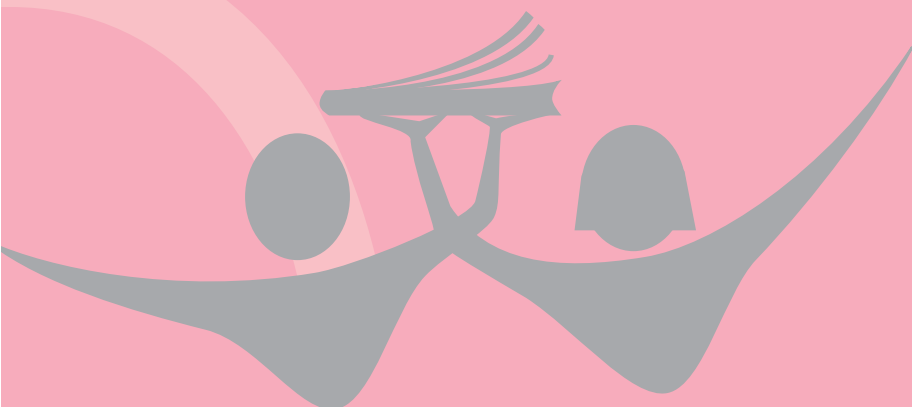




Good Practices



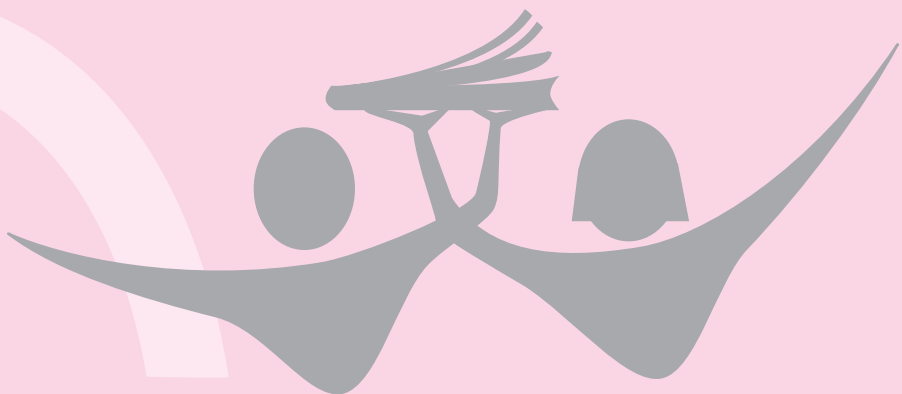
# GENDER EQUALITY

in Basic Education and  
Lifelong Learning  
Through CLCs:  
Experiences from 15  
Countries



United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization  
UNESCO Bangkok





Good Practices

# GENDER EQUALITY

in Basic Education and  
Lifelong Learning  
Through CLCs:  
Experiences from 15  
Countries

Pant, Anita P.

*Good practices: gender equality in basic education and lifelong learning through CLCs: experiences from 15 countries/* by Anita P. Pant and the APPEAL Colleagues, Bangkok: UNESCO Asia and the Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, 2003.

101 p.

1. BASIC EDUCATION. 2. LIFELONG EDUCATION. 3. GENDER EQUALITY.  
4. WOMENS EDUCATION. 5. GIRLS EDUCATION. 6. EDUCATIONAL  
DISCRIMINATION. 7. ASIA AND THE PACIFIC. I. Title

370

This report was prepared by Ms. Anita P. Pant with the collaboration of APPEAL Colleagues.

© UNESCO 2003

Published by the  
UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education  
P.O. Box 967, Prakanong Post Office  
Bangkok 10110. Thailand

Printed in Thailand

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

# Contents



<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Part I:</b> Basic Education and Lifelong Learning for Gender Equality: An Overview	<b>5</b>
<b>Part II:</b> Review of Good Practices from the Asia-Pacific Region	<b>17</b>
<b>Part III:</b> Lessons Learned from Good Practice	<b>89</b>
<b>Part IV:</b> Recommendations	<b>97</b>

The education of women and girls remains a major challenge in the Asia-Pacific region, especially in developing countries. More than two-thirds of the out-of-school children and illiterate adults are female. Since the World Conference on Education for All (Jomthien, Thailand, 1990), many countries in the region have made remarkable efforts to reduce the gender gap existing in regard to access and quality of education. However, delegates at the World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal, 2000) reported that gender discrimination continues to permeate education systems.

Thus, gender equality in education has remained a matter of concern for all countries. To bridge this gap, it is very important to focus on illiterate women and girls who have been neglected by the formal school system. This lack of attention has led to new concepts of lifelong learning or continuing education.

The idea of providing an institutional base for holistic lifelong education became operational with the establishment of community learning centres (CLCs). With the mainstream system focusing on formal schooling, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious institutions and individuals are playing a pivotal role in the promotion of non-formal education as a complementary system.

This report reviews the activities carried out by selected CLCs in various countries of the Asia-Pacific region as examples of good practice in the promotion of gender equality in basic and lifelong education. It discusses the lessons learned from these examples and offers recommendations for enhancing the CLC's role in providing education for a more effective impact on community life. Drawing primarily upon case studies of good practice, the report also makes use of relevant information gathered from a variety of sources.

Part I of the report covers definitions and concepts related to education and gender equality. Moreover, it covers the highlights of the major initiatives taken at the global level in education, with special reference to gender.

A review of innovative approaches to basic education and lifelong learning is presented in Part II of the report. It gives an overview of 14 case studies, concentrating on the background,

major findings and conclusions. It sheds light on the strategies, achievements and impact of these initiatives to promote gender equality in basic and continuing education, along with their weaknesses.

