EDUCATION FOR ALL – MID DECADE ASSESSMENT

ADULT LITERACY AND LIFELONG LEARNING IN INDIA

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Preface

The World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal approved a comprehensive vision of Education for All (EFA) to be achieved by 2015 based on the six goals. The six goals relate to the areas of early childhood care and education, universalising primary education, gender, youth and adolescents, adult education and quality of education. The main focus is on 'reaching the unreached' for ensuring complete coverage of education. With this background the *Mid- Decade Assessment of Education for All* was initiated to take stock of the progress made with respect to EFA Goals. Corresponding to this exercise, a comprehensive review of the progress made with respect to Education for All in India was conducted jointly by Government of India and the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA).

The present work which is a sequel to the National Report consists of a series of thematic and state review papers. There are nine thematic review papers covering all the six goals including three additional papers on three other themes, namely, Teacher and Teacher Education, Management Strategies for EFA and Financing of EFA in India. These thematic review papers are further followed by a series of analytical papers covering progress of EFA in twenty seven states of India. State reviews attempt to present a quick picture of the current level of progress in each state of India assessing the magnitude of the task involved in achieving EFA goals and projecting a realistic time frame as well as strategies needed to reach the goals. Each thematic review as well as state-specific analytical review paper has been prepared by an established expert in the respective area/state in close collaboration with national and state governments.

The review papers along with the National Report present a comprehensive and disaggregated picture of the progress made towards EFA goals in the country. The papers are coming out at a very opportune time when the Parliament is engaged in debating the legislation to make education for all children a Fundamental Right. While the thematic papers highlight state of development of education with respect to different goals of EFA, the State papers present the diversity of the situation across the country. The whole series would serve as an invaluable independent documentation on various aspects of EFA ranging from early childhood care and education to universal elementary education and adult literacy programmes using authentic data sources accompanied by a review of relevant empirical research.

The whole Project involving the National Report along with the series of thematic and state analytical review papers were conceived and executed by Prof. R.

Govinda, NUEPA who led the entire exercise and would like to thank him profusely for his leadership. Dr. Mona Sedwal who as a part of the Project Team at NUEPA contributed immensely to the whole exercise also deserves appreciation. The Team immensely benefited by the advice given by the Technical Advisory Group set up under the Chairmanship of Professor A.K. Sharma for guiding the entire exercise. I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Prof. A. K. Sharma for his invaluable guidance. Finally, I would also like to acknowledge the generous financial support provided by UNICEF and UNESCO.

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Editorial Note

Indian Constitution directs the State to provide free and compulsory education for all children upto the age of 14. This goal has been pursued by the country for nearly six decades through successive development plans. The last two decades have witnessed significant improvements in children's participation in schooling, accompanied by substantial increase in investments. The recent effort to raise resources for the sector through imposition of an education cess is major effort in that direction. Even though school education has traditionally remained a subject for action by State Governments, Government of India has, during the last two decades following the National Policy on Education – 1986, begun to play a leading role. This culminated in the launching of the national programme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in 2001. Despite all these efforts, the final goal of providing quality education for all has eluded the country.

Urgency of reaching the goal has been heightened in recent years due to several national and international developments, including commitments made under the Dakar Framework for Action for providing quality Education for All by 2015, which not only covers primary education but also focus on literacy goals, gender equality and quality concerns. The Dakar Framework of Action listed the following six specific goals to be achieved by all countries.

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.
4. Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literary by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
6. Improving every aspect of the quality of education, and ensuring their excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The National Plan of Action for Education for All (2002) in India reflects this sense of urgency felt within the country by proposing to reach the targets much ahead of the international dateline. At the national level, the Constitutional Amendment in 2002 declaring education in the age group 6-14 which corresponds to the elementary

education stage of schooling a fundamental right has brought the issue of universal elementary education (UEE) to the centre stage of public discourse. The country is in the process of drawing up the legislation for effective implementation of the right for translating the constitutional provision into reality. With the progress made in recent years the goal seems to be achievable by the international time frame of 2015. But this requires systematic assessment of the various goals the present exercise is one such effort.

UNESCO has been bringing out annual review of the progress made in moving towards the goal of EFA through the Global Monitoring Report. These assessments do not reflect an encouraging picture of the Indian scene. This is an issue of serious concern for the national leadership as one sixth of the world population lives in India. With around 65% adult literacy rate, there are more around 350 million adult illiterates in the country. This should not be taken to imply that no efforts are being made to meet the challenge of EFA. Besides, the national averages do not fully reflect the diverse reality characterizing educational progress in India. In fact, it is paradoxical that while certain pockets of the country are emerging as the international hub for creating a knowledge society, certain other regions and sections of the population continue to be deprived of even basic education. It is clear that in pursuing EFA goals, not all states and regions of the country are in the same league. The variety is too wide to draw any generalization. While some states have made remarkable progress in education, practically eradicating illiteracy and achieving near universal participation of children in elementary education, several other states continue to remain far from the final goal. What is needed to progress faster in moving towards the 2015 EFA deadline in all parts of the country? This obviously demands an analytical exercise - goalwise as well as statewise.

It is with this objective in view that the present exercise was taken up to make an independent assessment of the progress achieved in different states and with respect to different EFA goals. The present series of papers constitute the outcome of such a comprehensive exercise carried out by independent experts, in collaboration with Central and State Governments. The main purpose of the exercise is to place before policy makers, planners and the civil society as a whole an analytical picture of the progress made towards EFA goals and the challenges ahead for reaching the goals in a realistic fashion.

The exercise consisted of three parts. The first part consisted of presenting an overview of progress in the country with respect to six goals highlighted in the Dakar Declaration. This was largely based on the technical guidelines for assessment prepared by UNESCO. A national report entitled "Education for All Mid-Decade Assessment: Reaching the Unreached" has been prepared and published jointly by NUEPA and Government of India.

The Second Part consists of a series of nine thematic review papers dealing with different dimensions of 'Education for All' keeping in view the Indian context and

priorities. These include: (i) Early Childhood Care and Education; (ii) Universal Elementary Education; (iii) Adult Education; (iv) Towards Gender Equality in Education; (v) Education of Adolescents and Young Adults; (vi) Quality of Education; (vii) teacher and teacher education; (viii) Management Strategies for EFA and (ix) Financing of EFA. Each of these papers has been prepared by an expert or experts in the respective area. The papers were reviewed by another independent expert and revised based on the observations.

The third part consists of analytical papers covering all states of India. Each thematic review as well as state-specific analytical review was prepared by an established expert in the respective area/state in close collaboration with national and state governments. The state level reviews are prepared on lines similar to what was followed for preparing the national review. Each of them deals with comprehensively on all six goals of EFA specified in the Dakar Declaration.

One of the major goals of the EFA framework is to significantly enhance the adult literacy rate in each country. India registered a significant jump in adult literacy rates between 1991 and 2001. The Dakar Framework has set a modest goal of reducing adult illiteracy levels by 50% between 2000 and 2015. National Literacy Mission has set the goal of reaching 75% literacy level by 2007. Translated into numbers, this would require imparting literacy skills to more than 100 million people. Considering that number of children dropping out in early years of schooling with very little learning continues unabated, will we be able to reach this level of adult literacy in by 2015? The present review paper by Ila Patel assesses the current status and examines adequacy of the efforts being made in the country towards the literacy goal as specified in the Dakar Framework.

This elaborate exercise of assessing the progress in EFA should be viewed in the context of repeated assertions by the UNESCO Global Monitoring Report on EFA that Indian is at the risk of not making the global targets with respect to several EFA goals. The findings of the review clearly points out that the situation across the country is very diverse. While some States have registered fast progress on all fronts, some others continue to lag behind. Also in general, access to schooling has improved every where even though much remains to be done with respect to other goals of EFA. It is hoped that the various volumes brought out through the exercise would together present a realistic analysis and a disaggregated picture of the Education for All process and achievements in the country.

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INTRODUCTION

In India, the National Policy on Education (1986) provided considerable impetus to promote basic education for school-age children, youth and adults. In the 1990s, India endorsed the World Declaration of Education for All (EFA) adopted by the World Conference of Education at Jomtien (1990), and accepted the declarations of the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) with regard to adult literacy and adult learning. India has made significant strides to impart elementary education and adult literacy education in the 1990s (see Govinda, 2002.). However, the major thrust of the basic education reform in India remained on elementary education, and not on adult education and lifelong learning and as such the vast majority of youth and adults, has either remained illiterate or with low level of formal education (Patel, 2000).

Following the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000), India has endorsed the Dakar Framework for Action and committed to two Dakar goals related to adult literacy:

> "ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes, and achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults".

This paper gives an overview of the existing policy and programmes related to adult literacy and lifelong learning. Specifically, it examines the relative importance assigned to adult literacy and continuing education for adults in the educational policy, development plans and the national EFA plan, and the extent to which they are geared towards meeting Dakar goals of adult literacy and learning. The paper is primarily based on a review of secondary sources of information. Discussion is organised in six sections. Following an introduction, the second section gives an overview of the literacy situation and highlights the progress made after the Census 2001. The third section focuses on understanding the

directives of the adult education policy during (1986-99). The changing direction of the policy in the post-Dakar period is examined in the fourth section. It is followed by discussion in the fifth section on how the policy framework is operationalised in the major programmes of NLM. This section also highlights specific programmes for women and innovative interventions of NGOs. The last section summarises key trends emerging from the review of policy and programmes of adult literacy and continuing education in the post-Dakar period.

MAPPING THE CHALLENGE OF LITERACY

In the 1990s, India witnessed phenomenal educational development in quantitative and qualitative terms. Yet, the EFA goals of universal elementary education and basic literacy education for all have still remained illusive. This section highlights major trends and patterns of adult and youth literacy, particularly since 2001 and draws attention to the challenge of making the vast population of youth and adults literate.

Growth of Literacy with Persisting Disparities (2001)

In the 1990s, India achieved considerable progress in improving the literacy situation. The literacy rate went up from 52.1% in 1991 to 65.4% in 2001 for the population in the age group 7 years and above (see Figure 2.1). Improvement in the literacy rate is evident in rural and urban India for both the sexes in the period 1981 to 2004-05 in given in Table 2.1. The rate of growth of literacy in the decade ending 2001 has been higher in the rural areas, it being 14.8% as compared to the 7.2%

in urban areas. The Census 2001 shows that the all-India literacy rate has increased by 13.2 percentage points and improvement in literacy rates is evident for all the states/Union Territories (UTs). Nearly 50% districts (294 out of total 591 districts) have recorded literacy rate above the national average of 65.4% (Registrar General and Census Commissioner India, 2001).

The most striking change visible in the Census 2001 relates to female literacy rate. About three-fourths of the male population (75.9%) and more than half of the female population (54.2%) in the country were literate in 2001. In fact, the growth rate of literacy has been higher for the female population at 14.9% than for males at 11.7% during the last decade. For the first time after independence, gender gap between male and female literacy rate has gradually declined from 24.8 percentage points in 1991 to 21.7 percentage points in 2001.

Furthermore, there has been a marked improvement in the literacy situation of

the disadvantaged groups of scheduled castes (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST) that are accorded special status by the Constitution of India for affirmative action.The literacy rate for SC and ST in 2001 was 54.7% and 41.9% respectively. Among the religious communities, Jains have the highest literacy rate (94.1%), followed by Christians (80.3%), and Buddhists (72.7%). Hindus and Sikhs have marginally higher literacy rate than the national average.

Thus, there has been a perceptible improvement in the literacy situation during the 1990s. Growth of literacy is evident for the general population (7+ age group) in both rural and urban areas and across gender, regions, religious groups and social communities. Notwithstanding improvement in overall literacy situation over the years, progress of literacy even during the last decade has remained uneven across regions, States/UTs), gender and communities.

Figure 2.1: Progress of Literacy in India by Gender (1951 to 2004-05)
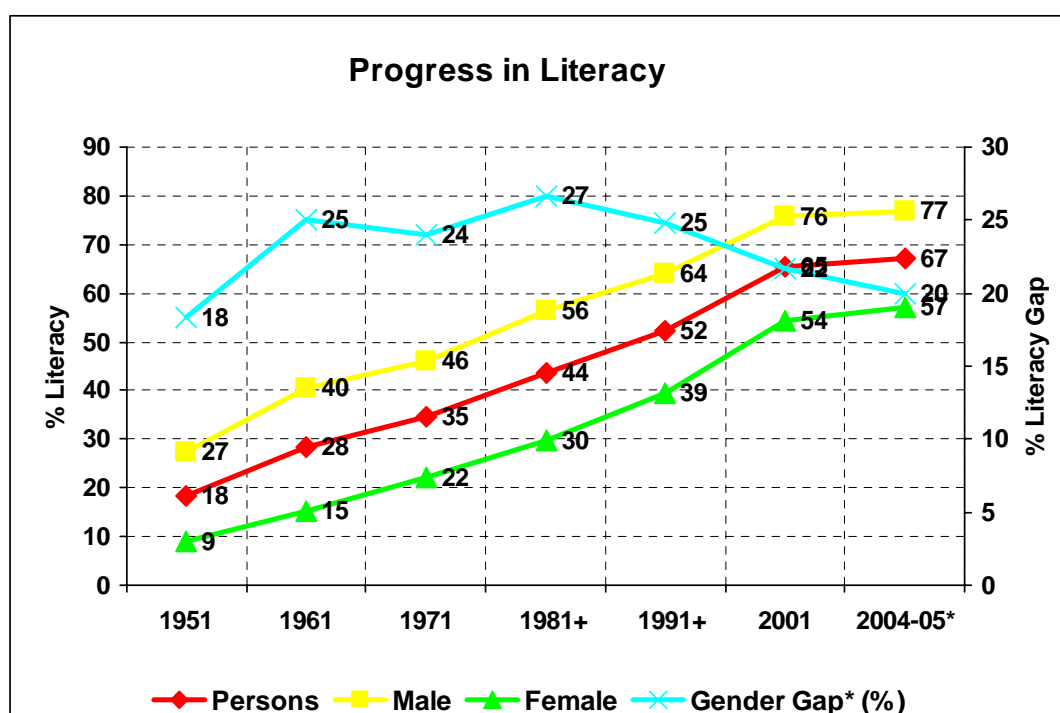
Source: Registrar General and Census Commissioner, 2001.
        National Sample Survey Organisation (2006a:24).
* NSSO 61st Round. (2006a)
Notes: (i)   Literacy rates relate to the population aged five years and above for the Censuses of 1951, 1961, and 1971 and to the population aged seven years and above for the Censuses of 1981, 1991 and 2001. The gender gap is indicated by the difference between the literacy rate of male and female.

(ii)   Literacy rate for the Census of 2001 exclude entire Kachchh district, Morvi, Maliya-Miyana and Wankaner talukas of Rajkot district, Jodiya taluka of Jamnagar district of Gujarat State and entire Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh where population enumeration of the Census of India, 2001 could not be conducted due to natural calamities.

A state-wise disaggregated analysis shows striking disparities in literacy rates across the States/UTs have persisted. The low literacy districts (30-36% literacy rates) are scattered in the underdeveloped states of central and eastern India (Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa). The problems of uneven progress of literacy and widespread illiteracy are in fact linked with the political economy of uneven development in India (Saldanha, 1999).

In general, the states with overall low literacy rate continue to have large gender gap also despite substantial improvement in female literacy. More than 80% of districts having female

Table 2.1:   Literacy Rates by Gender and Area (1981 to 2004-05)

Year	Literacy Rate (Percentages)			
	Persons	**Male**	**Female**	**Gender Gap**
1981 (7+ years)				
Rural	36.0	49.6	21.7	27.9
Urban	67.2	76.7	56.3	20.4
Total	43.6	56.4	29.8	26.6
1991 (7+ years)				
Rural	44.7	57.9	30.6	27.3
Urban	73.1	81.1	64.0	17.1
Total	52.2	64.1	39.2	24.9
2001(7+ years)				
Rural	59.4	71.4	46.7	24.7
Urban	80.3	86.7	73.2	13.5
Total	65.4	75.9	54.2	21.7
2004-05 (7+ years)**				
Rural	61.9	72.7	50.6	22.1
Urban	82.7	88.8	75.9	12.9
Total	67.3	77.0	57.0	20.0

Source: Registrar General and Census Commissioner, 2001.,
          National Sample Survey Organisation (2006a:24)

* Literacy rates for 1951 refer to effective literacy rates and the break up of rural, urban and male-female components are crude literacy rates.

** NSSO 61st Round. (2006a)

literacy rate below 50% were concentrated in the nine states of Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Arunachal Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh. In Bihar, there was no district with female literacy rate more than the national average of 54.2%. The gender gap in literacy rates among SC and ST was large. In 2001, the literacy rate for SC males and females was 66.6% and 47.1% respectively. The literacy rate for ST women was considerably lower (34.8%) than ST men (59.2%).

Disparities in literacy are also reflected in the other dimensions of social inequalities within communities. The literacy situation of the disadvantaged groups of Scheduled Castes (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST) is still dismal, being below the national literacy rate. In general, districts with lowest literacy rates have traditionally quite a high proportion of the Scheduled Tribes population. The gender gap in literacy rate is large among SC and ST. In 2001, the literacy rate for SC males and females was 66.6% and 47.1% respectively. The literacy rate for ST women was considerably lower (34.8%) than ST men (59.2%).

