

## 2001 ACCU-APPEAL Joint Planning Meeting on Regional NFE Programmes in Asia and the Pacific

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**Country Report**

## India

## NFE Innovations

Prepared by Mr. Jagan Mathews

Joint Secretary (Adult Education)

Director-General

National Literacy Mission

Department of Elementary Education &amp; Literacy

Ministry of Human Resource Development

**Innovations in Adult Literacy Programmes in India**

The last decade of the second millennium was eventful in India for a variety of reasons. Not least among them was the increased attention given to meeting the goal of Education for All by the year 2000. While all the goals may not have been met completely, the latest decennial Census of India 2001 does reflect the substantial impact of the efforts of the last decade. According to the provisional tables already released, several states have shown remarkable progress in literacy achievement. The comparable literacy rates show that for some of the States that were well below the national average in 1991 and in 2001 have narrowed the gap considerably.

India and selected States	Literacy Rate in 1991	Literacy Rate in 2001
<b>India</b>	<b>52.20</b>	<b>65.49</b>
Rajasthan	38.55	61.03
Bihar	37.49	47.53
Uttar Pradesh	40.71	57.36
Jharkhand	41.39	54.13
Chhatisgarh	42.91	65.18
Madhya Pradesh	44.67	64.11
Andhra Pradesh	44.09	61.11

With the exception of Bihar, and to some extent Jharkhand, the other states have narrowed the difference considerably registering significant increases in literacy. A closer scrutiny of some very low female literacy districts is equally revealing. A sample of districts from Rajasthan is given below.

Name of District	Female Literacy Rate 1991	Female Literacy Rate 2001
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Churu	17.32	53.87
Karauli	13.01	45.44
Dausa	14.15	43.15
Barmer	7.68	43.91
Dholpur	15.25	42.36

A positive climate has been successfully created in the country, especially in the low literacy States and weak-performing districts, for basic education. People have responded in vast numbers to the drive for Universalization of Primary Education (UPE), Nonformal Education (NFE) for out of school children and National Literacy Mission for adult literacy initiated by the government as its three-pronged strategy to address the EFA challenge.

### **Dakar Declaration and After**

These figures from the Census of India 2000 encourages the belief that the national commitments made in the declaration in Dakar in April 2000 and the achievement of the six goals is definitely possible. The two national programmes to meet these objectives are the National Programme for Universal Elementary Education (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan) and the expansion of the community-based literacy, post-literacy and continuing education programme of the National Literacy Mission (NLM). NLM has set itself the objective of attaining a sustainable 75% literacy by 2005 the target is 15-35 age group. This has already been achieved for males but the efforts to promote female literacy have to be strengthened further. The programme of NLM also provides for equitable access to basic and continuing education for adults.

Unlike the literacy campaigns of the last decade with its effective social mobilisation for literacy, the Continuing Education Programme of NLM is a recent effort to give permanence to the learning environment for adults by establishing Continuing Education Centres (CEC) for a population cover of 2000-2500 persons. The basic design of the CE programme envisages a shift of responsibility for management to the community and the initial financial support from Government of India will gradually be taken over by the States, Panchayati Raj Institutions and/or the village community. By its very nature the CE programme cannot be uniform and will be influenced by the local situation.

Though the CE programme is still new there are some interesting initiatives that are taking place in some of the States and particular districts that may be worthwhile to share with a larger audience. The States of Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh have taken an innovative approach to meeting the challenge of EFA. The results from the Census show that these initiatives have been fruitful. The approach and experiences from these two States are presented below as an indication of the kind of direction that the CE programme may be taking in the future.

### **Learning/ Study and Progress Committees in MP**

Madhya Pradesh started with the Total Literacy Campaigns (TLC) in the early 90s

between 1993-96 TLCs expanded to cover 39 districts. Subsequently 29 Post Literacy programmes were sanctioned and 2 CE projects were sanctioned till 1999.

In the meantime, the State Government had initiated a Lok Sampark Abhiyan (LSA), a public contact drive in 1997 to do a state-wide household survey to enumerate children who were out of school under a time-bound programme for UPE/UEE. The identification of vast numbers of out of school children especially in small and remote habitations lead to the formulation of the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS). MP Government agreed to respond to any demand from a community residing in a habitation with no primary school within 1 km with financial support for a schooling facility –EGS centre/ school – provided there were at least 15 children who were not going to school and the community could identify a person with minimum educational qualifications to teach the children. This initiative of the State Government has been a resounding success affecting enrolment and dropout rates significantly.

Learning from this experience the State Government decided to apply the same principle of responding to demand in the case of adult literacy with the intention of ‘mopping up’ the non-enrolled adults into the literacy programme and taking it further into the CE mode. The first task was to identify the non-literates, which was available from the household survey through LSA, and create the Padhna Badhna Samities. The literacy volunteer who made them literate would receive a ‘Gurudakshina’ (honorarium) of Rs100 per person made literate upon certification by the community. The State Government provided this amount along with the primers and other support materials and training opportunities. The Padhna Badhna Andolan (PBA) ran for one year (October 1999 to October 2000) and a 100% learner evaluation was conducted across the State between 7 and 9 December 2000. The response from the people was overwhelming. Large numbers came forward to participate in the programme and the volunteers also had the incentive to complete the teaching assignment. A further incentive for the Padhna Badhna Samities was the opportunity to transform themselves into self-help groups after successful completion of the literacy endeavour. The achievements of the PBA in summarised below:

Number of PB Samities formed	217,000
Target of verified non-literates	5,183,000
Persons qualified in final evaluation (completed all three Primers)	2,985,000
Persons still at Primer III	257,000
Persons at Primer II	1,941,000

This movement for adult literacy has been in tandem with the effort of the State Government to achieve UEE objectives and ensuring that every child is in a formal school or has access to alternative schooling. The PBA is now converting the PBS as self-help groups, mainly of women, responsible for saving and preparation of resource planning for CE based on their micro-level needs. So far 42,724 such self-help groups (80% women SHG) have been formed with a collective saving of Rs 10,500,000.