Lessons learned from these initiatives are summarized in Part III. There are two categories of lessons – one important from a general perspective and the other with specific relevance to gender. A successful CLC recognizes community needs, adopts a participatory approach and mobilizes community resources in a strong partnership with local organizations and agencies. Capacity building of the community is crucial for the sustainability of CLCs. Furthermore, CLCs can be instrumental in promoting gender equality in rural areas, especially in remote areas without suitable education facilities for girls and women. Promoting gender equality is an outcome of multi-dimensional factors. Integration of literacy and skills training, recognition of women's needs, partnership with women's organizations and NGOs, raising social awareness and the representation of women in decision-making are some key factors, among many.

Part IV offers measures to improve the effectiveness of CLCs in the delivery of basic and lifelong education for gender equality. They include:

- adopting a gender mainstreaming strategy for the planning and management of CLCs;
- declaring a commitment to gender equality that is backed by an adequate budget and resources;
- establishing partnerships with local NGOs working with gender equality issues;
- developing gender responsive teaching-learning materials and adequate indicators to measure gender equality changes;
- building the capacity of CLC personnel to promote gender equality;
- involving more CLC female teachers and supervisors in motivating local women;

- promoting women's involvement in the decision-making process; increasing women's role as literacy and skill trainers;
- developing or strengthening credit and marketing facilities;
- making arrangements for child-care; and
- decreasing the household workload of women.

# Basic Education and Lifelong Learning for Gender Equality: An Overview

*A. Definitions and Concepts*

*B. Overview of Global Initiatives  
in Education*

## Part I

# Basic Education and Lifelong Learning for Gender Equality: An Overview

## A. Definitions and Concepts

Basic education is the term used to refer to education considered essential for everyone, ranging from functional literacy, primary and secondary education to vocational education and skills training. The main purpose of providing basic education is to equip people with the basic knowledge and skills to enable them to earn a living and improve the quality of their lives. Basic education is the foundation for acquiring other life skills and progressively raising the levels of knowledge to fulfill individual and social needs.

Primary schooling is the principal delivery channel of basic education, which must meet the basic learning needs of all children and take into account the culture, needs and opportunities of local communities. Although the main channel must be the formal primary education system, non-formal primary education and literacy programmes are indispensable to supplement and complement this system. In addition, instruments and channels of information, communication and social action can be used to educate people. Basic education also covers early childhood care and initial education provided with the involvement of families, communities or institutional programmes. Basic education should lead to higher incomes as well as better income distribution, providing people with the tools to address major social issues.

*Basic  
education*

## ***Lifelong learning***

Lifelong learning refers to the education that people experience throughout their lives, which may be in the form of formal, non-formal or informal education. It is the kind of education considered essential for improving the quality of life. Learning is a lifetime process, beginning with the universal experience of socialization within the family.

The key objective of lifelong learning is to enable people to improve themselves and to keep up with socio-economic, political, scientific and technological change. Various institutions in society, such as public libraries, museums and temples, play a major role in providing lifelong education for the people. Lifelong education activities can be organized in diverse ways through the use of media, such as radio, television or video, newspapers, conferences and training programmes. Nonetheless, such activities have to be in harmony with the daily lives of learners. Lifelong learning is usually described in terms of flexibility, diversity, universality and dynamism. For newly literate people, lifelong learning provides opportunities for acquiring additional skills beyond basic literacy.

6

## ***Community Learning Centres***

Community Learning Centres (CLCs) are places for community-based learning organized and managed by the people themselves. These centres are established with the aim of providing an infrastructure and an institutional base for holistic lifelong education. Although the objectives of CLCs vary from one place to another, their overall goal is to empower individuals and promote community development through basic and lifelong education. They primarily target people with fewer opportunities for education, such as out-of-school children, youths, elderly people and women. They provide education combined with skills training for income generating activities leading to improved income and quality of life for farmers, artisans, women, youths and other rural poor. Most CLCs are located in rural areas, but some centres address the problems of the urban poor.

Thus, the CLC is an institution that aims at empowerment, social transformation and improvement in the quality of life through literacy, income generating skills and social action.

An effective CLC ensures the direct participation of the target group, flexibility and community resource mobilization. It also allows for leadership to emerge from the community itself with the support generated through strengthened co-ordination, networking and partnership with various local organizations and agencies.

Gender is a concept that deals with the roles and relationships between women and men. These roles and relationships are determined by socio-cultural, religious, political and economic factors, not by biology. In other words, gender refers to socially constructed roles and responsibilities assigned to women and men in a given location and the social structures that support them, all of which are subject to change over time.

Gender refers not just to women, but to both women and men, and to the interaction between them. With this concept, it is important to understand the differences between women and men that are externally influenced, as well as the conditions imposed on them based on naturally given biological differences. Therefore, gender analysis has to deal with both sexes in relation to each other, not in isolation. Furthermore, an understanding of gender does not imply that all women are alike. Race, ethnicity, class, caste, nationality, age and social rank are other factors that may cause significant differences among women themselves, and among men as well.

The purpose of looking at gender is not to divide women and men, causing conflict between them. Rather, it draws our attention to those issues that have brought about unequal relations, and allows us to address these issues with appropriate measures that will help reduce rather than perpetuate inequality. Thus, the concept of gender helps to focus on growth in terms of the equitable distribution of benefits between women and men, equality of power relations between them and, most of all, the partnership between them in any field of development.