The literacy rate for Muslims is 59.1%, lower than the national average. Among the six major religious communities, the gender gap in literacy rate for Jains and Christians is less than ten percentage points. Maximum gender gap between male and female literacy rate is among Hindus (23 percentage points), followed by Sikhs (21.4 percentage points), Buddhists (21.5 percentage points) and Muslims (17.5 percentage points).

The Magnitude of Illiteracy

Despite growth of literacy during 1991-2001, the magnitude of illiteracy among different populations in absolute terms reveals the extent of challenge of literacy in the 21st century. Although for the first time since independence, the absolute number of illiterates in the age group 7+ years has declined from 332.3 million in 1991 to 304.1 million in 2001 (GoI., 2005), the challenge of making India literate is very daunting. The non-literate adults constitute about 40% of the adult population. This means there were around 236 million non-literate adults as in 2001. In absolute terms, regional and gender disparities in illiteracy were very alarming.

The seven states with literacy rate below 65.4%, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Madhya

Pradesh, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh, accounted for around 59.2% (175.3 million) of India's non-literate population. Even the states with medium literacy rate (67.8%) and somewhat higher socio-economic development (for example, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka) also had illiterate population of 82.5 million (27.9%). Macro-level data also disguises uneven progress of literacy in marginalised communities even among the states with high level of literacy (Govinda and Biswal, 2005).

Despite improvement in female literacy during 1991-2001, there were about 189.5 million female illiterates, constituting 64% of India's illiterate population (Figure 2.2). There were 17 districts from the two states of central India (Uttar Pradesh and Chhatisgarh), and eastern India (Bihar, Jharkhand and Orissa), where not even one out of four women was literate. Furthermore, the problem of illiteracy is accentuated due to low enrolment of children in schools and high drop-out at early stage of primary education, particularly among girls from rural areas and from the low-literacy states (Ramachandran, 1998:81-85). Relapse into illiteracy is likely to be high among all children, particularly girls, who could not complete the initial cycle of five years of primary education.

Figure 2.2:   Magnitude of Illiteracy by Gender (1981-2001)
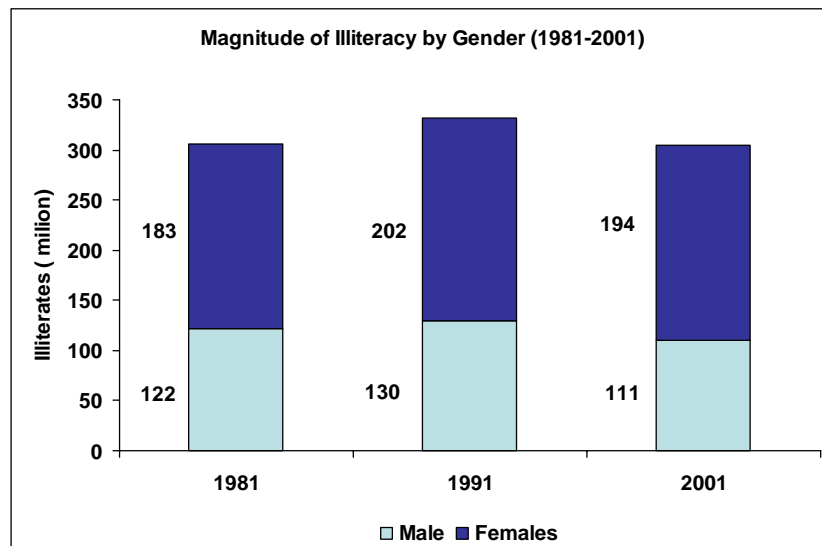
Note: Figures for 1991 are based on the estimated population (7 years and above).
Source: Chand, Prem (1992:5), GoI. (2005:3).

In sum, India still faces the challenge of making sizeable population literate in the 21st century. It is equally important to strengthen quality and sustainability of fragile literacy skills of neo-literates and extend opportunities for continued learning to the vast unschooled population of youth and adults in order to improve their livelihoods and quality of life.

Are We Making Progress?

Comparison of India's youth and adult literacy rates with the other developing countries shows that India substantially lags behind Brazil, Russian Federation, and China (Table 2.2). The comparison with China shows that India is at a considerable educational disadvantage. Youth literacy rate of India is 22.5 percentage points from that lower than China's and adult literacy rate is below 30 percentage points of China. Among the South Asian countries, India's literacy level is better than that of Bangladesh and Pakistan, but far behind Sri Lanka. India's female literacy rate in the age group 15+ years is even lower than that of Sub-Saharan Africa. A closer look at the literacy status of the population in the age group of 15 years and above reveals the extent to which we have made progress towards achieving the EFA goals and the challenge of making India literate.

Table 2.2: Youth and Adult Literacy Rates (2000-2004)

Country	Youth Literacy Rates (%) (15-24 Years)			Adult Literacy Rates (%) (15 + Years)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
World	87.3	90.5	84.1	82.2	87.2	77.3
Developing countries	84.8	88.6	80.9	76.8	83.5	70.1
Brazil	96.8	95.8	97.9	88.6	88.4	88.8
Russian Federation	99.7	99.7	99.8	99.4	99.7	99.2
China	98.9	99.2	98.5	90.9	95.1	86.5
India	**76.4**	**84.2**	**67.7**	**61.0**	**73.4**	**47.8**
Bangladesh	51.5	59.4	43.1	42.6	31.7	33.1
Nepal	70.1	80.6	60.1	48.6	62.7	34.9
Pakistan	65.5	75.8	54.7	49.9	63.0	36.0
Sri Lanka	95.6	95.1	96.1	90.7	92.3	89.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	72.2	77.8	68.3	61.2	69.5	53.3

Source: UNESCO, 2005.

Progress of Adult Literacy

Age-specific literacy data are not yet available for Census 2001 even in 2007. However, literacy rate for 15+ age group is estimated to be 61% in 2001 by the Registrar General of India on the basis of population projections. Over the years, there has been significant improvement in the literacy rate of the population in the age group 15+ (Table 2.3). The literacy rate of 15+ age group has increased from 27.8% (41.5% for males and 13.2% for women) in 1961 to 61% (73.3% for males and 47.8% females) in 2001. Adult literacy rate increased by 12.5 percentage points during 1991-2001. For the first time, gender gap in adult literacy also decreased by 2.3 percentage points during the last decade. If we apply the estimates of NSSO Round 54 (1998) and 61 (2004-05), then improvement in

adult literacy rate has been 8.8 percentage points during 1998 to 2004-05. Furthermore, there is substantial decrease in the gender gap (i.e. 6 percentage points) during this period.

In the 1990s, NLM introduced Total Literacy Campaigns (TLCs) on a large scale. That extent to which TLCs and other programmes of adult education have contributed to improving literacy rates of the adult population in the 1990s, the estimated projections about the adult literacy rates in 2001 provide us a disturbing picture. According to Srivastava (2003), the estimated number of literates in 15+ age groups should be 350.3 million (i.e. 59.4%) of the total estimated population of 589.8 million). Thus, only 9.1 million persons acquired literacy during 1991-2001. Even if we assume that the literacy rate

Table 2.3: Progress of Adult Literacy in India (15 years and Above)

Year	Male	Female	Total	Gender Gap
Census of India				
1961	41.5	13.2	27.8	28.3
1971	47.7	19.4	34.1	28.3
1981	54.9	25.7	40.8	29.1
1991+	61.9	34.1	48.5	27.8
2001	73.3	47.8	61.0	25.5
NSSO				
1996 (52nd Round)	67.3	40.7	54.3	26.6
1998 (54th Round)	70.0	44.0	57.0	26.0
2004-05 (61st Round)	77.0	57.0	67.3	20.0

+ Excludes Jammu and Kashmir

Source: GoI, 2007: XXXIX and National Sample Survey Organisation, 2006a:24.

for 15+ age groups is 61 % more than the age group of 7+, the number of illiterates in the 15+ age groups would be 362.1 million. This implies that only 20.9 million in this age group became literate as a result of adult literacy programmes during 1991-2001. This is much lower than the claims of 79.5 million persons made literate (59.4 million through Total Literacy Campaigns and 20.1 million through other schemes). The detailed data on literacy by various age groups as and when become available would shed light on the contribution of primary education and adult literacy programmes on literacy.

On the other hand, the National Plan of Action (NPA) for EFA (2003) presents an optimistic picture regarding future growth of adult literacy rate from 59.4% in 2001 to around 80% in 2015. It speculates that with the accelerated growth of literacy in the age group 6-14 years due to intensive efforts for universalisation of elementary education, and the declining growth rate of the population in this age group, India is likely to reach adult literacy rate of 70-90% by 2015. The NPA (2003) also anticipates that India would be in a position to reduce its illiteracy rate from 40% in 2000 to 20% in 2015 and decrease the illiterate population from 263 million in 2001 to 150 million in the year 2015. The challenge of literacy, however, becomes visible when we examine the magnitude of illiteracy

among different populations in the absolute sense.

Illiteracy at Glance (NSSO Survey - 61st Round)

The NSSO Survey (61st Round), conducted during 2004-05, provides useful information on the educational status of the population after the Census of 2001 (NSSO, 2006a). It defines a person as literate if he/she could read and write a simple message in any language with understanding. As per the survey, the literacy rate for the general population in the 7+ age group was 67.3% (77% for males and 57% for females), an increase of only two percentage points since Census 2001. The literacy rate for urban areas (82.7%) continues to be higher than that in rural areas (62.1%). Despite increase in literacy levels during 1991-2001, disparities in the literacy rates across gender and between rural and urban areas have persisted. The gender gap has marginally declined from 21.1 percentage points in 2001 to 20 percentage points in 2004-05.

Illiteracy Among the Households

The NSSO 61st Round shows educational deprivation in terms of households that did not have any literate member and literate females in the 15+ age group (Figure 2.3). In 26% rural households and 8% urban households, there were no literate adult

members. About 50% rural households and 20% urban households had no literate adult female members. Absence of literate adult members/females (15+ years) has significant implications for promoting education in the next generation. Given critical role of female literacy in economic and social development, and in demographic transition, predominance of households without any female adult literate could have long term adverse impact on development.

Figure 2.3: Illiteracy Among Households in Rural and Urban Areas
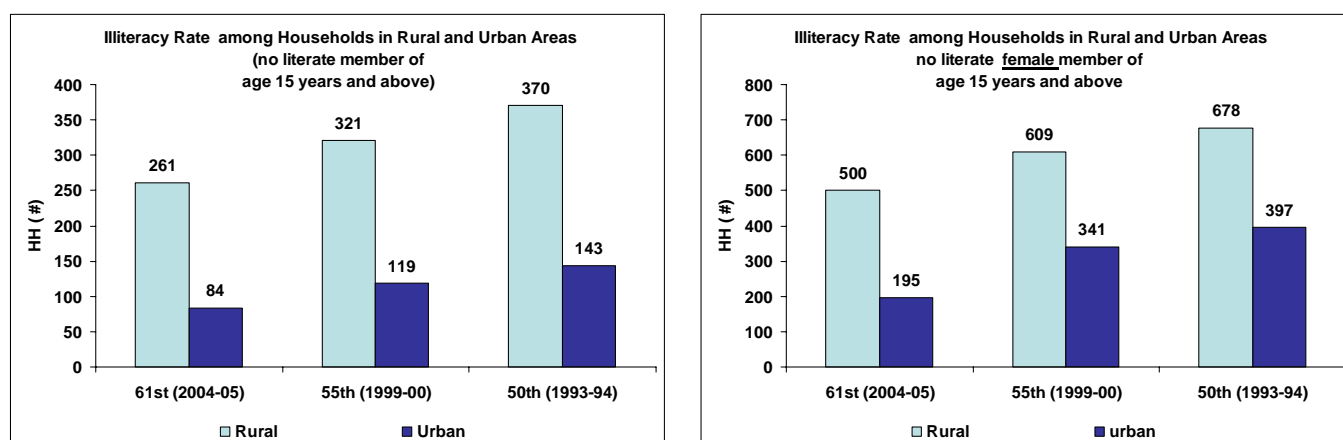
Source: NSSO (2006a:21).

Note: (i)   Figures are for number of households with no literate member/female member of age 15 years and above per 1000 households.

(ii)   The denominator for the rate given in any cell is `all household' belonging to the specified sector, viz., rural sector or urban sector, irrespective of whether the households has any member of age 15 years or not or whether the households are having any female members or not.

Regional Disparities in Literacy

Regional variations in literacy rates for persons of age 0 years and above have continued across the states[i] (Table 2.4). Mizoram had highest literacy rate across genders in rural and urban areas, followed by Kerala. Low literacy rates (below 60%) were found in the states of Bihar (53.7%), Andhra Pradesh (55.8%), Uttar Pradesh (58%), Rajasthan (58.8%), Madhya Pradesh (59.1), and Jharkhand (59.8). The educationally backward states in the Hindi belt also had low female literacy in the general population (less that 45%). Bihar had lowest female literacy (35.1%), followed by Rajasthan (36.9%).

Rural female literacy in educationally backward states was also abysmally low (less than 40%). Rajasthan had lowest rural female literacy (31.3%), followed by Bihar (32.6%), Madhya Pradesh (36%), Uttar Pradesh (36%), and Andhra Pradesh (39.1%). Rural-urban divide in literacy had also persisted. Rajasthan had low urban literacy rate (63.7%), followed by Uttar Pradesh (65.5%).

On the other hand, rural-urban differences and the gender gap in illiteracy for non-literates in the 15+ age group have continued (Table 2.5). The proportion of non-literates was lowest in Mizoram and Kerala for both rural and urban areas and for both males and females. However, it was highest in Bihar (51.6%), Jharkhand (48.5%) and Uttar Pradesh (47.8%). In rural areas, the highest proportion of non-literates was in Rajasthan (59.1%), followed by Jharkhand (55.2%) and Bihar (54.5%). Female illiteracy continued to be high in the educationally backward states of Bihar (67.6%), Jharkhand (65.1%) and Uttar Pradesh (63.5%). Illiteracy among females was very high in the states of Rajasthan (78.3%), Jharkhand (72.8%), Bihar (70.6%), and Uttar Pradesh (69.8%). In these states, illiteracy rates in urban areas were also high. In other words, despite improvement in the literacy situation in the last decade, illiteracy in the 15+ age group has been very high in the states with low level of educational development.

Table 2.4:   Distribution of Literate Persons (0 Years and Above) for States and Union Territories (per 1000 persons)

State/UTs	Rural			Urban			Rural+Urban		
	Male	**Female**	**Person**	**Male**	**Female**	**Person**	**Male**	**Female**	**person**
Andhra Pradesh	558	391	475	767	625	696	612	452	558
Arunachal Pradesh	620	500	563	866	840	854	652	540	620
Assam	751	635	696	856	788	823	761	650	751
Bihar	537	326	437	756	602	684	558	351	537
Chhattisgarh	647	434	539	824	687	759	676	471	647
Delhi	811	657	743	854	749	807	851	742	811
Goa	805	690	743	808	728	768	806	703	805
Gujarat	693	469	585	847	736	795	745	556	693
Haryana	681	473	581	796	669	738	713	524	681
Himachal	791	641	715	810	781	797	793	653	791

Pradesh									
Jammu & Kashmir	671	466	573	800	650	730	704	513	671
Jharkhand	598	342	473	836	687	765	639	400	598
Karnataka	622	467	545	820	694	759	684	536	622
Kerala	850	806	827	874	839	856	856	814	850
Madhya Pradesh	591	360	481	788	651	722	637	428	591
Maharashtra	718	551	636	843	748	798	769	629	718
Manipur	806	672	741	856	754	805	819	693	806
Megahlaya	774	743	759	908	871	888	791	762	774
Mizoram	885	875	880	927	927	927	901	897	885
Nagaland	782	714	749	891	826	861	817	748	782
Orissa	625	460	542	773	664	721	646	486	625
Punjab	674	588	633	806	731	771	716	633	674
Rajasthan	588	313	453	722	549	637	620	369	588
Sikkim	788	690	742	890	740	820	799	696	788
Tamil Nadu	724	545	634	856	756	806	776	626	724
Tripura	785	675	731	845	776	810	793	689	785
Uttaranchal	708	503	603	822	698	763	738	548	708
Uttar Pradesh	580	360	473	710	594	655	607	406	580
West Bengal	679	539	610	845	761	805	721	593	679
A&N Islands	820	670	747	853	771	815	832	705	820
Chandigarh	757	598	695	886	815	854	870	794	757
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	692	381	552	817	716	768	705	419	692
Daman & Diu	705	680	694	952	826	882	781	740	705
Lakshadeep	828	746	794	808	718	764	819	731	828
Pondicherry	764	544	650	856	736	795	823	665	764
All-India	**636**	**450**	**545**	**805**	**693**	**752**	**680**	**511**	**636**

Source: NSS Report No. 517, NSSO, 2006a:57.

