

## RURAL WOMEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

By

Dr. Mussaret Anwar Sheikh\*

### **Abstract**

*Rural women lag behind in all aspects of their lives as compared to their counterparts in urban areas as well as the men in Pakistan. The rural women are deprived of education and economic opportunity because of cultural conservatism and patriarchal attitudes of the society. There is a dire need to educate rural population in general, but the rural women in particular so as to improve the quality of life of the families and the nation, as a whole.*

*Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), being the only distance education institution in the country, has performed tremendous task of educating rural population, especially rural women. It has offered course from literacy to post graduate level and teacher education to cater for the needs of different segments of population. The AIOU has implemented innovative programmes in the field of non-formal education for the educational and economic up lift of rural women.*

*The government of Pakistan has also been trying to implement projects and programmes for the social and economic uplift of rural women since the independence of the country in 1947. The Ministry of Education, Provincial education departments, agricultural institutions and universities are involved in education and agriculture extension work in the country.*

*Non-government organizations (NGOs) and many social work organizations are also actively involved in making the rural population skilled and literate. However, there is still need of a close collaboration among all stakeholders (public, private, NGOs and community). A close collaboration at regional level to benefit from each other's experience can help to educate women and can foster personal, social and economic empowerment of rural women.*

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\* The writer served as Director of Institute of Mass Education, AIOU, presently working as Consultant in Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi.

### **Introduction: Distance in Pakistan**

Allama Iqbal Open University was established in 1974 under an act of Parliament. When established, it was the second university of its kind in the world first being established in UK in the late sixties. Now, more than 65 universities have been established in the world on the basis of distance education. Even formal universities are introducing degree programmes on the basis of non-formal education.

In Pakistan the AIOU has successfully used a distance education model. It has established multi-media, multi level and multi method teaching system. Within a modest period the university has been able to offer courses from literacy to Ph.D. level. The AIOU programmes are offered throughout Pakistan and even in some Middle Eastern countries. The programmes offer a wide choice of courses at a variety of levels as well as for professional people.

Right from the beginning the AIOU has focused on basic and functional education for serving the masses, who do not have the access to education. This includes working people, housewives, out of school youth and rural communities, especially women and girl child. Pakistan is an agricultural country and almost 70% of its population lives in rural areas where quality of life is very low as compared to urban areas. The literacy rate in rural areas is 27.5% and it is even much lower for women. Health facilities are inadequate and employment and income generation opportunities are limited (Mahmood & Malik, 2001). The rural women are the most affected due to the low level of economic and social services available to rural population of the country. Although women contribute a large part of the farm labour and agriculture production but their contribution is not recognized. The rural women are deprived of education because of the cultural conservatism and patriarchal attitude of society. There is an urgent need to educate rural communities and particularly women for the social and economic development of the country.

The AIOU has distinguished itself in promoting female education in rural areas. It has undertaken field research and has launched many projects in all the four provinces of Pakistan to develop practical approaches for promoting mass education among females of rural areas. The AIOU for various levels of female education, has been reaching this focused population through its Institute of Mass Education, whose objectives are as follows:

- To develop need based course materials along with media support and allied materials for learners and instructors/ facilitators.

- To train non-formal instructors/facilitators in pre and in-service teachers training.
- To conduct research studies based on the feedback to improve upon the developed materials.
- To develop a viable strategy for marketing the materials and services of the available expertise.

## **AIOU's Earliest Initiatives on Rural Women and Girls**

### **Basic Functional Education Programme (BFEP)**

BFEP evolved out of AIOU's first research project called Functional Education Project for Rural Areas (FEFRA) whose main objective was to develop a workable strategy for the education of rural masses. After three years study of Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP Study) of the area, an innovative tested strategy was developed to pass on information effectively through non-broadcast media comprising of flip charts, audio cassettes and handouts and group discussion. In this approach there is no face-to-face instruction by trained teachers. The courses are centrally prepared in the university campus and presented to groups of 15-20 learners in their villages using simple and low cost media. Within each learning group, one of its member acts as a group leader, whose tasks include convening study meetings and presenting course material. IME team trains the group leaders. The group leader's work is monitored/supervised by a Field Worker from IME field base. One group leader has 20 learners; one Assistant Supervisor looks after 6 groups. One field worker monitors five Assistant supervisors and thus in this way the outreach of one Field Worker covers 600 learners. The BFEP course cycles are run according to the cropping pattern of the villages. The group leaders role is as that of the part time tutors in the DE system.