## Gender

## Gender equality

Gender equality is “equality between men and women and entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued, and favoured equally. It does not mean women and men have to become the same but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.”<sup>1</sup>

The emphasis on gender equality and women’s empowerment does not presume a particular model of gender equality for all societies and cultures, but reflects a concern that women and men have equal opportunities to make choices. Because of current disparities, the equal treatment of women and men is insufficient as a strategy for gender equality. Equal treatment in the context of inequalities can result in the perpetuation of disparities. Because of the current situation of inequality, gender equality cannot be achieved without the empowerment of women.

*“Women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.”<sup>2</sup>*

Promoting the equal participation of women as agents of change in economic, social and political processes is essential for achieving gender equality. Equal participation involves women’s equal right to articulate their needs and interests, as well as their vision of society, and to shape the decisions that affect their lives, regardless of the cultural context.

1. *ABC of Women Workers’ Rights and Gender Equality*, International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva, 2000.
2. *Beijing Declaration*, adopted at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, China, 1995).

Gender equality can only be achieved through partnership between women and men. Gender equality is an issue that concerns both women and men, and achieving it involves working with men to bring about changes in their attitudes, behaviour, roles and responsibilities at home, in the workplace, in the community, and in national and international institutions. **Achieving gender equality requires changes in institutional practices and social relations through which disparities are reinforced and sustained.**

Achieving gender equality requires specific measures that go beyond mere equal treatment of women and men. Such measures must address the policies, laws, procedures, norms, beliefs, practices and attitudes that maintain gender inequality. Women must have the capacity to make choices about their own lives. Efforts to achieve equality between women and men that use a one-size-fits-all approach may not take into account the discrimination existing in the past. Provisions for equal opportunities may not take into account the unique challenges that different individuals and groups face. That is why equity measures are necessary.

Gender equity means fair treatment of women and men. To ensure fairness, measures must often be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise sharing a level playing field. Equity leads to equality. Measures that address specific disparities that prevent women from having the same status as men will allow both women and men to share equally in the results and benefits of development. One example of such a measure of equity is the provision of leadership training for women, which addresses the problem of gender inequality in structures of governance. Thus policies, programmes and projects of gender equality address the issue of equity while pursuing the goal of equality. Gender equity strategies, however, are used to eventually attain gender equality. Equity is the means and equality is the result.

*Gender  
equity*

## **Gender analysis**

Gender analysis is a tool to diagnose the differences between women and men in regard to their specific activities, conditions, needs, access to and control over resources, and ability to receive development benefits and participate in decision-making. Gender analysis entails, first and foremost, collecting sex-disaggregated data and gender sensitive information about the population concerned. It is the first step in gender-sensitive planning for promoting gender equality.

Gender analysis is an indispensable tool for both understanding the local context and promoting gender equality. Local context refers to the recognition that development interventions operate within existing social, cultural, economic, environmental, institutional and political structures in any community, country or region. In addition, few communities, countries or regions are homogeneous – formal and informal power structures within each reflect social, economic and political relationships among the people concerned as well as with the outside world. Simply put, knowledge of the local context is vital for the understanding of these relationships and their connection to any programme in terms of needs, impact and results. It identifies the varied roles played by women and men in the household, community, workplace, political system and economy.

Thus gender analysis provides information about:

- Differences between women and men and the diversity of their circumstances, social relationships and consequent status (for example, their class, race, caste, ethnicity, age, culture and ability);
- The different perspectives, roles, needs and interests of women and men in any area, country, region or institution;
- Relations between women and men pertaining to their access to and control over resources, benefits and decision-making processes;
- The potential differential impact of programme or project interventions on women and men; and

- Socio-cultural opportunities and constraints for reducing gender inequalities and promoting more equal relations between women and men.

In 1995, at the Fourth UN International Conference on Women held in Beijing, gender mainstreaming was established as the internationally agreed strategy for governments and development organizations to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. Gender mainstreaming is:

## Gender main- streaming

*“the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s and men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.”<sup>3</sup>*

Gender mainstreaming is founded on the principle that there are differences between the conditions, situations and needs of women and men, and that these differences need to be recognized in any kind of planning that leads to the attainment of development with equality. In practice, gender mainstreaming requires concrete actions explicitly included in policy and project documents backed by human and financial resources, and monitored and reviewed through appropriate indicators of change.

In terms of the functioning of an organization, gender mainstreaming broadly means embracing the gender perspective in all administrative and financial activities and procedures, in particular, decision making. This means not only promoting the participation of women in decision making mechanisms but also ensuring that the participating women are committed to the promotion of

---

3. ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions (E/1997/100).

gender equality and equipped with the necessary skills to actively influence policy.

Gender mainstreaming as an organizational strategy relies on the skills, knowledge and commitment of the staff. In this regard, appropriate capacity building needs to be included in policy documents and backed by financial resources and gender responsive indicators. During this long process of change in the culture and environment of the organization, efforts need to be sustained and changes adequately monitored.

In addition to the promotion of women in decision-making, the use of gender analytical information and sex disaggregated data, advocacy, networking and teamwork are fundamental to gender mainstreaming.

## B. Overview of Global Initiatives in Education

### *World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand, 1990*

More than 40 years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserted that “everyone has a right to education.” Declaring the goal of basic education for all – for the first time in history – an attainable goal, the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) convened in Jomtien, Thailand, in April 1990.

Conference delegates affirmed that education is a fundamental right for people, both women and men, of all ages throughout the world. They recognized the importance of sound basic education as a foundation for scientific and technological literacy, as well as for self-reliant development.

The Conference further acknowledged that in general the current provision of education is seriously deficient and that education must be made more relevant and universally available. Underscoring the importance of universal access and promoting equity, it affirmed that basic education should be provided to all children, youth and adults. For basic education to be equitable, all children, youth and adults must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning. The most urgent priority is to ensure access to and improve the quality of

education for girls and women, and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation. All gender stereotyping in education should be eliminated.