Table 2.5: **Distribution of Non-Literates (15 Years and Above) for States and Union Territories (per 1000 persons)**

State/UTs	Rural			Urban			Rural+Urban		
	Male	**Female**	**Person**	**Male**	**Female**	**Person**	**Male**	**Female**	**Person**
Andhra Pradesh	453	674	566	186	381	285	382	597	491
Arunachal Pradesh	374	544	455	82	146	113	336	493	411
Assam	184	361	268	75	160	116	173	340	252
Bihar	386	706	545	156	380	258	361	676	516
Chhattisgarh	303	623	463	107	300	198	267	569	416
Delhi	128	291	195	79	222	143	82	226	146
Goa	116	265	197	102	230	165	110	252	184
Gujarat	259	568	411	77	222	146	195	450	318
Haryana	272	554	405	129	305	212	232	484	351
Himachal Pradesh	163	367	269	141	196	165	160	353	259
Jammu & Kashmir	320	601	454	174	351	257	281	536	402
Jharkhand	383	728	552	90	309	195	326	651	485
Karnataka	366	579	473	104	268	183	281	484	382
Kerala	69	131	103	39	91	66	62	122	94
Madhya Pradesh	375	709	535	121	317	216	313	612	456
Maharashtra	232	487	359	81	220	147	168	380	271
Manipur	146	335	241	97	233	166	134	310	223
Megahlaya	149	188	168	19	79	52	131	170	150
Mizoram	19	49	33	6	10	8	14	33	23
Nagaland	174	266	219	23	102	61	128	216	170

Orissa	326	558	445	129	298	210	297	524	412
Punjab	317	442	378	136	246	188	255	378	315
Rajasthan	398	783	591	191	463	322	345	705	524
Sikkim	185	340	257	19	167	88	165	320	237
Tamil Nadu	264	494	383	87	225	156	192	389	293
Tripura	167	317	240	82	172	128	155	295	224
Uttaranchal	229	528	383	122	274	195	199	464	333
Uttar Pradesh	362	698	529	205	394	293	327	635	478
West Bengal	292	497	393	102	210	153	237	418	325
A&N Islands	118	273	191	92	196	140	109	246	172
Chandigarh	216	455	308	67	171	116	84	195	135
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	269	650	434	59	191	119	245	593	397
Daman & Diu	139	348	237	29	164	103	100	270	184
Lakshadeep	25	239	116	81	203	144	50	220	130
Pondicherry	173	466	328	86	270	180	117	343	234
All India	**320**	**585**	**452**	**121**	**279**	**196**	**264**	**504**	**382**

Source: NSS Report No. 517, NSSO, 2006a:58-66.

Illiteracy and Economic Status

NSSO 61st Round shows direct relationship between the educational level of the household members (non-literate and educated[ii]), and the economic status of the households, assessed in terms of monthly per capita consumer expenditure (MPCE). Proportion of non-literates was highest in the lowest MPCE and it gradually decreased as the MPCE class increased (Table 2.6). In other words, the

Table 2.6: Distribution of Non-literates and Educated Persons (15 Years and Above) Across MPCE Class

MPCE Class (Rs)	Male		Female		All-India Person	
	Non-literate	Educated *	Non-literate	Educated	Non-literate	Educated *
Rural						
Less than 235	573	54	799	19	692	36
235-270	505	53	778	17	648	34
270-320	458	93	755	31	609	61
320-365	441	101	715	35	581	68
365-410	384	131	668	45	527	87
410-455	372	152	648	61	509	106
455-510	340	160	614	66	477	113
510-580	290	207	571	90	429	150
580-690	257	249	517	122	385	187
690-890	214	306	454	168	332	237
890-1155	169	401	373	240	267	323
1155 & above	102	542	256	365	176	457
All classes	320	211	585	102	452	156
Urban						
Less than 335	376	121	632	65	505	92
335-395	314	167	570	82	445	124
395-485	267	196	515	102	390	150
485-580	203	256	427	159	314	207
580-675	170	319	373	193	269	257
675-790	109	386	296	259	199	325
790-930	97	463	244	332	166	402
930-1100	74	526	201	386	134	460
1100-1380	52	634	138	505	92	574
1380-1880	25	733	103	601	61	672
1880-2540	16	825	74	702	43	767
2540 & above	11	905	27	825	18	866
All classes	121	483	279	356	196	422

Source: Report No. 517, NSSO, 2006a:27

households with low income had more illiterate adult members and with improvement in MPCE class, the proportion of the educated members also increased. In both rural and urban areas, illiteracy rate was high among the low MPCE households. In rural areas, illiteracy rate was 69% in the bottom MPCE and only 18% in top MPCE. In urban areas, the corresponding illiteracy rate was about 51% and 2% only. The difference in proportion of educated between bottom and top MPCE was higher in urban areas (78%) than in rural areas (42%). Nonetheless, proportion of educated in the bottom MPCE was low, both in rural (4%) and urban (9%) areas. Illiteracy among females was higher than that among males in bottom MPCE in both rural (80%) and urban (63%) areas. In nutshell, illiteracy appears to be widespread among poor households.

Table 2.7: Illiteracy by Household Type

Household Type	Male		Female		Person	
	Not literate	Educated*	Not literate	Educated*	Not literate	Educated*
Rural						
Self-Employed						
Agriculture	287	232	573	101	428	168
Non-Agriculture	250	245	512	128	379	187
All	276	237	556	109	414	173
Rural Labour						
Agriculture Labour	478	77	722	35	600	56
Other Labour	356	126	599	75	475	102
All	441	93	685	46	562	70
Others	136	520	410	254	285	375
All (incl.n.r.)	320	210	585	102	452	155
Urban						
Self-employed	135	440	293	334	211	390
Regular Salaried/ Wage Labour	67	588	203	444	132	520
Casual Labour	298	136	535	75	411	107
Others	58	717	231	411	148	559
All (incl. n. r.)	121	482	279	356	196	423

* Persons with general educational level secondary and above, including diploma/certificate course, have been considered to be educated.
Source: Report No. 517, NSSO, 2006a:28.

Furthermore, Table 2.7 shows that illiteracy is high among persons (15 years and above) belonging the households of rural labour (56.2%) and the households of self-employed in rural areas (41.4%). In rural areas, 60% of the persons (47.8% males and 72.2% females) belonging to the households of agricultural labour were illiterate, while illiteracy among the self-employed in agriculture was 42.8% (28.7% males and 57.3% females). In urban areas, the proportion of non-literates was high among casual labour (41.1%), particularly among females (43.5%) and lowest among regular salaried/wage labour (13.2%). On the other hand, the proportion of the educated was highest among persons from households of self-employed in non-agriculture (19%) in rural areas and from the household type of others (56%) in the urban areas. Thus, illiterates were concentrated in the households of agricultural labour, self-employed in agriculture, and casual labour. The gender gap continued among non-literate and educated across the household types in both the rural and urban areas.

Illiteracy Among Religious Groups

The NSSO 61st Round also reports on illiteracy among major religious groups (Table 2.8).[iii] The proportion of illiterates in all the religious groups was higher in the rural than that in urban areas. The Christians had the lowest illiteracy rate for both rural (31% for females and 20% for males) and urban (11% for females and 6% for males) areas. The proportion of illiterates was higher among Muslims than among Hindus, except for rural females. In rural areas, the illiteracy rates among females were at par among Hindus and Muslims (59%), but low among Christians (31%).

Illiteracy Among Social Groups

Among the social groups, the literacy rate was highest among the others (78%) category, followed by the OBC (64.5%), SC (57.3%) and the lowest among the STs (52%). However, rural-urban differences and the gender gap in literacy have persisted across social groups. Female literacy rate in rural areas was found to be lowest among all the social groups.

Illiteracy is also widespread among socio-economically disadvantaged communities. The proportion of households with no literate adult member/no literate adult female was much higher among the households of STs and SCs in comparison to the OBC or other category households in both rural and urban India (Figure 2.4 and Table 2.9). It was higher among STs in rural areas and among SCs in urban India. While OBCs had higher proportion of such households in both rural and urban India than the others category. Female illiteracy continued to

be widespread among ST (61.9%), SC (60.5%) and OBC (51.4%) in rural India.

Table 2.8: Illiteracy Among Major Religious Groups (15 Years and Above)

NSSO Round	Religious Groups			
	Hindus	**Muslims**	**Christians**	**All**
Rural Male				
2004-05 (61st)	318	370	199	320
1999-2000 (55th)	368	409	241	369
1993-94 (50th)	410	473	224	411
Rural Female				
2004-05 (61st)	597	590	305	585
1999-2000 (55th)	658	664	370	648
1993-94 (50th)	719	710	362	708
Urban Male				
2004-05 (61st)	106	225	55	121
1999-2000 (55th)	129	259	60	146
1993-94 (50th)	145	292	56	162
Urban Female				
2004-05 (61st)	268	395	109	279
1999-2000 (55th)	306	445	122	318
1993-94 (50th)	347	526	142	363

Note: Figures are for per 1000 distribution of not literate persons of age 15 years and above.
Source: NSSO, 2007:23 and 24.

Figure 2.4: Illiteracy Among Households Across Social Groups
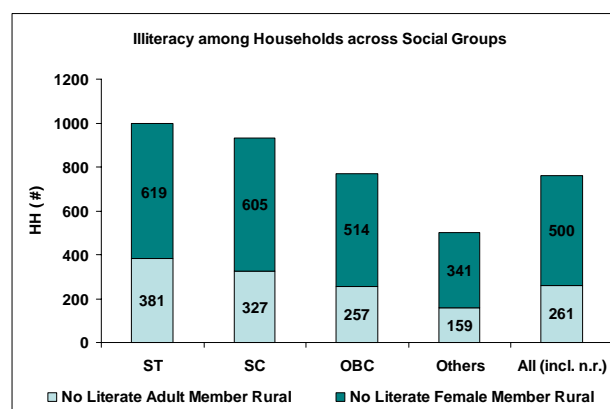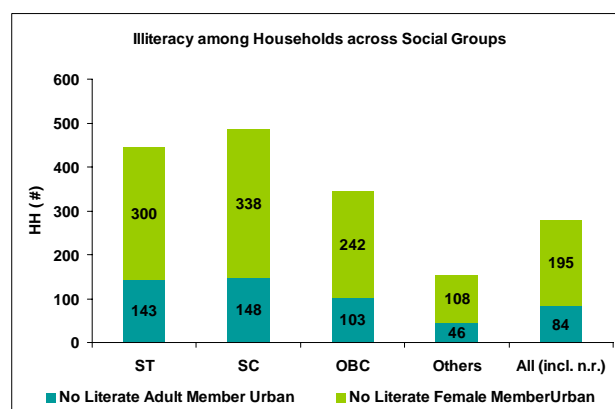
Source: Report No. 516, NSSO (2006b:28)

Table 2.9: Illiteracy Among Households Across Social Groups

Social Groups	Rural		Urban		Rural + Urban	
	No Literate Adult Member	No Literate Female Member	No Literate Adult Member	No Literate Female Member	No Literate Adult Member	No Literate Female Member
ST	381	619	143	300	358	587
SC	327	605	148	338	291	550
OBC	257	514	103	242	220	448
Others	159	341	46	108	113	246
All (incl. n.r.)	261	500	84	195	212	417

Note: Figures are for number of households with no literate member/female member of age 15 years and above per 1000 households.
Source: Report No. 516, NSSO, 2006b:28.

Low Educational Attainment Among Children

In the last decade there has been considerable improvement in educational participation of children (6-14 years) in schools. Figure 2.5 suggests that dropout rate in primary education (Class I-V) has gradually gone down by 10 percentage points, from 40.7% in 2000-01 to 31.4% in 2004-05. The trend appears to be very encouraging. Nonetheless, a large number of children still remain outside the school system. In 2004-05, 50.4% of children had dropped out from the elementary education system. However, quality of the learning achievement is a growing concern.

**Figure 2.5: Dropout Rates at Various Primary and Upper Primary
Levels (1990-2005)**
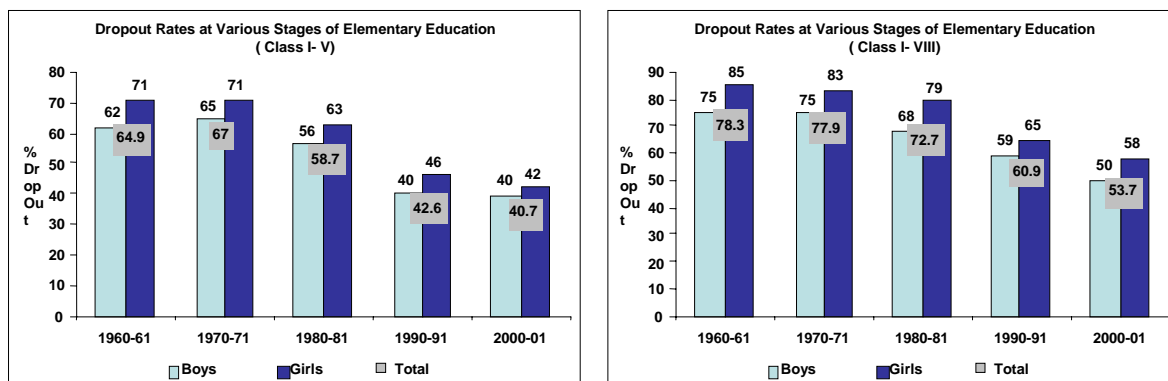
+   Dropout rate has been defined as percentage of the number of children to total enrolment, dropping out of the school education system in a particular year.

*   Provisional.

Source: GoI, 2007:XXI.

ASER surveys of 2005 and 2006, conducted by Pratham, give us a snapshot of learning achievements among children at elementary education level (Pratham, 2006 and 2007). In 2006, about 38.4% of all children in grade 1 could not read anything, 67.5% of grade 2 children could not read words, in grade 3, only 28% of all children could read grade 1 level text, and in grade 5 about 47% of children were unable to read grade 2 level text (Table 2.10). In arithmetic, 53.8% of children of grade 1 did not know anything, almost half of children in grade 2 could not recognise numbers, only 45.3% of children of grade 5 could do simple division, and only 24.2% of grade 8 children could do it. Thus, the ASER survey of 2006 shows the grim

reality and illustrates the nature and magnitude of the problem. Unless concerted efforts are made to improve the quality of education, sustainability of literacy among children with low level of educational attainment would be problematic.

The projections of NPA (GoI, 2003) are based on the assumption that universalisation of elementary education for all children (6-14 years) would contribute substantially to reduce illiteracy. However, dropout rate among children is still high and many children passing through the school are still have not been able to acquire basic literacy skills. This has significant implications for assessing estimates of literacy rates and magnitude of illiteracy in the future.

Table 2.10: Learning Achievement among Children

| Grade | Reading | | | | | |
	Nothing	Letter	Reading Word	Para at Grade 1 Level	Story at Grade 2 Level	Total
1	38.4	38.3	16.8	4.0	2.6	100
2	14.2	30.1	32.5	15.0	8.3	100
3	6.3	16.5	29.3	28.0	19.9	100
4	3.2	8.9	18.7	31.7	37.6	100
5	2.1	4.9	11.9	28.1	53.0	100
6	1.3	2.5	6.7	22.9	66.6	100
7	0.8	1.5	4.1	17.5	76.1	100
8	0.6	0.9	2.3	12.6	83.7	100
Total	9.9	14.8	16.5	19.8	39.0	100

| Grade | Artihmatic | | | | |
	Nothing	Number Recognition	Arithmetic Substraction	Division	Total
1	53.8	38.5	5.7	2.1	100
2	26.1	49.0	18.9	6.0	100
3	13.5	38.0	33.3	15.2	100
4	7.5	24.6	37.4	30.6	100
5	4.7	16.0	34.0	45.3	100
6	2.9	10.1	28.5	58.5	100
7	1.9	7.5	23.3	67.4	100
8	1.2	5.0	18.0	75.8	100
Total	16.1	25.7	24.6	33.6	100

Source: ASER 2006, Pratham, 2007..

Summary

Quality of literacy data plays an important role in formulation of effective policies and programmes. In India, there is considerable variation in the definition and methods of assessment of 'literacy' across various sources, such as decadal census, the National Sample Surveys (NSS), National Family Health Surveys and programme-level data generated through internal and external evaluation of adult education programmes (see Rao, 2002). Hence, literacy statistics generated by different sources are not strictly comparable.

There are two main problems with the existing approaches to assess of 'literacy'. First, they are based on different definitions and methods of data collection, such as self-referential categorisation, proxy indicators, or standardised tests etc. Second, they do not take into consideration the pluralities in literacy, i.e. multiple literacies. The dominant approaches to literacy assessment do not pay attention to literacy practices embedded in the social context. It is assumed that literacy is universal and literacy skills (reading, writing and counting) are detached from social practices. No attention is paid to understand how literacy acquisition and practices are socially constructed. Given the limitations of existing yardsticks of literacy, estimates of literacy are exaggerated and do not give us true picture.

India still faces the challenge of making its sizeable population literate. It is equally important to strengthen quality and sustainability of fragile literacy skills of neo-literates and extend opportunities for continued learning to the vast unschooled population of youth and adults in order to improve their livelihoods and quality of life. What are the policies and programmes that the government has taken up to meet these challenges?

THE SHIFTING POLICY DIRECTIVES AND PRIORITIES (1985 – 2000)

Despite massive illiteracy and low level of education among the adult population, adult education remained a marginal sub-sector of the general educational policy until the late 1970s. The government's policy towards adult education was characterised by the sporadic programmatic efforts with limited coverage.[iv] The first nationwide programme for adult education, known as the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP), was introduced in 1978. However, the promise of the NAEP was not fulfilled (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1980). Though it was intended to be a mass programme of adult education, it never assumed the mass character as envisaged in the policy statement. In practice, the NAEP remained a traditional centre-based, honorarium-based, and hierarchical programme of adult education, funded and controlled by the government, and did not make a dent in promoting adult literacy. It was the National Policy on Education –1986, that created favourable policy environment for elementary education and adult education, and also brought female education to the forefront

of development planning. This section highlights salient trends in the policy directives of adult education from the mid-1980s to 2000.