The field staff monitors and supervises the group sessions conducted by locally recruited persons. Additionally, they have to hold frequent motivational meetings and closely supervise the running of course cycle. The courses so far developed are:

1. Livestock Management
2. Agriculture Credit
3. Child Care-I
4. Child Care-II
5. Poultry Farming (for northern areas)
6. Livestock Diseases (for northern areas)
7. Better Yields (for Barrani Areas)

8. Poultry Keeping
9. Electricity in the Village
10. Women's Health
11. Family Health
12. Sanitation
13. Population Education
14. Better Yields (for irrigated areas)

The BFEP courses learning strategy has earned IME international recognition by getting two awards of UNESCO NOMA Award and RAJA ROY SINGH Award. The BFEP course material is purchased by NGO's for use with their groups in rural areas.

### **Integrated Functional Literacy Programme (IFLP)**

IFLP was an endeavor to facilitate the female learners in educating them and uplifting their social standard of life. This was a comprehensive scheme for educating the out of school and dropped out girls. Desirous and not much aged housewives of the area were also included in the programme. The specific objectives were:

1. Making arrangements for the basic education of about 600 girls in a period of three years.
2. Providing skills training to enroll females in such skills as embroidery, sewing, cutting, cooking, knitting, jamae, pickles making and juices or as may be proposed by local population.

The learning package consisted of 4 literacy primers, followed by primary books of level III through V spread over 18 months. A certificate is awarded at the end of level V exam.

### **Women Basic Education Programme (WBEP)**

The existing literacy and primary education programmes have been reformulated to bring them into the mainstream of the university framework through WBEP. The scheme for WBEP is aimed at the development of appropriate learning materials and methodologies that will integrate the literacy materials and methodologies and subject based primary level materials. The focus of these materials is on the empowerment of women for their personal, social, economic and political self-reliance. The learning materials will be gender sensitive and address the learners as adults, include information and functional knowledge, which will help them in their daily lives by building upon women's

lives, their life experiences, their practices, and their already existing knowledge. The target group is 10+. The objectives of the WBEP are as follows:

- To develop gender sensitive learning materials.
- To design learning materials which will be according to the needs of the rural women.
- To develop learning materials appropriate for the rural situations.
- To develop a mechanism of field-testing the learning materials including media support.
- To develop and put into practice a system for pre- and in-service training of local non-formal education teachers.
- To develop a system for learning achievement assessment.
- To develop and field test a methodology for training of field staff of NGO's and AIOU.
- To develop a system for monitoring and supervision.
- To develop a methodology for ensuring community/learners participation and ownership in cooperation with NGO's and community based organizations (CBO's).
- To develop a marketing strategy of WBEP learning materials and related training package.

The WBEP scheme of studies has been approved by the Academic Council recently. Material development will start in a workshop situation from December 2001 onwards. It is of three and half years spread over six levels as given in the table below:

<b>Term</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Duration</b>
I	Motivational Phase with BFEP course at pre literacy levels	2 months
II	Literacy level-I	4 months
III	Literacy level-II	8 months
IV	Basic level-III	8 months
V	Basic level-IV	8 months
VI	Basic level-V	8 months

#### **Women Middle Education Programme (WMEP)**

WMEP a missing ladder in the educational programmes of IME approved by the Academic Council in 1999 is now ready for launching of the Foundation course from December 2001 onwards at 20 centres. Ten centres will be at the Field Base Kharian and 10 at Bara Kou, where IFLP learners of AIOU are

available as a feeder to WMEP. It is to serve 12 + rural women through a two and half year programme spread over three terms of eight months each. The foundation course of three months is a pre-requisite so as to have a uniform group. The objectives are the same as the WBEP except that the age level requirements are to be catered. With the launching of the Foundation Course, AIOU will have to its credit the first post primary level programme through open learning for the un-reached population of Pakistan. The skill-oriented courses development process of WMEP will be according to the needs and resources of the area. The skill-oriented courses will be strengthened by Strategic Alliance of AIOU with the First Women Bank (FWBL).