Thus the EFA Conference concluded by urging the removal of centuries of attitudes and practices keeping girls and women from their full participation in the development process. Stronger partnerships among national, regional, and local education authorities, the development of supportive policies, the mobilization of resources, and increased international solidarity were essential for removing these barriers.

The World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000 made a commitment to achieve the EFA goals and targets for each citizen in every country. The Dakar Framework is a collective commitment to action. Governments have an obligation to ensure that the EFA goals and targets are reached and sustained, most effectively through broad-based partnerships within countries, supported by co-operation with regional and international agencies and institutions.

Forum participants reaffirmed the World Declaration on Education for All, supported by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, emphasizing that every child, youth and adult has the basic right to benefit from an education that meets his or her basic learning needs in the best and fullest sense of the term. They also affirmed that education includes *“learning to know, to do, to live together and to be.”*

Forum delegates committed themselves to a number of goals. Those with specific relevance to gender equality are as follows:

- **Goal 2:** ensuring that by 2015 all children, with special emphasis on girls, children in difficult circumstances and ethnic minority children, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;

*Education  
Forum,  
Dakar,  
Senegal,  
2000*

- **Goal 4:** 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; and
- **Goal 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.

To achieve these goals, governments, organizations, agencies, groups and associations represented at the Forum pledged themselves to develop gender responsive national action plans<sup>4</sup> and to significantly increase investment in basic education. They promised to implement integrated strategies for gender equality in education that recognize the need for changes in attitudes, values and practices. In this regard, the countries of Asia and the Pacific agreed that:

*“it is essential to eliminate systemic gender disparities, where they persist, amongst girls and boys, throughout the education system – in enrolment, achievement and completion; in teacher training and career development; in curriculum, and in learning practices and learning processes. This requires better appreciation of the role of education as an instrument of women’s equality and empowerment”<sup>5</sup>*

Education for gender equality must necessarily aim at transforming gender relations so that men and women can enjoy the same opportunities to reach their potential in all areas of society. More specifically, education for gender

- 
4. To assist national EFA teams to develop gender responsive plans of education, UNESCO Bangkok has developed the document “Guidelines for Preparing Gender Responsive EFA Plans” March 2002. The guidelines can be download at [www.unescobkk.org/ips/ebooks/subpages/gender.html](http://www.unescobkk.org/ips/ebooks/subpages/gender.html) and hard copies can be requested from [gender@unescobkk.org](mailto:gender@unescobkk.org).
  5. *The Asia and Pacific Regional Framework for Action* adopted by the Asia-Pacific Conference on EFA 2000 Assessment, Bangkok, 17-20 January, 2002.

equality is free from gender stereotyping and equips girls and boys, women and men, with the necessary skills and attitudes that will help them to pursue their potential regardless of their sex.

These national EFA plans would set out clear strategies for overcoming the special barriers facing those currently excluded from educational opportunities, with a clear commitment to girls' education and gender equality.

The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) was launched at the World Education Forum in April 2000. It is a 10-year initiative that helps national governments to meet their commitments to ensure a quality education for girls everywhere. The UNGEI has five strategic objectives:

- To build political and resource commitments to girls' education;
- To end the gender gap in school attendance and completion;
- To eliminate the gender bias within national education systems;
- To support girls' education in areas affected by or recovering from armed conflict, natural disasters or external shocks; and
- To eliminate social and cultural discrimination that limits the demand for girls' schooling.

The UNGEI supports countrywide changes to eliminate institutional and systematic gender disparities and bias. Working with national education systems, it can help to develop sound policies and to mobilize new resources for girls' education. It brings new attention to participation in secondary school, education during emergencies and a life cycle approach to education that includes the cognitive stimulation of very young children.

It also offers a "second chance" to adolescent girls who are pregnant or are mothers, or have never attended or completed school. In 54 of the 90 countries where some UN efforts are taking place, 3 or more UNGEI entities have already established programmes to further girls' education.

### *United Nations Girls' Education Initiative*

Building new and broader partnerships is essential for success and sustainability, and such partnerships are central to the Initiative's work. Thus, the initiative seeks collaboration from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector and, of course, from governments.

# Review of Good Practices from the Asia-Pacific Region



*A. Background*

*B. An Overview of Exemplary Practices*

## Part II

# Review of Good Practices from the Asia-Pacific Region

## A. Background

This section presents an overview of the case studies from 14 countries in the Asia-Pacific region: Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Iran, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam. The case studies represent good practice for promoting gender equality in basic education and lifelong learning. Country reports provide information on various areas of analysis in order to identify examples of good practice with a particular focus on gender equality.

The areas of analysis are (1) area of implementation; (2) target group; (3) resource mobilization; (4) participatory approach and partnership with government organizations (GOs), NGOs etc; (5) activities; (6) achievements; (7) impact; and (8) sustainability. These areas were identified at the Technical Workshop on “Basic Education and Lifelong Learning for Gender Equality through CLCs,” held in Jayagiri-Bandung, Indonesia, in March 2001. This workshop was organized by the Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in co-operation with the Indonesian National Commission for UNESCO.

As a follow-up to this technical workshop, the participants undertook research projects in their respective countries, following the framework and guidelines provided by APPEAL, with the main objective of identifying examples of good practice undertaken by CLCs to promote basic and lifelong education.

Although the specific methodology of the research varied from country to country, researchers generally made use of formal questionnaire surveys and focus group discussions, supplemented by review of the available secondary information. Given the varying amounts of information available, the overview indicates some variations in the depth of analysis used by researchers.