The National Policy on Education (NPE), first introduced in 1986 (GoI, 1986a and 1986b), and subsequently revised in 1992 (GoI, 1992a and 1992b) was a major attempt by the government to revamp the existing system of education in response to significant changes in India's development approach that paved the way to liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation of the highly controlled and regulated Indian economy.[v] It was a landmark in the history of educational reforms in India as it marked a beginning of the new direction of educational development and set the parameters for restructuring the general educational system in response to the neo-liberal economic reforms.[vi]

Overall, the policy did not pay adequate attention to the long-term implications of economic restructuring on the development of human resources

(Uppendranath, 1993). Its major thrust was on consolidating higher levels of the educational system while improving efficiency and quality of the existing system of education through efficient use of financial resources and better management of educational resources.[vii] The NPE (1986 and its revision in 1992) gave unqualified priority to basic education. It acknowledged educational disparities in terms of gender, caste and region and emphasised a positive and interventionist role of education in addressing gender, social and regional disparities in accessing education by the socio-economically disadvantaged groups through specific programmatic interventions. Specifically, the policy proposed a three-pronged strategy of universalisation of elementary education and universal retention among children up to 14 years of age, non-formal education in the educationally backward states, and a mission approach to make 100 million adults literate by 1997. The policy of promoting basic education was essentially shaped by the state's agenda of protecting the lower levels of education as 'safety net' in the market economy, while paving the way for privatisation of the higher levels of education. Although the NPE (1986) and its revision (1992) did not make direct link between literacy and the market economy, the policy discourse on adult education was set within the overall context of revamping the existing educational system in order to pave the way for the market economy.

Broadening of the Approach to Adult Education

The NPE (1986) has been a major landmark in the history of adult education as it widened the scope of adult education, and brought adult literacy to the forefront of educational planning. It articulated for the first time the national commitment to addressing the problem of eradicating adult illiteracy in a time-bound manner with planned, concerted and coordinated efforts. The policy provided impetus to development of a mass approach to eradication of literacy with mass mobilisation and support of divergent sections of society (see GoI, 1986a and 1986b).

Furthermore, NPE (1986) underscores continuing education as an indispensable tool not only for human resource development, but also for the creation of a learning society. It advocates continuing education for neo-literates and school drop-outs through *Jana Shikshan Nilayams* so that they could continue learning beyond rudimentary literacy education and apply this learning to improve their lives. But the policy did not pay adequate attention to operationalise continuing education and lifelong learning. The policy also enlarged the scope of adult education to provide flexible learning

opportunities to out-of-school youth, neo-literate adults and workers of the unorganised sector through the existing institutions and agencies.[viii] It envisaged expanding non-formal, flexible and need-based vocational education and training programmes for them to upgrade their knowledge and skills to improve their productivity and skills.

Although the new educational policy has brought adult literacy and continuing education as an important strategy for basic education, there is apparent neglect of building the sustainable and expanded system of adult education and training with adequate institutional structures, staff and resources. Hence, the government's commitment to adult education and continuing education has continued to be programmatic.

The Campaign Approach to Literacy

Given the magnitude of the task involved in promoting literacy among the vast population of non-literates, the Programme of Action – 1992 (GoI, 1992b) endorsed partnership between the government and civil society, and put forward the idea of a 'technological and societal' mission for eradication of illiteracy. It provided impetus to development of a campaign approach to promoting adult literacy. Subsequently, the mandate of the NPE (1986) was operationalised through the National Literacy Mission (NLM), which was launched by the government in 1988

(see GoI, 1988). The NLM was culmination of the national efforts to urgently address the problem of widespread illiteracy in the adult population through a massive intervention even before articulation of EFA goals in 1990.

The NLM was envisaged as an integral part of the overall development efforts of the country and identified as one of the five national technological missions to apply technology and scientific research to promote literacy. It was also conceived as a 'societal' mission to mobilise support of the wider sections of society for the achievement of NLM goals. The idea of a 'societal and technological' mission for eradication of illiteracy added a new sense of urgency and seriousness for improving the literacy situation, and positioned the mission as a responsibility of the whole nation, involving all sections of society in implementation of the large-scale adult literacy programme.

Initially, the NLM's objective was to impart functional literacy to 80 million illiterate adults in the age group of 15-35 years by 1995[ix] (GoI, 1988). As this age group belongs to the productive and reproductive period of life, the NLM focused on it to give young adults a second chance for learning in case they had missed the opportunity or were denied access to formal education system. Specifically, the NLM assigned priority to eradicating illiteracy among women, scheduled castes and scheduled

tribes, and other disadvantaged groups through mass mobilisation and support of the wider sections of people. The instrumentalist approach of NLM was based on the premise that provision of basic literacy education would tackle the problem of 'eradication of illiteracy' without bringing necessary socio-economic reforms.

NLM from the inception emphasised the active participation of NGOs in its mission. However, until 1989 it continued with the centre-based approach of the earlier adult education programmes and did not have a clear vision about how to operationalise its mandate. The major breakthrough came in 1990 with the success of the mass literacy campaigns in Kerala, first in Kottayam city and then in Ernakulam district. These campaigns were spearheaded by Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), a voluntary organisation based on the people's science movement in Kerala with the active cooperation of the local administration and large scale mobilisation of all sections of society. KSSP and *Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti* (BGVS), a voluntary organisation at the national level supported by the All India People's Science Networks, were the key architects of the NLM's campaign approach to literacy. BGVS played an important role in fostering active partnership between the district administration, volunteers, social

activists, NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) in Total Literacy Campaign (TLC), and in shaping the TLC's approach and strategy in the areas of environment-building, organisational and management structure, and monitoring and evaluation at the district, block and village levels. Subsequently, NLM adopted area-specific, time-bound and volunteers-based Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) with total coverage for the given age group, as a principle strategy for promoting literacy on a mass scale. Consequently, the direction of adult education programme shifted from the centre-based approach to the campaign approach.[x]

The key to the unique features of TLC strategy were: (1) environment-building and mass mobilisation through *kala jathas* (cultural caravans), folk media, radio and television, personal contacts, conventions, rallies, etc. to generate social demand for literacy and involve wider sections of society in promoting literacy; (2) large-scale involvement of volunteers for literacy work; and (3) planning and implementation of TLCs at the district level through decentralised administrative and organisational structure of *Zilla Saksharata Samiti*. The underlying assumption of the TLC approach was that intensive literacy campaigns would eradicate illiteracy across the country, irrespective of the structural context of underdevelopment,

deprivation and the history of social movements.

The NLM also introduced a technocratic pedagogic approach, known as Improved Pace and Content of Learning (IPCL) to address the problems of slow pace and poor quality of learning among adult learners (see GoI, 1993). The IPCL approach assumes that higher quality pedagogic inputs would improve the pace of learning and enable learners to acquire the expected level of literacy in about 200 hours as per the NLM norms.

In summary, even before the World Conference on Education for All at Jomtien (1990), promotion of adult literacy on a mass scale was an integral part of the government's educational policy on basic education. Mass literacy campaign model was the main policy instrument to eradicate adult illiteracy. The NLM policy document envisaged nationwide expansion of post-literacy and continuing education through new institutional structures, better utilisation of the existing infrastructures and open and distance learning. However, initially the NLM did not pay adequate attention to devising appropriate strategies for linking literacy with post-literacy and continuing education. On the whole, the government's commitment to adult education continues to be programmatic. Unlike elementary education, the government has not paid attention to developing a sustainable system of adult

education to promote literacy and continuing education among adults from disadvantaged and marginalised sections of society.

Revamping of the National Literacy Mission

Initially, the focus of NLM strategy remained on mass literacy campaigns. In the absence of effective policy, earlier programmes of post-literacy and continuing education yielded limited results. It was Arun Ghosh Committee that emphasised the significance of post-literacy and continuing education for sustainable literacy and for linking literacy with development in a way that it is beneficial to the neo-literates and the poor (GoI, 1994). With most districts covered under TLC in the late 1990s, it became essential to move beyond the stage of basic literacy to post-literacy and continuing education. In the Ninth Plan (1997-2002), the NLM's approach shifted towards consolidating the gains of literacy and promoting post-literacy and continuing education (Planning Commission, 1999). Changes in the NLM's approach are described as "revamping of NLM". The revised approach of NLM is reported in EFA 2000 Assessment and Dakar Declarations as a reference point. Subsequently, the NLM's approach to attain Dakar goals is modified. The new targets set are: achievement of 75 % literacy level by 2007, and expansion of

continuing education programmes to cover all districts by 2007.

Specifically, the revamped NLM policy has continued to focus on imparting functional literacy to non-literates in the age group of 15-35 years. However, it has also enlarged scope of the programme to include children in the age group 9-14 years from the areas not covered by the non-formal education programmes to ensure that TLCs impart basic literacy skills to out-of-school children as well. The NLM continues to focus on the disadvantaged sections, such as women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and backward classes as the main target groups. There has been, however, a subtle change in the underlying policy discourse. Promotion of literacy among these groups is not seen as a strategy to address existing educational inequalities, but as a means to educate a generation which it is hoped will be in a better gear to will educate their children to ensure realisation of the EFA goal of universalisation of elementary education.

The NLM continues to emphasise women as an important target group for its programmes and gives priority to 45 districts with low female literacy. It advocates increasing and strengthening women's participation in literacy, post-literacy and continuing education programmes to attain broader

developmental goals. However, the policy is silent on the strategy to mainstreaming gender concerns in overall planning and implementation.

Despite fragile levels of literacy attained through TLCs, and their sustainability in divergent social, political and economic context, the NLM assumes that TLCs have succeeded in making a large adult population literate. Based on this premise, NLM has shifted its attention to tackling the problem of 'residual illiteracy'. The revamped policy adopts an integrated approach to make basic literacy, post-literacy and continuing education phases into a learning continuum. It is assumed that such approach would achieve continuity, efficiency and convergence and minimise necessary time lag between different phases of learning.

The focus of NLM's strategy has shifted from mobilisation approach to managerial approach for implementation of literacy campaigns. Volunteers are no longer the backbone of literacy campaigns as emphasis has shifted to paid workers (*preraks*) with low wages.

There is a major change in the NLM policy, its emphasis being on decentralisation of management of adult education from the national to state and district levels and increase in involvement of PRIs, NGOs and the community in implementation of various

programmes to meet the diversified learning needs of the community. Consequently, financial and administrative roles of the central and state governments, ZSS, PRIs, and other local bodies and NGOs are redefined for decentralised and disaggregated planning and implementation of various programmes.

The policy emphasises greater role of PRIs, NGOs and the community in planning, implementation and monitoring of various programmes at the district level. It envisages that such institutional arrangements would facilitate decentralised, debureaucratised and participatory mode of programme planning and implementation at various levels. Eventually, financing of literacy, post-literacy and continuing education programmes will be taken over by the state governments, panchayats, and/or the village community.

In essence, decentralisation is perceived primarily as a strategy for efficient management and delivery of the programmes than strengthening democratic participation in educational governance. The major thrust of NLM's revised policy is on efficient management and delivery of various programmes through devolution of financial and administrative powers from national to state level, and strengthening and revamping of existing institutions, such as State Resource Centres, and *Jan Shikshan Sansthans*, for providing resource support to ongoing programmes. At the district level, partnership with the community, NGOs and *panchayats* is advocated essentially for efficient delivery of the programmes. The proposed decentralisation strategy will expand the role of state governments, ZSS, PRIs and the local community in financing ongoing programmes and in supporting them in the long run. However, decentralisation without adequate devolution of powers to the local level, and without building capacity of people at different levels to effectively plan and manage various programmes is likely to further weaken overall provisions and implementation of these programmes.

Furthermore, the revised NLM policy advocates strengthening institutional linkages within the educational department and other development departments to attain the NLM objectives of imparting functional literacy and building partnership with other agencies and organisations for implementation of various programmes. Such partnership more for improving efficiency of programme delivery rather than for strengthening the institutionalised system.

In sum, the revamped policy of NLM has introduced a significant shift in the direction of adult education. It has continued with the target-oriented approach, but there is a marked

transition in terms of conceptualisation of different phases -- literacy, post-literacy, and continuing education – and the implementation strategy. Overall, the focus has transformed from "eradication of illiteracy" (i.e. 'total literacy' in the selected age group) to removal of 'residual illiteracy' and from mobilisation approach to managerial approach in implementation of literacy campaigns. Continuing education is viewed as a key strategy for creating the learning society. On the other hand, devolution of financial and administrative powers from NLM to SLMA, and decentralisation of management of various programmes at the district level, and the expanded role of NGOs and community in programme implementation are some of the most crucial aspects of the revised policy of the NLM.

The policy reflects neo-liberal approach to governance of adult education programmes for efficient delivery of services, and diminishing political will of the central government to build a robust and expanded system of adult education for meeting divergent learning needs of the vast population of non-literate and neoliterate youth and adults on a sustainable basis.

THE POST-DAKAR TRENDS IN THE POLICY

With changes in India's development approach since the mid-1980s, educating the vast population of non-literate adults and out-of-school youth has become a development imperative. NPE (1986) and the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) held at Jomtien (Thailand) during March 5-9, 1990) provided impetus to promoting basic education among non-literate youth and adults (WCEFA, 1990). To what extent existing policy directives are geared towards meeting Dakar goals of EFA for adult literacy and learning?

Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning in the Legislation

The Constitution of India recognises the significance of education for social transformation. It perceives education as essential for making the provision of equality of opportunity a reality. There are several Articles in the Constitution and specific amendments related to education and educational opportunity (see GoI, 2001a). The 86th Constitutional Amendment Act (2002) makes free and compulsory education a justifiable fundamental right for all children in the age group 6-14 years and guarantees eight years of elementary education to each and every child in the country (GoI, 2002).[xi] The underlying assumption is that universal elementary education (UEE) among children (6-14 years) will boost the gross literacy rate for the general population and automatically tackle the problem of adult illiteracy.

The 72nd and 73rd constitutional amendments, introduced in the 1990s, pave the way to decentralisation of educational governance at the local level. Specifically, the amendments advocated the delegation of authority related to education (including primary and secondary schools, adult and non-formal education, technical training and vocational education) to Panchayati Raj Bodies (Article 243 G of the 11th Schedule). These amendments envisage increased participation of the community in social sectors and development administration. Given lack of political will to promote adult literacy and learning as an important component

of EFA strategy, community participation per se, is unlikely to improve planning and implementation of adult education programmes at the local level.

In the recent years, literacy has become part of the human rights discourse. However, rights of the vast population of non-literate youth and adults, basic literacy education and learning have remained invisible even in the debate and discussions on education as a fundamental right by the government and NGOs. Neither the legislation nor the educational policy guarantees adults the right to education as recommended by UNESCO in its 1976 recommendation and in the *Hamburg Declaration* 3.

Thus, focus of the constitutional amendments is primarily on elementary education of children (6-14 years), and not on adult education and learning for youth/adults. Hardly any efforts are made to justify literacy as a part of constitutional provision and guarantee. There is no serious concern for the right to basic literacy and learning for the vast majority of the non-literate adult population.

Policy Rationale and Direction

In India, concerns for the poor and women have come to the forefront of

development planning under the strategy for "globalisation with human face". Equity is critical in assessing the distributional effects of structural adjustment in the transition period and in the long-run as the adverse impact of structural adjustment is likely to fall on the poor, and women who are less likely to have access to economic and other resources, and power to improve their living conditions. Since the 1990s, successive five-year development plans of India have continued to emphasise poverty eradication. Access to basic education and health services are perceived as key indicators of human development for economic progress. There is, however, a gradual shift in the policy rationale for literacy. Earlier policy of NLM perceived literacy as a tool for social transformation and empowerment. In the revised NLM policy, there has been greater emphasis on human resource and skills development. Besides literacy, there is growing emphasis on providing neo-literates opportunities for vocational training to enable them to earn their living.

The Tenth Plan recognised education as a critical input in human resource development and in economic growth of the country (Planning Commission 2002). It emphasised strong linkages of human development indicators with eradication of poverty and economic

progress. Although major indicators of socio-economic development are interlinked, the plan considered literacy rate as a major determinant for increase or decrease in the other indicators. The Tenth Plan (2002-07) specified monitorable targets for specific indicators of social development in health, education and gender equality. These targets are not identical to MDGs, however, it is assumed that MDGs would be achieved if these targets are met. Only two out of 11 monitorable targets related to basic education and health focus on literacy - reduction in gender gap in literacy by at least 50% by 2007, and increase in literacy rates to 75% within the Plan period. As these targets are related to improving literacy rate for the general population (7+ years), emphasis on adult literacy is implicit in the plan.

The new government under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) that came to power in 2004 reiterated its commitment to pursuing economic reforms with a human face to stimulate growth, investment and bringing back the focus on basic development objectives – access to health, education, employment and food security. It has adopted the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) to promote 'globalisation with a human face" (see GoI, 2004).[xii] Several new initiatives and provisions of the NCMP have bearing on education.[xiii] Specifically, increase in

financial resources and investment in quality elementary education features high in the NCMP to meet the goal of universalisation of elementary education. Despite inclusion of 'eradication of illiteracy' in NCMP, elementary education has remained a top priority sector for the government.

