: hobbies, cultural activities, self-reliance, sports and activities for personal development. To be more specific, these activities may include reading and writing poetry, painting, making speeches, studying local law, participating in politics (organizing local elections), using computers, taking photographs, traditional dance, swimming, religious meditation, or flower arrangement. Learners can choose the activities that they are interested in.

Future Oriented Programmes (FOPs)

Through these programmes, we provide members of our community with opportunities to acquire new skills, knowledge and techniques. With these, they are more able to adapt themselves and their organizations to ongoing social and technological change. An important part of planning FOPs is to have an agreed vision of what the future should be like. The purpose of the programme would then be to prepare learners for that future. For example, with the widespread use of computer technology, typewriters will gradually disappear from public use. Hence we need to organize computer courses for typists so that they may become competent computer operators. Of course, the development of computer skills is not limited just to typists or managers, but should be an option for others in the community as well. In some countries, the development of this technology is slow, while in others it is happening very rapidly.

The ultimate goal of all six types of CE programme is to upgrade the standard of living and improve the quality of life of individuals, families and communities.

If we look at the following diagram, we can see that learners can select the type of CE activities that they want according to their needs. They can participate in all six types of CE programmes at any time throughout their lives as long as these programmes are available. For example, a person may want to participate in income-generating programmes (IGPs) to improve his or her standard of living; then he or she may choose to participate in individual-interest programmes (IIPs) for relaxation and enjoyment. The diagram shows that the route to continuing education is a road of lifelong learning.
Where does continuing education take place?

Continuing education programmes can be organized in any place convenient for learners, whether a temple, mosque, or community meeting hall. However, in many communities, the Community Learning Centre is the place where people find various learning opportunities in the community. In different countries, we can find examples of this type of community-based institution under different names, such as the Community Learning Centre, Community Education Centre, Village Library or Village Development Centre. Here, let us call all these institutions Community Learning Centres (CLCs).

CLCs play key roles as community focal points for planning and managing CE programmes. CLCs should establish links with other nearby CLCs and potential government and non-government agencies such as district agriculture centres, public health centres, community development groups or foundations that can provide support and assistance.
for running CE programmes. For effective management and wider community involvement, CLCs should be set up and managed by community people through a committee representing the members of the community. The local people should be involved in all activities of CLCs. A CLC will function best and its activities will be sustainable if people in the community fully participate in all activities and obtain a sense of ownership.

All six types of CE programmes can be conducted at CLCs. In addition, CLCs can be the settings for community development activities, cultural programmes, sports and recreation. A CLC also serves as an information centre or library providing not only reading materials but also information about the community.

Some of the cases from Bangladesh, India and Indonesia presented in Chapter Three will give us ideas on how to set up and operate a CLC.

Chapter Three and Part II of this handbook will provide us with more information about various kinds of CE programmes that have been conducted in different countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The cases may give us some ideas in choosing our own programmes. However, if we are interested in building up our knowledge further on different types of CE programmes and their implementation, we can also consult the eight volumes of APPEAL Training Materials for Continuing Education Personnel (ATLP-CE) published by UNESCO.