The case studies identify examples of good practice used in each individual country to provide education to community people resulting in positive changes in their thinking and behaviour, especially amongst women in the community. The studies illustrate how CLCs help to promote basic education and lifelong learning for gender equality in the community and what strategies they need to adopt to increase women's participation in education and community development, strategies undertaken through co-operation and partnership with different GOs and NGOs.

In addition, they also reveal the problems and shortcomings in carrying out literacy and skill learning activities. In view of the existing problems of gender disparity in education, the case studies assume a special significance because they address various crucial aspects of promoting non-formal education, with a particular focus on gender.

The following section highlights the innovative approaches to basic education and lifelong learning used by CLCs in 14 different countries in Asia and the Pacific.

## **B. An Overview of Exemplary Practices**

## Madhukari and Mitali CLCs

# B a n g l a d e s h

### A. Background

Recognizing the importance of education, particularly women's education, the government of Bangladesh has taken several measures in the past few years to increase the participation of women at all levels of education and to reduce the gender gap through extensive programmes.

Some of the major initiatives included enactment of the Compulsory Primary Education Act of 1990, implementation of the Act in 1993, creation of a separate Primary and Mass Education Division (PMED) in 1995, the Integrated Non-formal Education Programme (INFEP) under PMED, the Directorate for Non-formal Education (DNFE) in 1996, and the Food for Education Programme with special emphasis on girls' education. The DNFE introduced some post-literacy and continuing education programmes.

In addition, NGOs, including Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Proshika, Caritas, Swanirvar Bangladesh and many others launched massive education programmes targeting primarily women. In order to provide an institutional base and a structured post-literacy and continuing education programme, in 1992 DAM established a total of 808 *Ganokendras* (CLCs) as an innovative approach to basic education and lifelong learning for gender equality.

An empirical investigation of this initiative of DAM was undertaken by describing good practices used by two CLCs to promote gender equality in basic education and lifelong learning. Investigators selected Madhukari and Mitali CLCs as examples. The former is located in Rajapur

village, Jhenaidah district, and the latter in Boalmara village, Narshingdi district.

## B. Major Findings

### Target group

Both Madhukari and Mitali CLCs were set up in poor, marginalized rural areas with most villages lacking primary schools or *bazars* (market centres). The CLCs aimed to provide opportunities to the rural illiterate and landless poor, day labourers, marginal farmers, destitute women, and people with low levels of education. Because more women than men in all categories were marginalized, 75 per cent of the people served by both CLCs were women. The CLCs provided opportunities to neo-literates, especially village women, to continue their education with the overall objective of improving the socio-economic condition of the poor.

### Activities

The CLCs' activities consisted of general education and "awareness raising" in various fields on the one hand, and skills training and credit assistance for generating income on the other. The investigators assessed the impact of the CLC activities by comparing "CLC-member households" and "non-CLC member households." Among the "CLC-member households," investigators compared situations "before CLCs" and "after CLCs."



The basic literacy and post-literacy programmes of the CLCs imparted basic education to illiterate adults, adolescents and out-of-school children, and provided services to neo-literates and autonomous learners to further improve their literacy skills. Investigators found that the learning materials, syllabi, manuals and teaching aids at both CLCs were gender-sensitive. They also found that the CLCs, through

their basic literacy and post-literacy programmes, made a significant contribution to the increase in the literacy rate of the community (Rajapur [Madhukari CLC area]: from 37 to 45 per cent; Boalmara [Mitali CLC area]: from 20 to 23 per cent)]. Thus the role of CLCs was found to be positive in retaining and improving the literacy skills of CLC members as well as that of the whole community through the demonstration effect.

Social awareness training emphasizing the importance of education (particularly women's education), the environment, sanitation, primary health care, family planning, leadership, development, gender and other topics was very much in evidence at both the CLCs. One good practice at both CLCs was the dissemination of knowledge from the direct beneficiaries of training to all members of the CLC. Comparison between "CLC member households" and "non-CLC member households" showed that the number of adults who could write letters was higher for the former than for the latter, indicating that the CLCs were instrumental in raising awareness of the importance of education. Researchers also found that "non-CLC member households" were much less knowledgeable about women's rights (ownership, voting, etc.) and different legal provisions against violence than were "CLC-member households."

The investigators identified poultry raising, *murali* (flute) and candle making, fisheries, vegetable cultivation and sewing as the areas of skills training conducted by the CLCs for income generating activities. The CLCs also had support services for providing access to credit for members after receiving skills training. The skills training activities of the CLCs had a positive impact on the skill development and incomes of poor women as reflected in their greater involvement in economic activities (farming and business) and subsequent improvement in social status. Comparison between "before CLCs" and "after CLCs" showed a decrease in the number of women CLC members with the status of housewife. Due to their engagement in different occupations, the average income of the CLC members

increased (Madhukari CLC: from Tk. 143 to Tk. 376; Mitali CLC: from Tk. 500 to Tk. 580), improving their status both inside and outside the family.

The study found that the CLC members were involved in different socio-cultural activities, such as debates and essay and sports competitions on different occasions (Literacy Day, Independence Day etc.). The stories, poems, folk songs and dramas inspired and raised awareness among the helpless and destitute women. These programmes were also a source of recreation for the villagers.

Most of the programmes of the CLCs were found to be gender-sensitive. In addition, campaign and orientation activities (community meetings, rallies, parent education, school programmes, etc.)



were organized under a separate programme for gender sensitization. Gender and development training addressed the economic and social roles of women, the gender division of labour, the role of men in the empowerment of women and other similar topics. Gender consciousness was

common among both women and men CLC members, and was more apparent among CLC members than non-members.