Based on the revised NLM policy directives, the Tenth Plan (2002-07, GoI, 2002) continued the integrated literacy approach (TLC and post-literacy and continuing education) followed in the Ninth Plan and substantially increased scope of the programmes. It endorsed the NLM objective of attaining sustainable threshold level of 75% literacy by 2007. It suggested the two-pronged strategy: eradication of residual illiteracy, specifically among the population with high illiteracy (women, SCs, STs and other communities) and in low-literacy districts through the fast track initiatives, and development of need-based and target-specific programmes integrating literacy with vocational and technical skills and with income generation and quality of life improvement programmes. The Plan continued to advocate greater involvement of NGOs at all levels in the social sector and increase in people's participation and ownership of various programmes, while limiting the role of the state to a facilitator. The mid-term appraisal of the Tenth Plan highlights slow pace of progress in achieving

monitorable targets for health, education and gender equality (Planning Commission, 2005). There is, however, hardly any discussion on achievement of targets related to 'eradication of illiteracy'.

The Eleventh Plan (2007-12) envisages achieving faster, more broad-based and inclusive growth by focusing on reducing poverty and bridging various divides that exist in society (Planning Commission, 2008). Its strategy of inclusiveness emphasises education, health and other basic public facilities. On the other hand, human resource development is viewed as a key strategy for all-round progress of the economy and the people. Elementary education continues to remain a priority sector of education in the Eleventh Plan. However, for the growing economy in competitive global environment, universalisation of primary education is not perceived as sufficient. For the knowledge economy, the plan emphasises the need to expand higher levels of education, including secondary education, and to strengthen existing institutes of higher education and technical education, while improving the quality and standards of education. In the Eleventh Plan (2007-12), enhancement of vocational skills has become an important priority area for meeting the changing skills requirements of the economy.

However, the focus is on vocational education and training for the educated youth.

Approach Paper of the Eleventh Plan (2007-12) assumes that the 10th plan target of attaining 75% literacy rate is likely to be attained by 2007, and aims at achieving adult literacy at 85% by the end of the 11th plan period. It expresses concern about both the magnitude of illiteracy among the adult population and the low-quality of adult literacy. The approach paper acknowledges that of the 300 million adult illiterates in the country, a significant proportion of them, particularly in the 35+ age group, are not covered under any adult education programme. It also underscores that the measure of adult literacy used in the literacy programme is not an adequate indicator of the level of functional literacy that is required for the new millennium. It suggests a new programme using computer-based self-learning system for the 35+ age group,[xiv] and advocates this programme as a national mission for acquiring skills for reading a newspaper. It envisages that such a mission would make India 100% literate within 5 years. For quickly attaining the goal of functional literacy, there is a gradual shift from the broad-based concept of functional literacy towards minimalist approach to literacy acquisition.[xv] On the other hand, the plan proposes to achieve higher levels

of literacy through workable model of continuing education.

Furthermore, the Eleventh Plan emphasises the need for assessing the quality of programmes implemented by NGOs and greater involvement of NYKs network and PRI network to fulfil the goal of adult literacy under the overall umbrella of TLCs. Thus, the task of promoting literacy appears to be left with NGOs and local institutions.

In sum, despite such a strong concern for human development in developing planning in the new millennium, it is still a long way to go to dramatically improve access to quality healthcare, basic education and other essential services and improve the conditions of the poor and socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Development plans reflect ambitious targets to achieve the EFA goal of literacy. But, adult literacy and lifelong learning have continued to be of low priority for the government. The underlying assumption is that the task of making India literate would be attained through fast track initiatives in tackling residual illiteracy and continuing education and primary education would contribute to high levels of literacy.

The National Plan of Action for EFA (2003)

The National Plan of Action (NPA), formulated in 2003 as a follow-up of the

Dakar Framework of Action for EFA, makes an attempt to link national policy goals and targets with the global targets of EFA (GoI, 2003). NPA (2003) highlights the government's approach to meeting the Dakar goals for EFA with regard to adult literacy and life long learning.

Reaffirming the importance given to elementary education in NPE (1986), the NPA (2003) gives the highest priority to achieving the goals of universalisation of elementary education. The plan emphasises removal of all disparities, including gender, and advocates more focused and gender-based interventions exclusively for girls and women. Overall, the NPA (2003) advocate two interrelated strategies for achieving the goals of universalisation of elementary education and promotion of 'total' literacy. First, it emphasises the preparation of contextualised and decentralised district-wise action plans to address local needs and demands and reaching the unreached. Second, it underscored active involvement of people in local-level EFA planning and implementation through democratic devolution of powers, particularly through *Panchayati Raj Institutions* (local self-governing bodies) or village education committees and school management bodies.

In the light of the revised framework of NLM and targets set by the Tenth Plan (2002-07), NPE (2003) attempted to benchmark NLM strategies in relation to the EFA concerns and argued that NLM should be able to attain the targets far ahead of the dates set by the Dakar Framework of Action. On the basis of projections, based mostly on Census 2001, it anticipated substantial decline in the absolute number of illiterates (from about 263 million illiterates in 2001 to 150 million in 2015) and the feasibility of achieving the Dakar goal of halving the illiteracy rate by 2015. It uncritically assumed that most of the learners would graduate to continuing education stage upon successful completion of literacy and post-literacy phases and the entire country would be covered by the continuing education programme by the end of the Tenth Plan in 2007. NPE (2003) highlighted overall targets set for attaining Dakar goals, but it did not pay adequate attention to specifying resources (human and financial) required for attaining these targets. It assumed that both, central and state governments would provide adequate resources for achieving the set targets.

With regard to education for empowerment of women, NPA (2003) reiterated the policy directives of NPE (1986) that emphasised the removal of gender disparities in education and advocated female education as an instrument of change for promoting women's equality and empowerment. Overall, education of girls remained the priority area. The NPE (2003) highlighted the thrust areas of NLM in the light of the Dakar Framework of Action, and strategies for bridging gender disparities in literacy in some of the states with low female literacy and for continuing education. For example, involving Panchayats in promoting female literacy in Rajasthan, use of SHGs as the nucleus to eradicate residual illiteracy among women, *Mahila Padhna Badhna Andolan* in Madhya Pradesh, etc, can be cited. However, it remained vague in terms of its approach to pursuing lifelong learning.

Although NPE (2003) advocated addressing gender concerns in all interventions, the target-oriented approach to adult education programmes remained unchanged. On the other hand, the *Mahila Samakhya* Programme was perceived as a key strategy for empowerment of rural women, particularly from the marginalised and socio-economically disadvantaged sections of society.

In setting up ambitious targets and deadlines, NPA (2003) appears to have given some importance to elementary education and adult literacy and non-formal education. However, fund

allocations to adult education have remained meager in comparison to elementary education. The low priority to adult education is evident in the proposed fund flows. NPA (2003) estimates total fund requirements of Rs 952,770 million for EFA, of which 54.9% (Rs 522,800 million) will be for elementary education, and only 6.7% (Rs 63,400 million) for literacy and continuing education (GoI, 2003:95).

Financing of Adult Education

In the context of neo-liberal economic reforms, issues related to financing of education have come to the forefront because of dwindling investment in the education sector. In India, the government is the principal source of financing basic education, including adult education.[xvi] For achieving EFA goal of literacy adequate and sustained funding is needed. The emerging trends and issues in financing of adult education in the post-Dakar period need to the understood.

Share of Adult Education in GDP

Public spending reflects the government's commitment and political will to invest in education as a public good. The NPE 1986 and the modified policy of 1992 had recommended that public expenditure on education should be raised to 6% of the national income. Although the proportion of GDP spent on education has increased over the years since 1990, it is still a long way to go to meet this target.[xvii]

Though education is perceived as an investment in human resource development, public expenditure on education in the post–Dakar period (2001-06) has remained less than 4%, same as for the early 1990s. The UPA government has not been able to fulfil its commitment to increase the share of GDP on education to 6% in the context of neo-liberal reforms.

The share of adult education in GDP is very marginal (Table 2.11). Total expenditure on adult education by education and other departments declined significantly during 1996-97 (Rs. 2057.4 million) and 1999-2000 (Rs. 1865.3 million). The share of adult education in GDP has declined from 0.05 to 0.01% between 1990-91 and 1999-2000. Although expenditure on adult education has increased from 3595.6 million in 2001-02 to Rs 4501.1 million in 2004-05, the share of adult education to GDP has stagnated at 0.02% during 2001-04.

**Table 4.1:   Total Expenditure on Adult Education by Education and
Other Departments in India (1990-91 to 2004-05)**

Year	Adult Education by Education and other Departments+		
	Expenditure (Rs.)	Percentage to GDP	Percentage to Total Expenditure on All Sectors
1990-1991	2731.5	0.05	0.19
1991-1992	2285.2	0.04	0.13
1992-1993	2109.7	0.03	0.11
1993-1994	2800.1	0.04	0.13
1994-1995	3383.1	0.04	0.13
1995-1996	2597.1	0.02	0.09
1996-1997	2057.4	0.02	0.06
1997-1998	2098.0	0.02	0.06
1998-1999	1894.5	0.01	0.04
1999-2000	1865.3	0.01	0.04
2000-01	2261.2	0.01	0.04
2001-02	3595.6	0.02	0.06
2002-03	4022.5	0.02	0.06
2003-04	3956.5	0.02	0.05
2004-05 (RE)**	4501.1	0.02	0.05

RE: Revised Estimates.

+ Expenditure on education by other departments has been distributed by level on the basis of expenditure (%) by education departments.

Source: GoI, (2007:105).

Thus, importance of adult education as a sub-sector of education appears to be diminishing despite promises of attaining the NLM's goal of reaching 75% literacy level by 2007.

Resource Allocations and Utilisation in Development Plans

In elementary education, non-plan budget constitutes the main component of expenditures for sustaining the existing institutionalised system. In contrast, plan allocations form the major part of the budget for adult education. Given the programmatic approach that guides the planning of adult education in development plans, non-plan budget that contributes to building the expanded and institutionalised system of education is not given primacy in financing of adult education in India.

Since the mid-1980s, elementary education has been given top priority over all other sub-sectors of general education in development plans. Increases in allocations to elementary education and dwindling resources for adult education since the Seventh Plan suggest diminishing significance of adult education as a sub-sector of general education (Table 4.1). The underlying assumption is that investment in elementary education will improve the overall literacy situation in the country.

Table 4.2: Plan Outlays and Expenditure on Elementary Education and Adult Education

(Rs. in millions)

P l a n		Sectors of Education		
		Elementary	**Adult**	**Total**
Seventh Plan (1985-90)	Outlays	19640 (31)	**5490 (9)**	63830 (100)
	Expenditure	28280 (33)	**6098 (7)**	85400 (100)
Eight Plan (1992-97)	Outlays	92010 (43)	**15550 (7)**	212180 (100)
	Expenditure	124240 (46)	**11707 (4)**	274580 (100)
Ninth Plan (1997-2002)	Outlays	273630 (51)	**11020 (2)**	535250 (100)
	Expenditure	268110 (50)	**8905 (2)**	529890 (100)
Tenth Plan (2002-07)*	Outlays	287500 (66)	**12500 (3)**	438250 (100)

Note: Figures are in rupees million. Figures in parenthesis are percentage of total outlays/ expenditure on the education sector in a given plan.

* Plan outlays for the Tenth Plan (2002-07) are for the central government.

Resource allocations to adult education in development plans in the post-Dakar period reveal low political will to invest in adult literacy and continuing education. The Tenth Plan (2002-07) was formulated to align with the requirements of the Dakar goals for EFA. Although allocations to adult education increased from Rs. 8905 million (2%) in the Ninth Plan to Rs.12500 million (3%) in the Tenth Plan, these were much lower than the proposed plan outlays of Rs. 63395 million to adult education in the Tenth Plan by the Working Group on Elementary Education and Adult Education.

There is considerable fluctuation in utilisation of plan allocations for adult education (Table 4.1). Notwithstanding the increased allocations to adult education with the large-scale expansion of TLCs, there is a sharp decline in utilisation of plan allocations on adult education from the Seventh Plan to the Eighth Plan. In the Ninth Plan, utilisation of plan outlays appears to have somewhat improved. Low utilisation of allocated funds for adult education could be attributed to procedural delays, and administrative bottlenecks (Shah, 2003:28-34). Furthermore, low utilization of the allocated budget written the plan time results in further decrease in budget allocations as low utilisation of budget is used as a justification for reduction in

the budget for the next year. There is a vicious circle. As long as programme implementation is weak on the ground, utilisation of funds will be low. The dismal situation of fund utilisation in adult education is unlikely to improve in the absence of bureaucratic and political will to take up adult basic education on a sustained basis.

Decentralisation of Financing of Adult Education

Earlier, the TLCs remained the government-sponsored literacy campaigns with high contribution of non-monetary inputs by the people (Varghese, 1997).[xviii] Since the Ninth Plan, the government is advocating "cooperative-federalism" for implementation of various programmes in partnership between the central and state governments. There has been a realignment of responsibilities for financing and administration of adult education programmes. With the introduction of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, *Zilla Parishads* have been made responsible for implementing various programmes of adult education. State governments are expected to play a much more active role in financing and administration of adult education. The extent to which resources are allocated to local bodies is likely to depend upon devolution of finances and powers by the state governments. Unlike primary education, the system of

adult education is not institutionalised yet as state governments are heavily dependent on the central government for creating and maintaining administrative structures at state/district levels for effective implementation of adult education programmes. Unless the government gives priority to adult education in educational planning, financing of adult education will remain uncertain.

In the Tenth Plan, the existing pattern of funding of literacy campaigns with funding ratio of 2:1 between the central and state governments has continued. The central government provides 100% financial assistance to continuing education for the first three years. Thereafter, the state government is expected to share 50% of the expenditure in the fourth and fifth years of the project. The policy is silent on how continuing education centres would be run beyond five years. The underlying assumption is that *panchayats* with the support of the community will mobilise resources for these centres.

With decentralisation of financial powers, there is a total reversal of the earlier fund transfer system from NLM directly to ZSS. Instead, the fund flow system for adult education programmes is from NLM to SLMA to ZSS. Such administrative arrangements have contributed to uncertainty and delays between sanction and receipt of funds

and adversely affected programme implementation. Furthermore, the bureaucracy has also been responsible for utilisation of funds. The bureaucrats could facilitate timely approval and release of funds and play a proactive role or hinder the process of fund flows, depending on their interest and commitment to adult and continuing education. Frequent transfer of officials at the district level, their unfamiliarity with the accounting system of the Government of India, and administrative procedures often delay timely sanctions of the funds. Long delays in release of funds lead to deterioration of programme implementation and discontinuation of learning. Will devolution of financial powers from the central government to state governments and local bodies lead to withdrawal of the government's support to adult education in the long run? Given programmatic approach to adult education, and high priority accorded to elementary education in achieving EFA goals, adult education is likely to a marginalised sector of basic education policy in India.

In sum, given priority assigned to universalisation of elementary education as a key strategy of attaining EFA goals, there appears to be apparent lack of bureaucratic and political will to capitalise the momentum created through TLCs and sustain the literacy movement. The state governments/UTs are not in a position to fully utilise the

adult education budget in the absence of adequate institutionalised structures to promote literacy, post-literacy and continuing education on a sustained basis. Overall, low utilisation of the allocated budget reveals the dismal status of implementation of various adult education programmes. It suggests that adult education is no longer a priority either for the national government or the states/UTs. What is lacking is a strong political and bureaucratic will to invest in adult basic education, which is a public good and a basic human right.

The Shifting Approach to Governance

To meet divergent learning needs of adults and youth requires commensurate institutional structures to facilitate decentralised planning and implementation of various interventions, partnership-building with all stakeholders and professional and technical support. Given programmatic approach pursued in the adult education sector, building of the institutionalised and expanded system of adult and continuous education has not received adequate attention. On the other hand, the revamped NLM policy document, Tenth Plan and NPA (2003) stress decentralisation of management of adult education with devolution of authority from the national to the state and district levels, and emphasise involvement of

PRIs, NGOs and the community to meet the diversified learning needs of the community.

The Controlled Decentrali-sation and Devolution of Powers

The NLM has continued with the three-tier organisational and management structure for overall planning, implementation and monitoring of various large-scale programmes of TLCs, post-literacy and continuing education. At the national, state and district levels, various institutions, organisations, and agencies are assigned specific roles and responsibilities to pursue the policy directives in adult literacy and non-formal education. The institutional framework articulated in the revised NLM policy indicates a gradual trend towards decentralisation of responsibility for adult education programmes from the centre to the state level, emphasis on greater involvement of local governance bodies, and subcontracting of services to the NGOs.

Until mid-1990s, the National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) played an important role in shaping the direction of adult education policy. Subsequently, NLMA has remained dormant. Reconstitution of the General Body and the Executive Committee of NLMA in 2005 has not brought any drastic change in the situation.

With the merger of departments of adult education and elementary education into a single department in the late 1990s, significance and priority given to adult education appears to have diminished in MHRD. Non-formal education for out-of-school adults and youth and lifelong learning involve multi-sectoral educational activities. However, there is no inter-ministerial coordination body at the national level other than NLM to network with the other departments and various development ministries/departments dealing with the adults and youth in the matters related to policy planning and implementation for adult education.