### **Women Secondary Education Programme (WSEP)**

Women's Secondary Education Programme has been offered since 1985 started under a directive of the President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan for "**Purda-observing families**" as well as housewives and women living in villages, who have little access to the formal education system because of socio-economic constraints. The secondary education programme education of women is especially very important for the development of the country because educated women tend to marry late and have fewer children. The Secondary education gives women access to a number of qualified jobs. The major objectives of the programme was to offer viable, relevant, functional and skill oriented courses for women especially rural women which are not only related to their needs but also helps them to become economically active and independent. The programme offers compulsory core courses in addition to the following skill oriented courses:

- Garment making
- Applied food and nutrition
- Selling home made products
- Home and farm operation management
- Poultry farming
- Family health and care
- First aid
- Home electrical appliances repair and maintenance

Majority of the students of secondary education programme are rural women. The programme has tremendous social and economic impact on the lives of women who have completed their certificate or those who joined the programme. Since 1999 the programme is being offered to male citizens. In collaboration with British Council and World Bank, the AIOU is offering Secondary Education programme since 2000 to educate 500 girls in two hard to reach districts of Gilgit in the northern area.

### **Strategic Alliance among First Women Bank Limited (FWBL) and AIOU**

FWBL and AIOU have committed to provide education land banking support to micro and small entrepreneurs particularly those operated by women. Both the institutions decided to work according to their respective roles and competencies to encourage and promote self-employment for women both rural and urban by designing tailored credit products and entrepreneur development programmes. The alliance at AIOU is to be carried out by IME with the responsibilities shared as follows:

<b>AIOU</b>	<b>FWBL</b>
Based on the selection criterion, IME will short list the areas where micro credit programme could be launched	Finalize the areas where micro credit programme can be launched in collaboration with AIOU
Conduct area/village profile survey, local economic base survey, impact study survey, and any other surveys required from time to time for successful launching and maintaining Micro credit operations.	Evaluate surveys conducted by IME and report results.
Organize community gathering meeting and create awareness of FWBL's micro credit programme	Attend from time to time community gathering meetings to promote FWBL Micro credit programme
Visit potential borrowers and fill relevant documents	Evaluate credit application and related documents and inform outcomes.
Provide transport and field workers once/twice per week to assist FWBL in recovery efforts.	Visit once/twice a week the respective areas and collect dues.
Provide transport facilities to FWBL staff members for field visits.	Provide necessary training to IME staff on credit programmes
Prepare and deliver skill development courses	Evaluate performance of the programme and propose improvements

A joint committee, three members from each institution, has been formed and empowered to formulate and implement operational mechanism. Furthermore both the institutions are to encourage and promote self-employment opportunities particularly for women by providing:

- a) Access to credit
- b) Skill development courses

- c) Marketing support by jointly organizing fairs, exhibitions, special events, and utilizing display facilities of FWBL business centres.
- d) Conduct seminars, workshops, group discussions, and advocacy to address problems faced by micro small entrepreneurs in those areas.

The alliance is in line with the Beijing +5 issues related to *women and economy, women and poverty, women and illiteracy, women education and training*. Pakistan is a signatory to all these. Out of the six goals of Education for All (EFA) Dakar Declaration, two goals highlight these.

### **Short Term Educational Programmes (STEP's) and Community Education Group**

STEP's is novel study plan, which can be taken at any time of the year at the convenience of the learners and at their own pace. STEP's 99 courses serve a wide range of interest and fall under six groups of management sciences, social sciences, hotel services and management, community education, secondary media tuition and computer courses. Out of the 16 courses of community education group the courses useful for rural women are childcare, food and nutrition, population welfare, poultry farming, selling of home made products, garment making I and II, family health and care, childcare, first aid. The other STEPS agriculture related courses are bee keeping, fish farming, growing mushroom, kitchen gardening, seri-culture and tree plantation.

### **UNESCO Women Empowerment and Poverty Reduction Project**

IME has signed an agreement with UNESCO on a project for women empowerment and poverty reduction whereby IME will run at 10 centres with the existing BFEP courses in the rural areas of NWFP province. In addition 4 readers, two videos and 2 audio cassettes will be developed on food preservation, kitchen gardening, family health and Women rights. The material development is in process.