The study identified the pressures of domestic work, women's full responsibility for looking after their children and the opposition of husbands as the main obstacles to women's participation in CLC activities.

### **Strategies**

Needs assessment, resource identification (financial resources, site, resource person, programme personnel, etc.) and membership selection emphasized the participation of everyone affected by CLC activities.

As the target group basically consisted of poor marginalized women, this strategy ensured their strong participation by recognizing their needs, desires and voices. The CLCs played a pivotal role in the mobilization of local resources, both human and natural. The CLC members took the initiative in reclaiming derelict tanks, building roads, cultivating the land taken in mortgage by the CLC, setting up nurseries, and similar activities, offering voluntary labour and even using their own savings for these purposes. The CLC savings scheme was used to invest in land and trade.



In all sorts of activities, women's participation was quite high, manifesting an enhanced social awareness and commitment among the women CLC members. Being CLC members, both women and men learned how to work together and how to participate in development work for the community. Above all, they learned that both women and men are partners in the process of development. All these were positive steps towards promoting gender equality.

The CLCs maintained a strong network with GOs and NGOs, which were involved in CLC programmes in a variety of ways. The CLCs served as a platform to provide education, health training and financial services by GOs and NGOs, to which CLC members were affiliated as well. The linkage established by both CLCs with GOs and NGOs showed that CLC programmes were not operating in isolation.

A comparison of different health indicators (visits to qualified doctors, number of mothers receiving help from qualified doctors during last delivery, contraceptive prevalence rate, immunization rate for mothers and children, expenditure

on health, nutrition and food as a percentage of total expenditure, etc.) for CLC members and non-CLC members indicated that the CLCs had made a significant contribution to the improvement of the health status of poor women through establishing linkages with health and family planning services.

#### *Co-operation between the CLC and other institutions*

There is a mosque adjacent to Madhukari CLC. It was there before the start of the CLC. Initially the members of the mosque committee were not very much in favour of the CLC. However, the CLC gradually succeeded in convincing them of the importance of promoting literacy among women. Subsequently there was no more tension between the two. The most interesting thing was that some members of the mosque committee were on the management committee of the CLC. The president and vice-president of the mosque committee were the vice-president and president of the CLC management committee.

The CLC personnel consisted of a management committee, a full-time facilitator or community worker and the general members. The community worker was always a woman, although other staff were men. At Madhukari CLC, there was a woman treasurer. At least 75 per cent of the general members were marginalized women. Local people, existing and potential users of the programmes, were consulted in the process of forming the management committee and selecting members.

#### **Weaknesses**

Despite the strengths of Madhukari and Mitali CLCs in the promotion of basic education and lifelong learning, some shortcomings were noted. In many cases, training was ineffective in regard to income generating activities. The beneficiaries were not using loans for development or retaining the skills they received from training. One reason, in some cases, was an insufficient amount of credit. In

addition, they lacked marketing facilities for their products and a child-care facility for the children of learners. Furthermore, women were inadequately represented on the management committees.

### C. Conclusions

We can draw the following conclusions from the experience of Madhukari and Mitali CLCs:

- Women are keen to learn and enrich their knowledge, if they get the opportunity;
- Women take greater interest in CLC activities than men;
- CLC training should address the role of men in empowering women;
- CLCs should ensure that women's needs are recognized and that women have a strong voice in CLC activities;
- The lack of credit and marketing facilities makes skill training less effective;
- The lack of a child-care facility restricts women's participation in CLC activities; and
- The lack of male commitment to share responsibility for household chores and looking after their children limits women's participation in CLC activities.

## Chamcar Bei CLC

# C a m b o d i a

### A. Background

The Royal Government of Cambodia in its national policy has given priority to poverty alleviation. Since 1994, it has been paying particular attention to human resource development through education and vocational training. Achieving the EFA goal by 2015, especially amongst the disadvantaged, including children of ethnic minorities, constitutes one of the national education priorities. To achieve this goal, the Non-formal Education Department of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, in close co-operation with local authorities and communities, and with financial and technical support from UNESCO, has established seven CLCs in six provinces of the country.

A survey of these seven CLCs identified the Chamcar Bei CLC (formerly the Girls' and Women's Education Project) as the best example of activities promoting basic education and lifelong learning for gender equality. Investigators looked at this particular CLC in terms of its establishment, programme implementation and achievements.

### B. Major Findings

**Target group** The Chamcar Bei CLC, located in Kep province, was set up to provide basic education particularly to the illiterate wives and daughters of former Khmer Rouge soldiers settled in the village, and to adolescent girls and women in surrounding villages as well. In addition, a long-term goal of the CLC was to prepare local authorities as well as government partners to help community members develop

their own community by themselves and to facilitate the integration of former Khmer Rouge soldiers into civilian life.

The activities of the CLC focused on three major areas – literacy, skills training and capacity building. Apart from holding literacy classes, the CLC provided skills training in various areas including tailoring, weaving, embroidery and food processing. Child development training (the majority of learners being women), raising political awareness, disseminating information on CLC-related matters and co-operation with local authorities in providing assistance to flood victims were remarkable features of the CLC's contribution to the community. The



CLC took the initiative in setting up learning centres for out-of-school children (as branches of the main village primary school) and launching Buddhist fund-raising ceremonies for community development activities (for example, road construction) in which military personnel, schoolchildren and even monks actively participated. The CLC also organized a self-help group for women to enable them to start a savings scheme involving group members. All these activities were undertaken in response to the needs of the community. In order to address the varying problems of the target group, three sub-committees – for women, youth and the elderly – were set up.