On the other hand, role of the Directorate of Adult Education (DAE), set up within the MHRD to provide necessary technical and resource support to the NLMA, has weakened over time due to limited institutional resources (human and financial). Consequently, dependency of DAE on external consultancy services for professional and academic support has increased over the years. There is no other national-level autonomous institution to provide academic and technical inputs to adult education policy and programmes.[xix]

Starting with the Ninth Plan (1997-2002), a perceptible shift is noticed in the NLM policy towards devolution of powers from the NLMA to State Literacy Mission Authority (SLMA), particularly with regard to financial sanctions of various projects of literacy, post-literacy and continuing education. With the devolution of financial and administrative powers at the state level, the SLMA is now the nodal agency for major policy decisions and strategies concerning management, monitoring and implementation of adult and continuing education. The NLM has attempted to rejuvenate the SLMA and empower it to approve continuing education projects and put funds at its disposal for these projects. SLMA is also authorised to sanction literacy related projects to voluntary agencies at the state level. Although SLMA's role in financing, management and implementation of adult and continuing education in the respective state has expanded, the policy directives are still determined by NLMA. Given low priority to adult education in basic education policy, devolution of powers to SLMA has not revitalised the programmes. It could be seen as a way for the central government to curtail its responsibility, while retaining the control over strategic policy decisions.

On the other hand, the State Resource Centres (SRCs) have been set up by the central government mostly under the aegis of NGOs to provide technical support and guidance to the ongoing programmes of adult education in the respective states. The role of SRCs has gradually expanded to undertake

research, evaluation and monitoring of various programmes in different states and implementation of continuing education projects. Since the Ninth Plan, efforts have been made to revamp and strengthen the infrastructure and resource facilities of SRCs so that they could play catalytic role in adult education. However, with diminishing technical and resource support of the DAE for developing their capabilities, only a few SRCs have the capacity to pursue the new mandate.

The Government-Controlled 'Autonomous' Structures

District Literacy Society, known as *Zilla Saksharta Samiti*, (ZSS), is a registered society under the Societies Registration Act. It is set up as an independent and autonomous body with overall responsibility for operationalising various programmes of adult education in rural areas within the NLM's framework.[xx] It is also entrusted with the responsibility to facilitate partnership between the district administration and civil society. The broad-based and participatory institutional structure of ZSS at district, *panchayat* and village levels is envisaged to elicit the support of district-level government agencies and organisations, government functionaries from various departments, NGOs and voluntary agencies, interested citizens, grassroots organisations and the community.

In the early 1990s, decentralised structure of ZSS facilitated partnership between district administration and non-officials from civil society in several districts for planning and implementation of TLCs (Karlekar, 2000). However, in most districts, ZSS functioned as a bureaucratic body under the leadership of a district collector. Once TLCs lost its momentum as people's literacy movement and became a routine and target-oriented programme, ZSS has also lost its dynamism.

Decentralised district-wise planning through ZSS, introduced in the 1990s, still continues to be key strategy for effectively addressing local needs and demands for functional literacy and lifelong learning. NLM has proposed several measures to involve civil society in TLCs, post-literacy and continuing education programmes at the grassroots. ZSS is vested with considerable powers to run and monitor literacy, post-literacy and continuing education programmes, and utilise the funds received from the NLM and state governments within the broad parameters set by the NLM. It has now freedom to use grassroots participatory networks like youth clubs, *mahila mandals*, voluntary agencies, PRIs, cooperatives, small scale industries, etc. as partners in implementation of continuing education. Furthermore, ZSS is now entrusted to foster partnership

with NGOs in implementation of CE programmes, including devolving funds to run CE centres in areas where NGOs are active.

Given uneven devolution of powers across the districts, autonomy and flexibility of ZSS is primarily controlled by the district bureaucracy. In fact, setting up of ZSS as NGO under the district administration itself disguises the role of district bureaucracy in controlling the overall functioning of ZSS as an autonomous body. In practice, decentralisation without adequate devolution of powers at the local level and building people's capacity at different levels to effectively plan and manage various programmes is likely to further weaken overall provisions and implementation of these programmes.

Building Partnerships and Institutional Linkages

With the shift in NLM's approach from literacy and post-literacy to continuing education, building partnerships and institutional linkages within the educational department, other development departments, universities and institutes of higher learning, is underscored essentially for improving implementation of various programmes. However, how far efforts are made to build sustainable partnerships and linkages?

Within the MHRD, the role of various sub-sectors of education (elementary education, vocational education, higher education, and technical education) in promoting the objectives of NLM is emphasised, specifically in literacy curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The institutional linkages between NLM in the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy and other departments such as Youth Affairs and Sports, Rural Development, Health and Family Welfare, etc. are stressed so that the human resource requirements of one department can be complemented by the other. With decentralisation of powers at the state level, SLMA is also expected to involve other related departments for better coordination, convergence and linkages so that integrated approach is adopted and the NLM agenda of functional literacy could be achieved. However, no systematic efforts are done to forge such linkages within the MHRD or with the other development departments at the national and state levels.

At the district level, convergence of activities and services of Nehru Yuvak Kendra (a youth club) and other development departments is envisaged to synergise their strengths as well as financial and human resources. Such coordination is foreseen to improve delivery mechanisms and ensure that their common target group benefits from joint endeavours. But it is left entirely to

the ZSS to build partnerships with various agencies and departments.

Unlike elementary education, there is no dedicated national-level academic institute under the MHRD that provides technical support to the ongoing programmes of adult education. But, involvement of various institutes of higher learning and research in programmatic research and evaluation has continued. University Departments of Adult and Continuing Education, and Extension have continued to provide academic support (research, evaluation and documentation) to such ongoing programmes. The government has further enlarged the role of universities to provide resource support to ongoing programmes and involve them in running literacy classes and continuing education centres. Given diminishing importance of adult education within basic educational policy, involvement of universities and other academic institutions in policy formulation and shaping the practice of ongoing programmes is inconsequential.

Involvement of the private sector in promoting adult literacy and continuing education in India is insignificant. Sporadic efforts have been made by a few corporate houses to conduct adult literacy classes on a small scale. The most well-known example of the corporate social responsibility in adult literacy education is the Computer-Based Functional Literacy Programme of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), which is implemented in several states, i.e., Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.

To sum up, there is growing emphasis on building partnerships and linkages with different agencies to pool resources and improve implementation of various programmes. However, no systematic efforts are made to develop institutional mechanisms at various levels to build and sustain them.

Role of NGOs and Community Participation

The NLM has continued to endorse partnership between the government and civil society in implementation of TLC, PLP and CE. The organisational and management structure of NLM at different levels has created spaces for partnership between the government and civil society in planning and implementation of adult education programmes. However, with growing bureaucratisation of adult education programmes, its character as a people's movement character of the earlier TLC model is lost. Notwithstanding active involvement of NGOs and CBOs in TLCs, their engagement in the EFA follow-up processes has been very limited (Kohli, 2003). Their rich

experience in the literacy movements across the country has not been tapped for the development of effective policy and programmes of post-literacy and continuing education.

Most of the NGOs, which were actively engaged in policy planning and implementation of TLCs, have gradually distanced from NLM and its programmes over a period of time. In spite of policy rhetoric of decentralisation of decision making process in adult education, policy planning and conceptualisation of programmes has remained the prerogative of the central government.

Partnership with NGOs is sought mostly for implementation of various programmes. At the district level, it is left to ZSS to involve NGOs, PRIs and the community in programme implementation. Representatives of NGOs, activists and academicians are inducted in various institutional mechanisms (NLMA, SLMA and ZSS), but their sphere of influence in planning and implementation appears to have declined. The shift towards recruiting professionals at low wages instead of volunteers to run continuing education centres has adversely affected involvement of volunteers, social activists and NGOs in literacy campaigns and other programmes.

However, the nature of partnership between the government and the NGO sector has changed over the years. In the Ninth and Tenth Plans, the government has perceived the NGO sector as a third sector of development and reaffirmed the need to enlist the participation of NGOs in achieving the goal of EFA. The government essentially views NGOs as service providers, particularly for reaching the hard-to-reach populations and as contractors to help build the capacity of the community and PRIs for decentralised planning and management of educational interventions. With the introduction of the managerial approach to literacy programmes, the focus is on utilising the services of NGOs for specific tasks, for example, mobilisation of the community, monitoring and evaluation, etc.

During the TLC phase, the government involved BGVS and the other NGOs in various decision making bodies (NLMA, SLMA, ZSS, etc.). Subsequently, the NGOs that were key partners in designing and implementing TLCs, had distanced from the government. With diminishing involvement of NGOs/CBOs, volunteers and social activists who were genuinely interested in promoting literacy as people's movement, literacy programmes are being planned and implemented as routine target-oriented programmes. While continuing NGO involvement in existing programmes, the government envisages assigning the NGOs a larger role in implementation of literacy, post-

literacy and continuing education projects. In other words, the government now looks forward to participation of NGOs as implementers of literacy and continuing education programmes and not as mobilisers of the communities around literacy for empowerment.

Strategy for Gender Equity and Empowerment

In India, there is progressive legislation in favour of women. However, there is a long way to bridge the gap between the stated Acts/laws and actual implementation. It is with the shift towards "globalisation with human face" to reduce adverse impact of neo-liberal economic reforms on women that empowerment of women has acquired centre stage of development planning since the 1990s.[xxi]

Based on the recommendations of the National Policy for Empowerment of Women, the Tenth Plan (2002-07) has articulated the strategy of women's empowerment and spelled out sector-specific, three-pronged strategy for empowering women – social empowerment, economic empowerment and political empowerment. Women's empowerment has become an essential element in development policies. Although the policy discourse is laced with the rights-based approach and uses the feminist language, women's empowerment within the instrumentalist

perspective is viewed as a means to achieve the development goals within the context of neo-liberal economic reforms. Despite growing emphasis on 'globalisation with a human face', gender disparities in education for girls and women are viewed essentially as problems of access, and not in terms of denial of choices and opportunities to get basic education as a right.

NLM has identified women as the key target group for ongoing programmes. It is assumed that access to basic literacy education per se would ensure them equality of educational opportunities for continuing education and lifelong learning. Although women are identified as an important target group of literacy, post-literacy and continuing education programmes, systematic efforts are not made by the government to create gender focal points for adult education. No institutionalised mechanism has been evolved at the national level within the Bureau of Adult Education, or NLM or DAE to address gender concerns in adult education policy, plans and programmes.

NLM has specified women's equality as one of the core values in literacy curriculum. However, development of gender sensitive literacy primers and material has not received adequate attention. To address regional, social and gender disparities in literacy, the major thrust of the policy is on the

target-oriented fast-track special interventions in 47 districts with female literacy rate below 30%, and developing localised strategies to eradicate residual illiteracy among women.

The NLM advocates mobilisation and organisation of women neo-literates from post-literacy and continuing education districts into membership-based grassroots levels associations or Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to facilitate their access to micro-credit and take up income-generating activities. SHGs are also encouraged to take up various development activities, like health, nutrition, agricultural extension, watershed development, social forestry, etc. It is assumed that access to micro-finance and participation in SHGs would contribute to social, economic and political empowerment of women, while improving their livelihoods. Such strategy is based on a limited and simplistic view of women's empowerment, which is equated primarily with economic empowerment. It ignores other dimensions of empowerment that enable them to exercise their rights and choices. Emerging evidence suggests that access to saving and credit or formation of SHGs per se does not automatically lead to reducing poverty among women and empowering them (Mayoux, 2003).

Unlike various programmes of NLM, the Mahila Samakya Programme (MSP)[xxii] is a process-oriented programme that perceives education as a continuous process of learning and an ability to critically engage with one's environment and society. It views education as central to the efforts of empowering women to achieve equality. However, the government has not yet tapped the MSP's experience in promoting women's education and women's empowerment in continuing education programmes.

Since the late 1990s, there has been rapid expansion of the MSP to more districts and states. Gradually, the MSP is becoming a target-oriented programme. With more involvement of the MSP in implementation of the educational programmes for girls, such as the National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL), and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), women's literacy has become a low priority.

Summary

Despite success of Total Literacy Campaigns in mobilising a large number of non-literate adult learners, mostly women, and imparting to some extent rudimentary literacy skills in the 1990s, promotion of adult education on large-scale and on a sustained basis appears to have been assigned a low priority for the government in the post-Dakar period. Since the late 1990s, there has been significant change in the policy direction of adult education.

In TLCs, literacy is no longer perceived as a powerful tool for empowerment of socio-economically disadvantaged populations, but as one of the inputs for human resource development. The focus of the policy has shifted from 'eradication of illiteracy' to tackling 'residual illiteracy' and promotion of continuing education for creating a learning society. NPA (2003) has set up ambitious targets for meeting EFA goals for adult literacy and continuing education. However, resource allocations to adult education in the post-Dakar period have dwindled. Decentralisation of financing of adult education to the state governments and ZSS has not contributed to improve programme implementation. Low utilisation of allocated resources suggests the lack of bureaucratic and political will to implement various programmes.

On the other hand, there is a noticeable shift in the NLM policy towards devolution of financial and administrative powers from the central (federal) government to state governments, and decentralisation of management of adult education. But without devolution of powers to the local levels by the state governments, the decentralisation strategy has not improved the provisions and governance of adult education. NGOs are no longer seen as mobilisers of the community, but as service providers. Partnership with NGOs is seen primarily for implementation of various programmes. Women have continued to be the key targets of TLCs and other programmes. However, the focus is on improving the access and not mainstreaming gender concerns in project planning and implementation. In the MSP, the focus has shifted from process-oriented to more target-oriented programme and from promotion of women's literacy to education of girls.

Developing basic human capabilities of the vast population of adults, who either are illiterate or have fragile levels of literacy skills, is no longer a priority for the government in the changing development context that requires skilled workers and citizens and higher levels of education for sustainable economic development.

FROM LITERACY TO POST-LITERACY AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

The government has set an ambitious aim of achieving a sustainable threshold literacy level of 75% by 2007 and covering all the districts under the continuing education programme by then. How has the government operationalised its policy to promote adult literacy and lifelong learning? To achieve its objective, the NLM has introduced three major programmes of adult education: Total Literacy Campaigns (TLC) for imparting basic literacy skills, Post-Literacy Programme (PLP) for applications of literacy skills, and Continuing Education Programme (CEP) for linking literacy with skills upgradation and improvement in the quality of life (Table 4.2) In addition, the government has revamped the scheme of *Jan Shikshan Sansthans* (Institutes of People's Education) to impart neo-literates vocational skills and trainings, and the *scheme of Support to Voluntary Organisations* to enhance the role of NGOs in implementation of various programmes of NLM.[xxiii] In addition, the *Mahila Samakhya Programme* and the *Accelerated Female Literacy Programme* are the two key initiatives of the government to educate non-literate women. This section examines salient issues in the programmatic framework of these programmes and highlights the NGOs' approach to promoting literacy.

Issues in Programmatic Framework of NLM

With revamping of the NLM policy in the late 1990s, there has been a significant change in the NLM's programmatic approach since then. The programmes of TLCs and PLP have been integrated under the scheme of *Literacy Campaigns and Operation Restoration* since April 2000 for continuity of learning.[xxiv] TLC and PLP are viewed as two operational stages of the learning continuum. It is envisaged that integration of the activities of basic teaching-learning with post-literacy activities would ensure a smooth transition from TLC to PLP. Under this scheme it is feasible to take up TLC and PLP concurrently and draw finances from a single budgetary provision and formulate strategies for restoration of the stagnated campaigns.

TLC is no longer perceived as a people's movement, linking literacy with development and social concerns through volunteerism, but as target-oriented and time-bound literacy programme run mostly by paid functionaries. Mobilisation strategy of TLC is replaced with the managerial approach to improve programme efficiency. De-linking PLP from CEP has weakened post-literacy as an important stage of learning.

The focus of TLC has remained on imparting basic literacy skills (reading, writing and numeracy) and the achievement of pre-determined levels of literacy and numeracy through IPCL primers. However, assuming that TLCs have succeeded in making the vast population literate, attention has shifted to tackling the problem of residual illiteracy and improving the quality of literacy skills of neo-literates. Consolidation, remediation, continuation and application are identified as key functions of PLP. However, limited attention is paid to material, training and resource support on a sustainable basis to attain them.

Realising the significance of sustaining fragile literacy skills of neo-literates, and linking literacy with development after TLCs, the government has strengthened and revamped the Scheme of Continuing Education to provide lifelong learning opportunities to all people beyond basic literacy/post-literacy and functional literacy.[xxv] The proposed framework of CEP is very similar to the earlier Jan Shiksha Sansthan model. The CEP is planned as a flexible programme to meet learning needs of diverse groups of learners, including neo-literates. The Continuing Education Centre (CEC) is conceived as the focal point of all learning opportunities, covering a wide range of activities. CECs are managed and coordinated by *preraks* and assistant *preraks*, who are expected to work full time with low honorarium. The basic design of CE programme shows a shift in responsibility for financing of the CEP from the central government to the state government and ZSS. Linkages with other departments and institutions, and high community support and participation in CEC activities is also envisaged for sustainability.

A critical review of the operational framework of the major programmes of the NLM draws attention to the limitations in conceptualisation and programme design.