### **Campaigning for Adult Literacy Project 2001-2003**

AIOU in collaboration with the Literacy Cell of the Ministry of Education has submitted a project proposal for a national campaign for the eradication of literacy among adults both men and women of age group 15-40. It is a two-year campaign aimed at making 13.5 million literate and raising the literacy rate to 60%. The primary responsibility of implementing this campaign will rest in the proposed District Governments under the supervision of the provincial governments. The literacy focus is on providing basic literacy skills with media



support through 90,000 literacy centres with 60,000 as face-to-face Literacy Centres (FFLC) and 30,000 Community Viewing Literacy Centres (CVLC). The learning package will have both print and media component. The Print material for the FFLC's will be AIOU's four literacy primers and functional education radio programmes. The TV programmes in the CVLC will have tele-lessons in two parts. Part I initially will be AIOU functional education programmes. PTV and AIOU will prepare additional TV programmes focusing on adult literacy. Part II is based on TV lessons of PTV/Pakistan Literacy Commission (PLC) called Nia Din (New Day). The literacy personnel training will be done by AIOU at three levels for master trainers, teachers and supervisors. AIOU will have the Project Implementing Unit (PIU) for undertaking the following responsibilities":

- Production of learning packages for learners, teachers, master trainers.
- Production of media programmes both radio/audio, TV/video
- Training of teachers, master trainers and supervisors
- Launching of the project in those districts, which come under AIOU regional network and outreach system
- Contributing as one of the stakeholders in the electronic and print motivation campaign

### **AIOU's Initiatives at Post Graduate Level**

#### **M.Sc. Women Studies Course on Economic Contribution of Rural Women**

The Department of Women Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences is offering a postgraduate degree, diploma, or certificates of Women Studies. The Women Studies programme was developed to emphasize women's status, their approach to life situation and their contribution to national development thoughts and activities. Out of the 11 courses of women studies one is on economic contribution of rural women. It is a full credit ambitious course attempting to highlight the account of rural women's toil within the limitations of the available research data on the subject. The rural women are not visible when it comes to giving credit for the contribution made by women farmers in agricultural production, which is the main stay of Pakistan's economy. The rural women according to 1990 Agriculture Survey carry out more than 50% of farming work but it is shown in survey reports as minimal.

### **Women Development Education Project of UNESCO**

Teacher Education Department of the Faculty of Education is developing a half credit course with the main objectives as follows:

- Develop better understanding of the conceptual and methodological aspects of women's development for their socio-economic uplift.
- To understand the role of women in the development of the society.
- Analyze the present position and trends of female literacy in Pakistan
- Inculcate the behavior and skills to conduct research on gender issues.
- Motivate the teachers to play their role for women's development in the society and to measure, evaluate and monitor the teacher's role on women's development after successfully completing the course.
- Develop better understanding about various training methodologies and their implications in the field of development of women in Pakistan.

The course focuses on aspects as status of women in the present world, female literacy in Pakistan, non-formal education for women, gender roles and responsibilities, gender issues. Role of women in national development (Agriculture will be one of the aspects). The course will be offered to prospective teachers, managers of NGO's working in the field of women development in the country. About 5000-10000 students of AIOU are expected to take this course every year for the next 10 years.

### **Government Initiatives for Rural Women Development**

The initiatives taken by the government for the rural women are mostly in the form of face-to-face non-formal education system because the women at literacy and basic level can not cope with the self-study requirement of distance learning. Following are some of the examples of government initiatives in the field of non-formal education:

#### **Pakistan Literacy Commission's Women Community Schools Participatory Project**

Women community schools participatory project has been designed for rural women between the age group of 14-24 years. The project's main aim is functional literacy with skill training, micro credit and micro enterprise

development in order to improve the quality of life of rural women in Pakistan. The project is going to be implemented in collaboration by public, private sector and civic society. The Pakistan Literacy Commission is responsible for policymaking, social marketing, human resource development, monitoring and evaluation and life-oriented integrated curriculum, while provincial governments are responsible the execution of the project. Agriculture Development Bank of Pakistan (ADBP), First Women Bank Ltd. (FWBL) and Small Business Finance Corporation (SBFC) are going to set up community schools with the help and participation of local community (Comprehensive Literacy and Poverty reduction Programmes, 2000).

#### **The University of Arid Agriculture, Rawalpindi**

The University has been actively involved in the social and economic uplift of rural women by providing education in the field of agriculture and food processing. The university has initiated a project for rural women, which aims at establishing vocational centres with training facilities for women in different income generating skills. This project also aims at training o women in marketing skills and aims to provide short-terms loans for business.

#### **Economic Empowerment Programme**

The national social policy provides for primary education, skill training, basic health and micro credit for eradication of poverty among rural women in the country (National Social Development Policy, 1998). In accordance with the Social Policy of the government a Non-formal education programmes for rural women of 15-25 age group which would combine literacy skills with health, hygiene, population education, environment, productive and marketable skills as well as access to micro credit and enterprise education has been initiated in collaboration with Asian Development Bank (ADB) which will cater for the needs of 150,000 women of this age group in Punjab and Baluchistan (EFA Assessment, 2000).