The CLC facilitated the deep involvement of the entire community in its activities related to education and community development. Community members chose their own literacy teachers, and there were fewer dropouts in women teachers' classes than in classes taught by men. In some cases, when they came to lessons they found interesting, women learners requested women teachers to continue teaching even on Sundays. One of the most

## *Activities*

## Achievements

important features of the CLC from the gender equality perspective was that women constituted half of its management committee (three out of six members). Records showed that an earlier management committee had been chaired by a woman literacy teacher. An advisory committee, created at the initial stage, also consisted of three women and two men. Thus the Chamcar Bei CLC recognized the role of women in management right from the beginning.

In response to the great number of illiterate men in the community, the CLC made a point of mandating that men attend one-third of the classes. Similarly, the CLC recognized the effectiveness of having men and women together in the same class when discussing gender-related issues, such as domestic violence, which was very common in Cambodian society.

Researchers discovered various remarkable changes in the community resulting from the CLC's activities. Illiteracy was reduced to 10 per cent, and there were positive changes in the ways children were looked after, in attitudes toward children's education (more children were attending first grade), in relations between spouses (reflected by a sharp decrease in domestic violence), and in forest conservation. Having a better understanding of health and

hygiene measures and acquiring basic legal knowledge, the villagers were better able to deal with the related problems by themselves to a certain extent.

One of the most important factors contributing to the success of Chamcar Bei CLC was the problem of land distribution. This problem was solved by

giving each family a plot of land to produce food crops. Because of the literacy activities, the distant relationship



between the Khmer Rouge soldiers and people in the surrounding areas was transformed into mutual understanding and friendship. Consequently, peace and safety, regardless of the image of the Khmer Rouge soldiers, were restored in the area.

The impact of Chamcar Bei CLC was not only confined to the target community. Observing the changes the Chamcar Bei CLC brought about in the community, neighbouring villagers established CLCs for themselves. Aware of the importance of educating parents as well as children, these villagers requested the Chamcar Bei CLC to initiate parent education activities in their communities.



At a later stage the CLC was able to undertake support-raising activities on its own, acquiring financial aid, equipment and technical assistance. It was also able to independently obtain support from both domestic and international organizations, such as the World Food Programme and the Provincial Women's Association of Kep.

Observers noted that phasing out this support should occur gradually, particularly in a situation where the education level of the management committee was low. Even when the community takes full responsibility for management, the role of supporting agencies is vital for strengthening the CLC. Providing training in management skills, monitoring and evaluation, needs assessment, small enterprise development, marketing and other areas would help make the CLC sustainable.

## C. Conclusions

We can draw the following conclusions from Chamcar Bei CLC, an example of good practice for promoting basic education and lifelong learning for gender equality in Cambodia:

- Women's voices can be heard and women's problems can be addressed only when women's participation starts right from the beginning.
- For CLCs to be more effective in promoting gender equality in this context, joint participation of women and men in gender issues classes is highly desirable.
- Capacity building with a gradual phasing out of support is crucial for sustaining CLCs.

## Community Learning Programme in Guangxi Zhuang

### China

#### A. Background

Among the five autonomous regions of China, Guangxi Zhuang is the most densely populated, with 38 per cent of its population consisting of national minorities. The economy is poor and life is often difficult in Guangxi Zhuang due to its historical background and harsh natural conditions. To improve the lives of local people, in 1998 the Guangxi Provincial Education Bureau in collaboration with UNESCO launched a community learning programme in three counties – Longsheng, Tiandong, and Rongshui Miao. CLCs were set up in three townships in Longsheng county, two townships in Tiandong county, and two in Rongshui Miao county.

In order to assess the performance of the programme, an empirical study was carried out in these three counties. The investigation revealed that the programme had achieved great success in reducing the gender gap and could be considered as an example of good practice in promoting lifelong adult education.



#### B. Major Findings

Investigators found that the educational activities were integrated with cultural activities related to national customs, arts, architecture, history and cuisine. Four forms

#### *Activities*

of training were used: specialized training, short-term training, training via radio and television, and on-site visits and exchanges.

Vocational training in practical techniques was carried out in various areas with the involvement of many people. These



areas included growing field crops, raising livestock and poultry, agro-processing technology, gardening and others important for the village economy. Women participated actively in the organization of these activities. In addition, illiterate or semi-literate women cadres of the villages after receiving

appropriate training were responsible for conducting literacy classes in different village homes. Because women play such an important role in farming, science and technology training for demonstration families was conducted to improve the socio-economic status of women. Women attended training sessions in science and technology held on site at high-yield vegetable gardens, fruit orchards, demonstration rice fields, pigpens and fishponds. People receiving this training also became responsible for transmitting practical knowledge and skills to others afterwards. Women were also provided with credit facilities by township governments and credit co-operatives.

### **Strategies**

The study revealed that the programme had been well planned and carried out effectively giving due consideration to local conditions. Three models for the implementation of the pro-programme were applied: township, school, and on-site. The township CLCs were set up at cultural and vocational schools at the township level under the administration of the township government and the management of the township education department. The school CLCs were set up in primary or vocational schools

at the township level and operated by these schools. Similarly, on-site CLCs made use of instruction and guidance conducted at village demonstration sites such as orchards, ponds and fields.

The county and township education authorities, departments related to agriculture, education, science and technology, and the women's federation were involved in implementing the programme. Moreover, the local government and women's federation collaborated in developing project activities, the township vocational schools participated in training, and the township government and co-operatives worked together in providing credit to programme participants. The county government also offered a preferential policy for women. The programme demonstrated its flexibility by conducting training during the slack season or in the evening.