Table 5.1: Major Programmes of NLM

Key Programmes	Objective	Target Groups/ Beneficiaries	Duration	Implementation Strategy
Total Literacy Campaign (TLC)/ Literacy Campaigns and Operation Restoration	• To impart basic literacy skills • To achieve pre-determined levels of literacy	Non-literates (15-35 years)	8-12 months (200 hours of literacy instructions)	• Area-specific, time- bound, total coverage for given age group. • Volunteer-based • Environment-building and mass mobilisation • Improved pedagogy with emphasis on learning outcomes
Post-Literacy Programme (PLP)	• Consolidation: to prevent regression to illiteracy • Remediation: to enrol dropouts and enable non-achievers to upgrade their literacy skills • Continuation: to improve literacy skills to a self-reliant level of learning • Application: to enable learners to use literacy skills in day-to-day life • Skill-development: to enable learners to acquire skills for economic self-reliance • Institutionalisation: to promote collective action and facilitate take-off to continuing education.	• Neo-literates • Dropouts of primary school / NFE Programmes • Dropouts / left outs of Literacy Campaign (for 'mopping up' operation)	12 months	• Project Formulation • Re-survey • Environment-building • Mopping up operation • Conducting PL activities • Skills development
Continuing Education for	• To provide life-long learning opportunities to all people	• Neo-literates who complete the		• To create an effective learning structure for neo-

| Neo-Literates | beyond basic literacy and primary education. | functional literacy/post-literacy in the TLC/PLP.
• School dropouts
• Passouts of primary schools and Non-Formal Education Programmes
• All other members of the community interested in availing opportunities for life-long learning. | | literates to strengthen their existing skills.
• Make learning relevant to actual life situations by providing technical and vocational skills.
• Encourage creative thinking through participative group activities.
• Encourage NGOs, voluntary agencies, universities, Jan Shikshan Sansthans, SRCs etc., to actively participate in planning, management and running of CECs/ NCECs.
• Active participation of Panchayati Raj institutions and functionaries at all levels.
• Enlist community participation in such a way as to lead to community ownership of the Scheme.
• Active linkages with other development departments at the grassroots level.
• Make the programme sustainable by making it need-based and demand oriented. |

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, GoI, 2005.

Lack of Clarity in Conceptualisation

Despite multi-pronged approach for attaining the objective of sustainable threshold level of 75% literacy rate by 2007 through literacy, post-literacy and continuing education programmes, there appears to be a lack of clarity about operationalising different stages of learning. The NLM's conceptualisation of post-literacy and continuing education has borrowed heavily from the Asia Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) framework. At the policy level, there is still a lack of clarity about post-literacy and continuing education, and relationship between basic literacy and post-literacy/continuing education is ambivalent (Daswani, 2002; Rogers, 2002).

Programmatic framework of the NLM is based on the premise that although TLCs succeeded in making the vast adult population literate, there is still a backlog of non-literates, viz. dropouts/left-outs of the literacy campaigns, dropouts of primary school and NFE programmes who constitute new addition to the adult illiterate population. Therefore, a fresh momentum to basic literacy programmes is essential. However, the focus is not on reviving the literacy movement, based on people's participation. The priority is given to tackling the problem of 'residual illiteracy' in the districts not covered and

those having female literacy rate below 30%. It is assumed that fragile literacy skills of neo-literates would be strengthened through 'mopping-up operations' under the post-literacy programmes, and the initial stage of the continuing education programme. Such approach is based on a misleading assumption that once these districts/areas are covered through fast track programmatic initiatives, the EFA goal of literacy would be achieved.

Despite multi-pronged approach for attaining the objective of sustainable threshold level of 75% literacy rate by 2007 through literacy, post-literacy and continuing education programmes, there appears to be a lack of clarity about operationalising different stages of learning. Specifically, post-literacy has become a rather hazy stage between total literacy campaign (TLC) phase and continuing education (CE) phase. On the one hand, PL is integrated with TLC phase, focusing on literacy learning. At the same time, PL is considered as a programme of further directed learning; i.e. as the initial stage of CEP. CE projects can be sanctioned to only those districts, which have successfully completed the one-year PL programme.

On the other hand, continuing education is perceived both as a stage in learning and progression towards the ideal state of a learning society. It is assumed that when a non-literate learner passes

through the phases of basic literacy and post-literacy, he/she develops a strong demand for further learning. The CEP is expected to provide neo-literates opportunities for self-directed learning, equivalency programmes based on open schooling, job-oriented vocational education and skill development programmes.

In practice, continuing education programme has not taken off on the ground as envisaged. In general, programmes are standardised and routinely administered. A number of innovative activities, PL/CE, had taken place on the ground after successful TLCs (Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samithi, 2002), but the existing policy and institutional framework of PL and CE do not have sufficient flexibility to support and nourish these initiatives. The bureaucratic structure of ZSS does not seem to be capable of responding to the felt needs of the community. No systematic efforts are made to develop mechanisms for building sustainable linkages with other development departments and agencies.

The Changing Notion of Voluntarism

Basic literacy teaching through volunteers is underscored in TLC/PLC and continuing education phases. However, the existing framework reflects a loss of people's movement character in imparting basic literacy and

post-literacy education on a mass scale. Furthermore, introduction of paid project staff (for example, *preraks*/volunteer teachers) in continuing education, appears to have shifted the focus away from voluntarism at the grassroots. With growing emphasis on paid functionaries in running the PL and CE centres, the involvement of volunteers has been reduced (Mathew, 2002). On the other hand, the community participation is encouraged for funding CEC and various activities for financial sustainability of CECs. With diminishing importance of volunteers in various programmes, there is growing bureaucratisation of programme planning and implementation.

Partnership with NGOs

Ever since the launching of literacy as a 'societal' mission in 1988, the NLM has emphasised strengthening the partnership with NGOs and has evolved both institutional and information mechanisms to give voluntary agencies and NGOs an active promotional role in the literacy movement. Partnership with the NGOs was central to the success of TLCs in the earlier phase. Participatory organisational structures facilitated high level of participation of NGOs, and the community in the literacy movement. On the other hand, the government has continued to encourage NGOs to participate in various programmes and has provided financial support to NGOs

for various activities through the Scheme *of Support to NGOs* to run post-literacy and continuing education programmes, However, 'partnership' with the NGOs is increasingly viewed by policy planners for management and implementation of literacy, post-literacy and continuing education projects. Thus, the NGOs are considered merely as 'service providers' and not as partners in policy formulation and planning.

Capacity Building

Capacity building is the most crucial aspect for planning, management, monitoring and evaluation of various diversified and multi-faceted programmes of literacy, post-literacy and continuing education. The cascade approach is used for training functionaries on a large-scale. TLCs followed a three-tier system of training, comprising of Key Resource Persons (KRPs), Resource Persons (RPs), Master Trainers and Voluntary Instructors. In CEP, a two-tier system of training is followed. *Preraks* and *assistant preraks* are trained by the KRPs, who are identified and trained either by the ZSS or the SRC. The key training providers are SRCs, District Resource Units, District Institutes of Education and Training and university departments of adult education. However, most of the government institutes reduce training to mere transmission of knowledge and has

followed top-down and lecture-based approach to training (Dighe, 2005).

Monitoring and Evaluation

NLM envisages vigorous monitoring and systematic evaluation of various programmes. Evolving an appropriate framework for assessing achievement in basic literacy and allied areas, such as functional literacy, life skills, etc., has, however, remained a much neglected area in India. Overall, the focus of evaluation (internal and external) has remained on achievements of quantitative targets and not on the processes and quality of learning. Claims of internal and external evaluation about literacy achievements are seldom questioned or validated through rigorous studies. Limited attention is paid to understanding learning environment and contextual reality that shape the learning outcomes. Except the evaluation frameworks developed by the Committees (for example, Dave Committee, Ghosh Committee), there has been hardly any debate and discussion on definitions or norms of literacy and functionality. No efforts are made yet to assess literacy or literacy with functionality or the other outcomes from divergent frameworks (national or international) of assessment of literacy. NLM has developed comprehensive standardised guidelines for the concurrent and final evaluation of the CEP. Such standardised evaluation

framework may not capture qualitative impact and processes in different contexts.

Sustainability

Programme design of CEP emphasises sustainability of CECs five years after their establishment. Concerns for sustainability are built into the programmes, particularly in programme design of CEP in several ways. The scheme of CEP envisages 100% assistance to the states for the first three years of the implementation and 50% thereafter during the fourth and fifth year of the project. The strategy for sustainability also suggests increased role of the state governments, PRIs, NGOs and the community in management and financing of continuing education. It is assumed that involvement of PRIs and the community in the management and implementation of CECs would contribute to their sustainability. Similarly, resource and technical support from various development departments, cooperative societies, technical institutions and professional groups is also perceived as an important means of sustaining the programme. However, the main concern appears to be financial sustainability, and increased community ownership and participation in running the CECs and its activities.

Without devolution of powers and funds to the *panchayats*, and lack of convergence of resources from other departments and agencies, financial sustainability of CEP would be difficult in the long run. Given marginality of adult literacy and lifelong learning in the EFA agenda of basic education at the national level, and financial constraints of the state governments, political will to pursue literacy and continuing education appears to be diminishing. The onus of running the CECs, however, cannot be shifted to the community in the long run.

In summary, there is a wide gap between policy intentions and operational framework of the NLM's programmes.

Approaches to Specific Programmes for Women

Women have been identified as one of the important target groups for literacy, post-literacy and continuing education programmes. However, the Accelerated Female Literacy Programme, and the Mahila Samakhya Programme are the two key initiatives of the government to educate non-literate women. Each programme differs in terms of its approach to promote women's literacy.

The Target-Oriented Approach

In the Tenth Plan, the government has launched a new scheme, *Accelerated Female Literacy Programme* (AFLP), in the 47 low female literacy districts to

tackle the problem of female illiteracy and residual illiteracy in a focused manner (GoI,2005:25-26). The AFLP is a result-oriented and time bound programme with emphasis on close monitoring. Special innovative programmes have been taken up in these districts for promoting female literacy. Different models are adopted for implementation of the scheme. Implementation of AFLP is envisaged either through local NGOs or ZSS. In Uttar Pradesh, AFLP is implemented through a network of about 100 NGOs to make approximately two million women literate within a period of about six months. In Bihar, AFLP is implemented with the involvement of *Panchayati Raj* functionaries, women volunteer teachers and women self-help groups to cover about three million non-literate women within 6-12 months. Similar projects would be taken up for the low-literacy districts in the other states. Under the programme, female-oriented special primers are developed for basic literacy learning. The extent to which target-oriented approach of the AFLP has succeeded in promoting sustainable literacy among women in low-literacy districts is not known.

The Process-Oriented Approach

The *Mahila Samakhya Programme* (MSP) is an innovative educational programme, started in 1989 as a 100% Dutch-assisted project to promote education for women's equality and empowerment among socially and economically disadvantaged and marginalised groups of women in rural areas. It is now totally funded by the government. Against the Tenth Plan's target of covering 240 districts in 17 states, the MSP has been implemented only in 9 states (Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand), covering 63 districts and 15823 villages by June 2005.

The programme perceives education as a continuous process of learning and an ability to critically engage with one's environment and society. It enables women to acquire knowledge from a position of strength to question, critically analyse issues and problems, and seek solutions and new ways of learning and doing. It seeks to bring about a change in women's perceptions about themselves and the people. It helps them to make informed choices and set their own agenda. The MSP views education as central to the efforts of empowering women to achieve equality.

Mahila Sangha, the women's collective established in each of the village under the programme, provides women the space to come together and initiate the process of critical reflection, analysis and action. The process of empowerment envisages women to become active agents of their own transformation. It is through *sanghas* that women articulate their needs.

Education is not narrowly defined in terms of acquisition of basic literacy skills. But education that empowers women though relevant knowledge and life skills underlies all activities in *Mahila Samakhya.*

Educational inputs are provided though workshops, meetings, and exposure tours in the form of knowledge, information and skills in the areas, which are relevant and useful to women in everyday life; for example, health, environment, law, livelihoods, government schemes and programmes, etc. A wide range of educational activities, such as literacy camps, non-formal education centres, vocational training, support services, *Mahila Shikshan Kendras* (MSKs), and early childhood care centres, etc. have been organised in a phased manner, depending on the needs and priorities expressed by women in different states. Education also enables women to take action at individual and collective levels, but also helps them to get access to basic services (primary health centre, anganwadi, school) and government institutions – district/block administration offices, police stations, courts, etc.[xxvi]

Thus, the starting point in *Mahila Samakhya* is not imposing literacy or traditional education on women, but generating demand for literacy and education by linking literacy with empowerment. Women are allowed to

seek education at a point when its meaning and value becomes evident to them. Education in the broad sense is used as a tool to facilitate the process of collective reflection and action through *mahila sanghas* (women's groups) and improve women's access to development resources and decision-making.

Basic literacy education has been taken up by the MSP when *Sangha* women have demanded. Although the MSP has experimented with innovative approaches to imparting literacy and developing gender-sensitive pedagogy and material, these efforts are not sustained. In response to the growing demand from *Sangha* women for education of girls and shift in the policy towards girls' education, there is an emerging focus on girls and adolescents in the programme. MSKs are established to provide learning opportunities to out-of-school girls and adolescents through residential bridge courses with vocational training and life skills. There are divergent gender-sensitive educational interventions, such as *Balika Mahila Shikshan Kendras* for girls (9+ years) in Andhra Pradesh, *Jagjagi Kendras*, the NFE centres for adolescent girls in Bihar, *Kishori Sanghas*, etc.

In summary, both the programmes differ in their approach to promoting women's literacy. AFLP is top-down and target-

oriented programme for imparting basic literacy skills to women in a time bound manner, while MSP is a bottom-up, need-based and process-oriented programme that attempts to link literacy with women's empowerment.

Lifelong Learning Through Continuing Education: A Long Way To Go

In India, continuing education has emerged as a major strategy of NLM for promoting lifelong learning, while strengthening and sustaining basic literacy skills of youth and adults. Continuing education by nature is envisaged to be flexible, responding to the learning needs of diversified groups of learners. Hence, implementation of CEP is likely to vary considerably across the states and across the districts within a state. Official statistics present a rosy picture of coverage of districts under continuing education. CEP is implemented in 296 out of 596 districts covered under various schemes of NLM (GoI, 2005: 62-63). To what extent the CEP is geared towards responding to community learning needs and sustaining learning? This section, based on a limited review of literature, highlights the emerging trends.

Programme Implemenation

The study of functioning of CECs in Rajasthan shows that the core programmes taken up in most CECs were related to tackling the problem of 'residual illiteracy' among non-literates, retention of literacy skills by neo-literates and utilisation of the library (Ahmed and Pandit, 2004). Besides imparting literacy education, among the four target-specific programmes only Income-generating Programme, and Equivalency Programme were well defined. The other two programmes - Quality of Life Programme and Individual Interest Promotion Programme - were vague and covered general activities (sports, recreation, culture. etc.). Nonetheless, CECs in many places in Ajmer district (Rajasthan) have become information centres for development activities. Development officials have started meeting at CECs and disseminating knowledge and information about various schemes to CEC learners because of the foresight of the district collector. In Ajmer district, the ZSS has concentrated on forming women SHGs for encouraging them to undertake income-generating activities and group action against social evils (for example alcoholism).

The most comprehensive evaluation of the CEP undertaken by the Centre for Media Studies (CMS) during November 2003-March 2004 sheds light on the dismal status of implementation of CEP in the five states of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, Rajasthan, West

Bengal (see Centre for Media Studies, 2004).[xxvii]

Despite uniformity in allocation of funds, the approved staff strength, and criterion for establishing a CEC, organisation, functioning and outcomes of the CECs and NCECs were uneven across the five selected states. Enthusiasm and concerted efforts of the staff at all levels from ZSS Secretary to CE functionaries appeared to be the most important factors for encouraging achievements in targeting the beneficiaries for some CECs.

Learners

Although the CEP appeared to have succeeded in reaching the targeted group of beneficiaries, mostly women (71%) from the socio-economically disadvantaged sections (SC, ST and OBC), given low attendance among learners in all the five states, post-literacy teaching and learning appears to be imparted only on a small scale. Hardly any support was provided by JSS for vocational training and skills development. Except in Kerala and West Bengal, *preraks* were not even fully aware of all the programmes of the CEP. Of the four programmes of CEP, only Equivalency Programme (EP) was operational and was only fully implemented in Kerala. The Quality of Life Improvement Programme (QLIP) was implemented to some extent in

Kerala and West Bengal, primarily due to the initiatives of *preraks*. Thus, implementation of CEP appears to be far from satisfactory.

Given the large gap in the policy and implementation, the impact of CEP on learners has been very limited. The CMS evaluation study shows increase in awareness level of learners and acquisition of some cognitive skills. Despite low and irregular attendance in CE classes, learners reported the impact of CEP in terms awareness on legal age at marriage, importance of child immunisation etc, increase in self-esteem, and improved interactions with government offices. However, there was hardly any impact on improving economic status of the beneficiaries as in none of the states, except in Kerala, beneficiaries acquired vocational skills. This was due to lack of initiative among *preraks* to arrange training for them, inadequate resources at CECs and NCECs, and lack of convergence of resources. Kerala was an exception because CECs made concerted efforts to help the learners economically.