In addition to this, export trade houses have been established at Lahore and Islamabad for women entrepreneurs, micro credit of Rs.14.4 million has been made available for women through First Women Bank during 1997-98. The First Women Bank Ltd. also provides funding for ongoing women's development projects in the country (EFA Assessment, 2000).

#### **Information and Communication Technology for Women (ICT) for Women**

Radio and television are the main source of information for rural women in Pakistan therefore; these media are extensively used for education and social awareness of rural women. Numerous broadcasts are made to increase awareness

on childcare, health and sanitation, women's rights, community development, agriculture practices, vocational training and communication (EFA Assessment, 2000). In addition, educational broadcasts of AIOU play an important role in the education of rural women.

### **Women Development Division**

Women's Division has been actively involved in implementing projects for women development since its establishment. The main objectives of the organization are to ensure women's interests and needs adequately represented in public policy formation; to undertake special projects for women identifying gaps in relevant sectors; and to promote research on conditions and problems of women. Women's Division has implemented projects for rural women's development in the following areas:

- Agro-based skill training and cooperatives
- Education of Women through distance education
- Social welfare and physical facilities for women
- Community development
- Industries
- Health

### **Private Section Initiatives for Rural Women Development**

#### **Agha Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP)**

Agha Khan Rural Support Programme was initiated in Northern Areas of Pakistan in 1982. The basic objective of the programme has been to increase the capacity of local population to become involved in their own development, so that rural household can improve their income and welfare in a sustainable and equitable manner. In northern areas due to specific cultural and social condition women bear the most of the burden of house and farm work, therefore recognizing the cultural, social and religious factors influencing women's participation in development, AKRSP has conducted extensive field research to ensure that the programmes are related to women's need and concerns. AKRSP has followed a two-tier strategy for women's development in Northern areas. Firstly, strategies designed for broad based economic and social development of the community through empowering household ... organizing women specific activities and programmes. Secondly, organizing women in the form of local women's organizations. Women's Organization (SOs) provide plat forms for women to initiate and implement economic and social development programmes. AKRSP's a most important achievement is the broader sensitization and heightened awareness among women of their own potential to create the

necessary conditions to progress and prosper in their own right. AKRSP is engaged in capacity building of women in the following manner:

- Mobilizing and organizing women in Women's Organizations
- Social Capital development through micro credit
- Encouraging traditional handicraft
- Improving health of mother and child
- Providing literacy/Education
- Income generation through indigenous skills
- Promoting micro enterprises
- Developing leadership among women

#### **Malik Maula Bakhsh Memorial Trust (MMBMT)**

MMBMT has 300 non-formal primary schools for girls in District Mianwali, which are managed and run by the community without donor support. MMBMT has signed an MoU with the University of Arid Agriculture Rawalpindi (UAAR) for 10 years for university level research in district Mianwali focused on rural women and girl child through their school network. In relation to this MoU the MMBMIT has also signed an MOU with Agriculture University of Bebei, China (AUH) enabling the Chinese agriculture experts to have direct access to the rural women of District Mianwali for technology transfer of agriculture technology with the help of UAAR. Both UAAR Pakistan and AUH China with the assistance from MMBM will prepare demonstration plots at different sites enabling the farmer direct access to latest agriculture methods in the form of implements, seeds and farm management techniques.

President of AUH China along with the four researchers visited the sites in Mianwali along with the UAAR RESEARCHES AND Vice Chancellor had number of visits to the sites, which were coordinated by MMBMT. The process of actual implementation of these MoU's will start by the end of year 2001.

Another initiative by MMBMIT is Poultry Farming project for rural girls. The girls are required to take admission in a school and they are given a Domestic Poultry Unit (DPU), which contains five hens and one rooster. The breed given to girls can lay 150 to 200 eggs per hen per year.

These hens can generate Rs.1500 per year. After utilizing the amount as under, the remaining money is utilized for any shortfall and nutrition of girls.