The broad strategy for the CE plan has two components – strengthening and sustaining

literacy skills, and, facilitating an economic development agenda for the PBS. Sustaining literacy is being done through the introduction of bridge primers including one for development awareness as well as a library movement, which has been initiated for the EGS schools already. The strategy for economic development will include forging links with existing and appropriate institutions for necessary training on livelihoods, bank credit and government programmes that impact on poverty alleviation and natural resource management. In short, the PBS spearheads the formation SHG, which becomes the focal point for educational and development initiatives. Considering that most of these SHGs are women's groups, it is expected that women will have a greater role in taking decision on development issues and become active participants in Panchayati Raj Initiatives.

### **Guntur and West Godavari Districts in Andhra Pradesh**

Unlike the MP situations, self-help groups engaged in savings is widespread in Andhra Pradesh. In Guntur district there were already 24,495 self-help groups and as an innovative measure the drive was to make the non-literate members of these groups reach a minimum level of literacy through a short duration (three months) campaign from 2 October and 31 December 2000. The State has used a lightly different strategy for literacy than what had been the NLM norm. These campaigns focused on reading skills first and then proceeded to writing. In Guntur 250,000 non-literate members of the SHGs were identified and the co-ordinators of the SHGs were given the responsibility to ensure that these members regularly participated in the literacy drive and became literate by the end of the campaign. Like the literacy campaigns elsewhere, intensive monitoring and support from the district administration contributed to the success. The local community was encouraged to contribute for the lighting and seating arrangements for the literacy classes and also purchase the teaching and learning materials. This community contribution became the inner strength of the programme and led to its successful completion.

The administration, in co-operation with banks and other development agencies, linked availability of loans and other development funds with the SHG members becoming literate. For instance, 2,000 SHGs were sanctioned an amount of Rs 10,000 for each member and these amounts were kept in a fixed deposit for 91 days (literacy drive period) with the same bank of the particular SHG and were released to the members on their becoming literate. The direct financial incentive combined with the desire to learn and spirit of volunteerism together made this effort successful. Now, the SHGs are poised to take greater responsibility in resource planning and participate more actively in village development.

West Godavari is a study in contrast in some ways though the participation of the community (neo-literate groups) was crucial in both cases. In West Godavari the CE programme evolved after the successful completion of the TLC and PL phase of the campaign. The starting point was the formation of associations (Akshar Sangams) of neo-literate persons who pay a subscription of Rs10 per annum for membership and each such association seeking to establish a Continuing Education Centre (CEC) would require having 250 members. In addition, the community was expected to collect a

corpus of Rs10, 000 through voluntary donations as a pre-requisite for the support from the ZSS. The management of the CEC would then be the association's responsibility and they could run their own programmes for seven days in the month apart from undertaking the programmes stipulated by the ZSS for three weeks. A formal Memorandum of Understanding was executed between the ZSS and the individual Akshar Sangams.

In order to launch the programme and get the neo-literate community to accept the idea, the ZSS in West Godavari held orientation programmes for all officials, elected representatives and the literacy volunteers and supervisors from the TLC period. Subsequently a systematic environment building campaign was taken up covering every village with cultural programmes, posters, handbills, rallies and village meetings. As a result the concept of CE as a people's programme, implemented by the Akshar Sangams with government help, became widely known and accepted by the people. The enthusiasm of the neo-literates went beyond the expectations of the ZSS officials. In many villages the number of members was over 600 with each of them contributing Rs10 for annual membership. West Godavari collected Rs2,186,450 as membership fees (218,645 members) and another Rs 6,022,000 as contributions to the Corpus Fund.

This enthusiasm has been unprecedented elsewhere in India. The main activities of the CE programme have been the library and reading rooms established in over 1,095 CECs. Two literacy centres (sub-centres) have been functioning under each CEC and about 41,730 persons have been enrolled in literacy classes. There are health and nutrition issues that are covered in the programme and discussions are held on a range of development issues.

### **Looking Ahead**

From the above some trends and directions are visible. These can be summed up in the following points:

- Forming grassroots level associations/groups of neo-literate women and men is possible and necessary
- Community participation and a sense of ownership is desirable for long-term viability of the CE programme
- Linking literacy and CE with economic activities, livelihood issues and village development makes it that much more relevant and meaningful
- People have high expectations when they come together and contribute their time, money and effort. Promises made for loans/grants and facilities must be kept.

In the context of the target of reaching 75% literacy by 2005 there is an urgent need to make a strong movement for women's literacy and formation of SHGs. The attempt in the CE programme is to make it more flexible and invite NGOs, Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) and Community Based Organisations (CBO) to become partners with the ZSS or operate independently to undertake CE programmes in a limited area.

Enhancing the available information base for planning and developing the skills of literacy workers in participatory planning methods are urgent tasks. Sharing

successful district (and even smaller) initiatives so that others can learn from the experience is necessary and documentation, validation through research and systematic evaluation are other thrust areas for NLM.