

“Women Adult Literacy: Where Are We! A Rapid Assessment in Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan”-Carried out in Partnership with Wealthungerhilfe (South Asia) and Indo Global Social Service Society (IGSSS):

With the re-launch of the National Literacy Mission to promote adult literacy with a new name “Saakshar Bharat”, it was felt opportune to reflect on the experiences of adult literacy promotion efforts in India till 2009. It was observed that various approaches have been attempted since the launch of National Literacy Mission in 1987. However, the various efforts made so far did not result in significantly reduce the total number of illiterates in this country. While the literacy rates have improved from less than 20 per cent in 1951, to 52 per cent in 1991, to 65 per cent in 2001, in absolute terms more than 30 million Indians continue to be illiterate. More than two decades elapsed since the launch of the TLCs. Most of the target districts have undergone TLCs, Post-Literacy Campaigns (PLC) and Continuing Education (CE) phase. This attempt to understand the contribution, impact and experiences of the literacy campaigns and what has followed thereafter by no means an easy task. The assessment focused on how did people (in particular women) participate in the literacy campaigns and continuing education? What were their expectations and how far these were met? What were the key processes adopted in imparting learning during the campaigns, and how were these impacted in the empowerment processes?

The districts selected for the study have been through the total literacy and post-literacy and CE phases, with the exception of East Singhum where the TLC itself was a big failure. This preliminary assessment study of the adult literacy campaigns have taken into consideration not only the ability to recognize alphabets but the overall benefits the learners see as a benefit- be it self-development, social and economic. These field studies have adopted a combination of methodologies for understanding the processes of learning in the adult literacy promotion efforts.

Our assessments have attempted to locate literacy within the larger social and political contexts. The assessment study has focused on understanding and documenting the overall change processes happened as a result of their participation in the literacy classes. The communities selected include the dalits and tribals of rural remote villages. We have tried to ascertain the different perspectives, to different groups of people - women, the marginalised and the indigenous groups.

In this backdrop, a preliminary study was conducted to quickly assess the status of ‘adult women literacy’ in four districts (Churu, East Singhbhum, Koraput and Jhabua) belonging to four States in India.

The study entitled “*Women Adult Literacy: Where Are We! A Rapid Assessment in Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odhisa and Rajasthan*” focused on the following three issues:

- Response of the youths and adults (with special focus on women and adolescent girls) to Total Literacy Campaigns (TLCs) and the newly launched Saakshar

Bharat (SB) after formal closure of National Literacy Mission (NLM) towards the end of 2009.

- Educational opportunities that were and are available and identify gaps as per the actual requirement of adolescent girls and women.
- Enabling and impeding factors as existing on ground for the implementation of SB to build critical knowledge base for implementation of Saakshar Bharat at the central, state, district and local levels.