The Facilitator/Preraks

The CMS evaluation study revealed that most of the *preraks* of the CECs and NCECs had earlier worked as volunteer instructors in TLCs. In none of the states, except in Kerala, *preraks* devoted full time at the centres. In

general, they worked only for three to four hours a day. On the other hand, there were very few nodal *preraks*. All the *preraks* had received training, but there was considerable variation in awareness among *preraks* about key programmes and activities of the CEP across the states.

Irrespective of their commitment to work at CECs and NCECs, *preraks* across the states faced similar constraints, such as lack of resources, irregular payment of honoraria, and lack of interest among learners. They were unable to coordinate the activities of CECs due to lack of resources to visit the CECs. Even the sanctioned number of *preraks* was not available to nodal *preraks* in Gujarat and Rajasthan. Effectiveness of the CEP will remain limited unless efforts are made to address these constraints.

Capacity Building of Functionaries

In the initial phase of TLCs, considerable efforts were made to organise training programmes for the functionaries at various levels. Over the years, however, training programmes for the functionaries at different levels have become scarce.

On the basis of a review of several evaluation studies on training, Shah (2004) reports that although the cascade approach was useful in training

a large number of functionaries in TLCs, training of voluntary instructors had become a low priority because of diminishing resources in terms of training content, materials, duration, funds and technical inputs to TLCs. Training curriculum generally gives more weightage to the literacy primers and primer-based training, and very little emphasis on adult psychology, andragogy and learning styles. The focus of training in CEP is primarily on imparting knowledge and skills to the *preraks* for setting up and managing CECs and organising CEP courses and not on adult learning. Thus, training appears to be a neglected area of the programmes. Given top-down approach to training, hardly any attention is paid to preparing the grassroots functionaries as adult educators for meeting their professional commitments and the challenges.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring is one of the weak areas of the programme. In general, standardised guidelines for monitoring are developed by the NLM and circulated to the districts. The Management Information System (MIS) is set up in a hierarchical way to routinely gather information and is hardly used to modify or improve the quality of programme implementation. Community participation in monitoring of the CEP through Village Education

Committee, Committee of Neo-literates, Users Committee, etc. is a welcome step. However, inadequate attention is paid to building the capability of the community to play and developing effective structures at the community level this role.

Sustainability

Active participation of panchayats is envisaged in implementation and financing of CEP. However, evaluation of CECs in Rajasthan reveals that devolution of funds has not taken place. The state government has not yet passed the funds to the panchayats but kept them with the ZSS. Hence, as envisaged by the policy, most of the panchayats have not yet committed officially to fund the CEC after discontinuation of the government funds.

The CMS study shows that neither CECs nor NCECs are financially sustainable. However, some efforts have been made in Kerala to generate financial resources. Convergence of resources of other development departments and other agencies (for example, District Institute of Educational Technology, SRC, JSS, educational institutions, etc.) could help in achieving financial self-sufficiency. However, *preraks* and ZSS had hardly made any effort to establish linkages with them.

Nonetheless, some sporadic efforts have been made at the local level to provide financial support to CECs. For example, a few panchayats in Rajasthan have continued to support CECs in small ways through personal income and donations of small things. This way thirteen CECs were adopted by the panchayats or individuals, who committed to meet CEC expenses for one year. Although *preraks* were not paid for 16 months, they had continued to work at the CECs. However, such voluntarism may not sustain CECs in the long run. In Andhra Pradesh, the CEP in Guntur and West Godavari districts, evolved after the successful completion of the TLC and post-literacy phase of the campaign, the corpus fund for CECs was created through subscription for the membership of associations of neo-literates (*akshar sangams*) and mobilisation of donations from individuals and the community (Mathews, 2001; Mathew, 2005).

In practice, the programme is left to the state governments. Given low priority to adult education in many states, CEP is neither adequately financed nor rigorously implemented by the state governments. It is also unrealistic to expect the community to contribute and sustain the programme, which is basically meant for the poor. In addition, lack of convergence with stakeholders,

inadequate efforts for training to link literacy with livelihood issues, low educational level of facilitators, lack of coordination with the local bureaucracy, etc. are some of the key weaknesses of the CEP.

Approaches of the NGOs

In India, there is a long tradition of involving NGOs in the implementation of adult education programmes of the government. NGOs have made significant contribution in planning and implementation of TLCs. With the loss of people's movement character of literacy and post-literacy campaigns, participation of NGOs in these programmes has dwindled. There are many NGOs in India working on improving the conditions of the non-literate poor and the women. With growing emphasis on universalisation of elementary education through Sarva Shikshan Abhiyan (SSA) in development planning, many NGOs are actively engaged in education of out-of-school girls, mostly through NFE (Wazir, 2000; and Ramchandran, 2003). However, only a few are involved in promoting women's literacy, and linking literacy with livelihoods issues.

Unlike most NGOs, *Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti* (BGVS), a voluntary organisation based on the support of People's Science Network, made an important contribution in the earlier TLCs in

evolving innovative strategy for large-scale community mobilisation and women's empowerment through organisation and linking literacy with livelihoods, development and governance.[xxviii] It attempted to bring women's issues to the forefront of the literacy movement and development through *Samata,* a women's platform for promoting women's education and equality. In response to the emerging demands from poor and neo-literate women after TLCs, *Samata* has attempted to build the bridge between literacy and other development concerns, such as enhancing women's participation in health, micro-credit, micro-enterprises, local governance, continuing education, etc. *Samata* faces the challenge of linking literacy with livelihoods issues, development and democracy in the context of limited state support and resources. But the NLM has hardly paid any attention to learn from rich experience of the BGVS while designing post-literacy and continuing education programmes.

Nirantar, a resource and research centre on women's education, works on promoting literacy, health education and vocational training among rural women from a gender perspective since 1993. It has developed innovative approaches to women's education and training (see http://www.nirantar.net for details). It attempts to demystify knowledge construction through workshops to build

capacities of NGOs and grassroots groups of women to enable them to undertake reporting, editing, and production of educational material, and produce their own broadsheets, newspapers, booklets, etc. *Nirantar* also trains women in the specialised skills of writing for neo-literates and in writing with a gender perspective. It also publishes *Pitara*, a bi-monthly news magazine in Hindi for the learners with basic literacy skills, and wide range booklets on women's interest.

Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan (KMVS), another NGO set up in 1989 for rural women in the drought-prone district of Kutch in the western state of Gujarat, aims at empowering poor women through education and skill building, and harnessing their collective strengths by building local leadership and creating *sangathans* (women's groups).[xxix] In 1992, KMVS conducted literacy camps for non-literate members of *sangathans* in two blocks to impart basic functional literacy and developed context-specific curricula on different issues for neo-literate and literate women.[xxx] Literacy work was further expanded through *Ujjas Mahiti Kendra* (information centre) by *Mundra Mahila Vikas Sangathan* and a self-managed information and publication unit to inform them about a range of issues, such as body, reproductive health, laws, government schemes, and the water harvesting

systems. A newsletter called *Ujjas* has also been started to document and disseminate different types of information among the villagers, particularly women. It is simplified in Kutchi and Gujarati so that neo-literate women could easily read it. KMVS now focuses on adolescent girls' education.

NGOs have experimented with alternative approaches to impart literacy to women. They have developed gender-sensitive project designs, materials, training and evaluation systems. Experiences of NGOs in designing gender-sensitive educational interventions suggests that content and processes used in literacy education play a very important role in sustaining the motivation of learners for learning and enabling them to develop critical understanding of their social reality. Hardly any efforts are made by the government to mainstream innovative approaches of NGOs to promote women's literacy.

In conclusion, there is considerable gap in policy objectives, programmatic framework and the field realities. There is apparent lack of linkages between TLC, PLP and CEP. Given poor programme delivery and implementation, promotion of lifelong learning towards a learning society through both formal and non-formal education appears to be the most neglected area. Furthermore, no

systemtic efforts are made to bring synergies between the government's interventions and innovative, process-oriented approaches of the NGOs.

CONCLUSION

There is considerable optimism about India's recent economic development. Basic education has become an important aspect of social policy for achieving economic growth. However, the story of India's achievement in attaining the EFA goals related to youth and adult literacy, and lifelong learning since 2000 is one of the mixed successes. On the positive side, there is improvement in the adult literacy rate from 61% (73.3% males and 47.8% females) in 2001 to 67.3% (77% males and 57% females) in 2004-05. On the negative side, India still has 34.6% (267 million) of the world's illiterate adults (771 million). Progress of adult literacy has remained uneven across the regions and lopsided with wide disparities in terms of gender, social and religious groups. The problem of illiteracy is still grave among poor households and females, particularly from rural areas. Pockets of illiteracy are spread across India, but concentrated primarily in low-literacy states. The socio-economically disadvantaged social groups of SCs and STs, and Muslims from rural areas also have low literacy. Low learning achievement and dropout at elementary stage among children also adversely affect growth of literacy.

To what extent current policies and programmes are geared towards meeting EFA goals of adult literacy and learning for the unschooled population of youth and adults? Even in the post-Dakar period, universalisation of elementary education is given far more importance in legislation, educational policy and development plans than educating the vast adult population of non-literates. The underlying assumption is that universal elementary education among children (6-14 years) will tackle the problem of illiteracy among adults (15+ years).

The policy and practice of adult education is conditioned by the broader context of development. In the context of neo-liberal economic reforms, basic education has become a key strategy for social and economic development. Basic education has continued to be a development imperative. But the right of non-literate adults (15+ age group) to basic literacy education and learning is

neither addressed by legislation nor raised by the NGOs in the debate and discussions on education as a fundamental right.

Devolution of powers and decentralisation of financing and management of adult education programmes, are the most important aspects of the revamped policy of NLM. Financial and administrative roles of the central and state governments, ZSS, PRIs and other local bodies are redefined for decentralised and disaggregated planning and administration of various programmes. In practice, given lackadaisical approach of the central and state governments towards adult education, and inadequate devolution of powers to PRIs, there has been overall weakening of the provisions and governance of adult education. There is a growing trend towards bureaucratisation of programme implementation.

In the revamped NLM policy, there is greater emphasis on the partnership with the NGOs and on community participation in implementation and monitoring of various programmes for efficient management and delivery of programmes. Community participation is viewed essentially for the long-term sustainability of the programmes. Will such strategy improve provisions and governance of adult education programmes or lead to gradual withdrawal of the government as a provider of adult education? If the neglect of adult education continues in overall policy of basic education, then achievement of EFA goals of adult literacy and learning for all will remain an elusive reality.

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ENDNOTES

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i   As literacy statistics for the population in the 7+ and 15+ age groups are not yet available from NSSO 61st Round Report No. 517 (61/10/3) for the states, it is not possible to estimate the increase/decrease in literacy rates since 2001.

ii   Persons with general educational level secondary and above, including diploma/certificate course, have been considered to be educated.

iii   The survey collected information on religion followed by each household as part of the household characteristics. It cconsidered religion of the head of the household as the religion of all the household members and identified seven main religions - Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism. The major religious groups were Hindus, Muslims and Christians.

iv   The major programmes of adult education during the 1947-77, were: Social Education linked with the Community Development Programme, Gram Shikshan Mohim (Village Literacy Movement) initiated in Maharashtra in 1959, Farmers' Functional Literacy Project initiated in 1967-68 in the context of Green Revolution, and the Scheme of Non-formal Education for Youth (15-25) from weaker sections, launched in 1975-76 as part of the populist strategy of abolition of poverty. Refer to Saraf (1980) and Shah (1989) for general discussion of these programmes.

v   For a detailed discussion on the new development strategy, refer to the Seventh Five-Year Plan – 1985-90 (Planning Commission, 1985a and 1085b) and Patnaik (1986) for economic and political dynamics that led to the shift in India's development approach.

vi   See Patel (1992) for analysis of NPE (1986) from the political economy perspective.

vii   Specifically, it focused on privatisation of higher education, vocationalisation of education, modernisation of technical and management education, and decentralisation of educational management to gear the existing educational system to the emerging demands of the skilled labour force with efficient use of available resources.

viii   For example, community polytechnics, *shramik vidyapeeths* (polyvalent adult education centres), rural institutes, Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and Training for Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM) of the District Rural Development Agency.

ix   This target was revised to 100 million young adults (15-35 years) during the Eighth Plan (1992-97).

x   Besides TLCs, the NLM continued several small-scale schemes of adult education, such as the Rural Functional Literacy Project, specific literacy programmes in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, and the scheme of *Shramik Vidyapeeths* (SVPs).

xi   The 93rd Constitutional Amendment Bill that sought to make education a fundamental right was criticised by the National Alliance for the Fundamental Right (NAFRE) along with the other networks and coalitions working for children's rights to education (see http://www.indowindow.com/ akhbar/article.php for NAFRE statement on the Bill). Criticism of the Amendment was directed towards exclusion of the age group 0-6 years in the provision of 'free and compulsory' education, compulsion on parents for educating children, lack of definition of the quality of education to be offered and what was 'free' in education, lack of clarity on financial resources, and lack of attention to private schools in the national endeavours. The campaign against the Bill, spearheaded by the NAFRE, mobilised civil society groups working on education and brought educational issues to the forefront of public debate (Roy and Khan, 2002:4-5)

xii   The UPA government has introduced the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) that lays down the key areas for market-driven economic reforms. Focus of the NCMP is on rapid economic growth based largely on the private sector, agriculture-led growth strategy for rural

development, and higher investment in health and education. Poverty alleviation is envisaged through rapid economic growth and targeted investments aimed at the poorest of the poor.

[xiii] The key issues addressed by NCMP are: (a) elimination of disparities in access, (b) empowering women, (c) securing a rightful place for the disadvantaged and the minorities, (d) eradication of illiteracy, (e) education for women's equality, (f) improvement in the quality of education and its content, and (g) decentralisation of the processes of educational change with the participation of people at the grassroots level through the *Panchayati Raj Institutions*.

[xiv] It is based on the Computer-Based Functional Literacy Programme of the Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), which claims to make an adult illiterate read a newspaper in 8-10 weeks.

[xv] Earlier concept of functional literacy was broad-based, and encompassed self-reliance in basic literacy skills (reading, writing and counting), participation in the development process, skill improvement to improve economic status and general well being and imbibed values of national integration, conservation of environment, women's equality and observance of small family norms etc.

[xvi] For a detailed discussion on financing of education in India, refer to Tilak (2003).

[xvii] See Tilak (2006) for critical analysis of the government's failure to allocating 6% of GDP to education.

[xviii] Key sources of funding for the TLCs were: the National Literacy Mission Authority, the state governments, and the local bodies and resources that were mobilised at the local level. Local mobilisation was mostly in terms of non-monetary inputs, such as voluntary involvement in TLCs.

[xix] The National Institute of Adult Education, established by the government in early 1990s, for this purpose has more or less become defunct.

[20] In urban areas, municipalities are being encouraged to take up this role.

[xxi] Specifically, empowerment of women has become an important development agenda since the Eight Plan (1992-97), which adopted human development as a key goal of all development efforts (Planning Commission, 1992). The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) signifies a shift in the perspective from women in development approach to gender in development approach (Planning Commission, 1999). In 2001, the Government of India adopted a National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, to bring about gender justice and make de jure equality into de facto equality (GoI, 2001b), laid down the foundation for a more holistic approach towards empowerment of women and spelled out the policy framework to ensure gender equality.

[xxii] It is an innovative programme, which was started in 1989 with Dutch development assistance to promote education for women's equality and empowerment among socially and economically disadvantaged and marginalised groups of women in rural areas. It is now a government-funded programme. The Tenth Plan has targeted to cover under this programme 240 districts in 17 states.

[xxiii] For detailed description of the major programmes of the NLM, see its website (www.nlm.nic.in).

[xxiv] The earlier scheme of Rural Functional Literacy Project is absorbed into this scheme.

[xxv] The earlier Scheme of Continuing Education for neo-literates was launched by the NLM in 1996 on the basis of recommendations of the Expert Group under the Chairmanship of Prof. Arun Ghosh (GoI,1994). Subsequently, the scheme has continued with some modifications in the Ninth Plan.

[xxvi] Activities and action of *Sangha* women range from "accessing basic civic amenities; learning to deal with health issues; committing themselves to ensuring learning opportunities for their children, especially girls; doggedly trying to make themselves literate; breaking gender stereotypes in acquiring new skills like becoming mechanics; learning to manage credit; effectively participating in Panchayati Raj processes (local self-government); learning legal procedures and understanding how administrative and social structures work; gaining the strength

to demand accountability and effective delivery of services; confidently addressing issues like violence against women, child marriage, etc." (**NPA, GoI, 2003:52**).

xxvii The study, referred to as CMS study henceforth, was conducted through a survey and structured interviews with beneficiaries and the functionaries, discussions with ZSS, JSS, GPS, officers of the SLMA/Directorate of Adult Education, opinion leaders in the villages, and visual inspection of CECs/NCECs and the surrounding settlements. For assessment, the study selected several indicators as per the NLM guidelines for evaluation of continuing education projects.

xxviii Refer to Srivastava and Patel (2006) for understanding the efforts of BGVS to empowerment of women in the government -sponsored TLCs and linking literacy with livelihoods and development after TLCs.

xxix Specifically, it works in remote and less accessible villages on the issues of education, health, saving and credit, handicrafts marketing and design support, legal aid, local self-governance and communication. It supports and provides resource support and training inputs at the taluka level to women's groups through issue-based units.

xxx See *Nirantar* (1997) for a detailed documentation of KMVS' work in adult education.