- Rs.300/- for school uniform
- Rs.240/- for school fee (Rs.20/- per month).
- Rs.365-400/- for textbooks and copies
- Rs.150/- for buying next DPU

MMBMT has proposed another Integrated Rural Development Project for *Nomadic Rural Community in Interior Sindh*. The Pilot project for 1000 households has been launched on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2001. Survey Prior to launching of actual programme was required. MMBMIT Career Advancement Programme (CAP) also aims at unemployed youth both male and females literate and illiterate residing in the rural areas of Pakistan. The programme is in the final stages of launching. The main features of the programme are career-counseling, assessment of economic background, trends and aptitude of the individual, educational needs keeping in view the aptitude, trends and jobs available, follow-up for next 3 years.

### **Bunyad**

UNESCO Islamabad assisted BUNYAD, an NGO in Punjab in formulating a plan for the establishment of the Institute for Community Education (ICE) which is being launched with multi donar support. The objectives of ICE directly related to rural women and distance education are reproduced here:

- Empower disadvantaged sectors, such as the girl child, working street children, rural women illiterates and the poor with literacy and life skills.
- Sensitize policy makers for rural development work at the grassroots; and
- Organize field-base training course in NFE, Open school system and distance learning.

ICE will be offering practical courses, both long term and short term for the disadvantaged groups such as girls and rural women, street children, illiterates and the poor. ICE is the umbrella activity of BUNYAD and all its Basic Education Research Training Initiatives. BUNYAD is also involved in other projects like Literacy Watch and Mobilization Campaign for Literacy, Incentive schemes for girl's education.

### **UNESCO**

UNESCO Islamabad has helped in the government sector, NGO's and the AIOU with the different programmes aimed at the empowerment of rural women through literacy, income generation activities, and material development. It also brought out four posters depicting the importance of literacy and education for girls and women with the messages of United National Secretary General and the Director General UNESCO, underlying the need for basic education, education for girls and women, for sustainable social development.

### **Lessons Learnt**

Distance education/non-formal education system is an effective mode of educating rural women. AIOU's experience of educating rural women through distance education up to secondary level has been very successful, however, educating rural women at lower levels needs more face to face contact, therefore, AIOU has evolved different strategies of BFEP for non-formal education system to reach the women in rural areas.

Educating women in rural areas is a huge task, which requires stronger infrastructure at regional and grass root level for effective implementation of its programmes. It needs extra services to motivate, enroll, guide and administer the growing number of students and learner. The strengthening of the regional campus's and office with the additional posts of a female student counselor and Deputy Director Academics has provided relief to the workload of the Regional Directors.

At national level there is a need to coordinate all efforts in the field of education of rural women so that the resources are not wasted and also to avoid duplication of efforts. Scattered and poorly implemented efforts cannot help solve the huge problem of illiteracy in the country. Economic activities and skill training planned for women should take into account. The indigenous skills and products of women so that with the introduction of new technologies, rural women are not deprived of their skills and income.

### **Recommendations**

- There should be a close collaboration between educational institutions and agricultural research institutions so that new research in the field of agriculture can be made available to the rural community. Both types of institutions should join hands to conceive and implement integrated projects to impart education, skills and information to rural women so that they can become active participants in national development.
- Exchange of information, expertise, agriculture technology and skills in order to enhance training and income opportunities for rural women.
- Collaboration among universities and local organization on the pattern of UAAR, AUH and MMBMT, the ultimate beneficiaries will be rural women.
- University Linkage programmes between AIOU and Agriculture universities be initiated as these will lead to spin off new

programmes and closer collaboration of the institutions for the uplift of the rural community especially women.

- ICE and AIOU collaborate for sharing technical and expert support services with other government/private sector for community and sustainable development focused on the improvement of quality of life of the rural women and others living in marginalized state.
- For better articulation between general and vocational education the technical and vocational training (TVET) existing programmes be analyzed to see how its interface and effective linkages with the world of work may be forged.
- New and innovative experiences of AIOU be used as models for meeting the targets set in the national plan of action for distance education and EFA.
- A continuous updating and application and integration of the non-formal mode of education with the general education system of education be an ongoing process for extensive outreach and regional network of the DE institutions.
- TV/Videos of the Agriculture Department of AIOU and IME on subjects which are of a common nature is used with dubbing.
- Exchange of information and course materials of distance education programmes in the region so that these can be culturally adapted and implemented by the interested countries.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Distance education has proved to be a very effective mode of education for the people who do not have access to education through formal education system throughout the world. In Pakistan, distance education has been successfully used to educate rural women and AIOU has used innovative methods of non-formal education system for this purpose. Partnerships in DE both with in country and other countries with slight modifications in accordance with their culture and social requirement can benefit from the experience of AIOU.



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