The study found that the programme made valuable contributions to the lives of the people. The farmers, especially the women, obtained practical vocational skills and technological knowledge, and applied them to improve their farming practices. This in turn led to an improvement of women's social position and role in economic development. In addition, the programme contributed to increasing the competence of those involved in management.

### C. Conclusions

The following conclusions are obvious from the example of the community learning programme in Guangxi:

- The integration of educational activities with cultural activities encourages women to participate;
- Science and technology training can form an important component of a CLC's activities to improve the socio-economic status of farm women; and
- On-site instruction and guidance at village demonstration sites is a good way to obtain effective results.

## Shivapur Community Learning Centre

# India

### A. Background

The conventional school system has not helped much to improve the economic conditions of the rural people, particularly women. In order to adapt learning activities to actual living conditions, non-formal education is of the utmost importance to enable rural people to improve their lives. With its education activities as a form of action research for economic and social change, the Shivapur Community Learning Centre (CLC) in the state of Maharashtra is engaged in transforming the attitudes and lives of the people, especially women.

A study of the Shivapur CLC's programme for the development and empowerment of rural women found very interesting and useful results, providing an impetus for further thought and action related to basic education and lifelong learning for gender equality.

### B. Major Findings

#### *Target group*

Because education and the empowerment of women are major requirements for the transformation of society, the Shivapur CLC emphasised women's education. However, this did not mean that the CLC neglected the education of the men in the community. It was mainly a question of priorities. The CLC focused on serving those between 15 and 35 years of age, with the upper age limit waived for deserving candidates. The trainees were mainly from eight villages around Shivapur.

## Approach

The programmes of the CLC were prepared in consultation with teachers, local leaders and, most importantly, women in varying situations. It was considered particularly important to understand the viewpoints of men regarding education, different roles and the overall status of women. In any programme for women's education and development to be conducted in a rural society, the dominant position of males cannot be ignored. The names of women who desired to participate in the programme were solicited from the members of village councils, co-operative societies, women's groups, headmasters of primary schools and village leaders.

The CLC decided to select local women instead of bringing trainers from urban areas. These women, with recognized leadership qualities, received intensive training in the skills and knowledge essential for implementing the curriculum. The group of trainers visited exhibitions, emporia, small production units and sales units for rural industries.



The curriculum was essentially a flexible offering that could enable different types of learners to acquire knowledge and develop attitudes, habits and values according to their conditions and life experiences. The CLC did not follow any tightly structured curriculum but offered a flexible basket of programmes that could be selected and adjusted from time to time according to the needs of learners. Curriculum modules were also kept flexible to suit the pace and ability of each learner. Schedules were made so as to satisfy the convenience of the learners. The CLC adjusted its schedules in the rainy season and in winter in view of the difficulties of the trainees in commuting. On a few occasions, it gave them assignments to be completed at home when their attendance at the centre was not possible (due to the rains and other difficulties).

## Activities

The CLC's activities focused on education for acquiring economic skills as well as personality development. The trainers used new forms of out-of-school education. They also recognised that apart from skills for income generation, rural women required other kinds of support to overcome their feelings of oppression and inferiority. For this purpose, special learning programmes were designed for personality development.



The learners were initially not aware that there were a large number of skills related to improving the quality of life. They only knew about the traditional skills of sewing and needlework, which were considered to be specifically feminine. However, the centre staff decided to accept their

suggestions and conduct vocational programmes focusing on traditional skills, introducing innovative skill training programmes at a later date. Four kinds of skill training activities were carried out – sewing; embroidery; knitting and the production of rexin articles. The participants also learned about the functions of various machines and their operation, how to undertake basic maintenance and minor repairs, and how to manage and store equipment and materials.

In addition, the CLC engaged itself in eclectic activities such as health, nutrition, child development, care of the elderly, the legal rights of women, their political participation and socio-economic contribution, public speaking, first aid, sports and the organised celebration of festivals. Solutions to the problems of women's health and nutrition, child care methods and constraints imposed on women by traditional rituals were considered important by the CLC for women to enjoy full rights as members of their families and citizens of their country. At the same time, such information was found essential for men as well in order to remove from

their minds the conventional ideas and prejudices which lowered the status of women. The CLC considered it necessary to keep in touch with the families of the learners. It acted as a modernising force helping them to overcome superstitions and rituals that relegated women to a lower status.

Although the CLC did not charge fees for the courses and also provided many of the raw materials, the learners had to bring some materials from which they could prepare articles for personal or family use. Some participants could not meet even these expenses. In such cases, the CLC provided the materials.

Apart from financial constraints, the learners were subject to cultural constraints. Some of the families required their girls and women to be back home from the training centre or farm work or any other activity before sunset. It was thus difficult to organise sports, games and cultural activities in the evening. Even when the trainees were taken on study tours, the families did not allow them to spend nights away from home. The length of some of these tours was curtailed as a result. By and large, married women found it somewhat difficult to concentrate on their training although they were keen to acquire all the skills offered by the centre. Their household

duties often came in the way. Illness of a family member or other difficulties at home affected their attendance. Some had to leave the training programme midway through. However, most of the unmarried trainees managed to complete the courses selected by them, because their parents felt that the skills would be an additional qualification for them when they were to be married. In the choice of courses, it appeared that the elders in the families

### *Constraints faced*



often pressured the learners. Marriage, change of residence, pregnancy and lack of time to attend the course regularly resulted in learners dropping out.

Although the programme was publicised in ten villages around Shivapur, most of the learners came from eight villages located no more than six kilometers from Shivapur. Bus service was available for some of them. However, some could not afford the bus fares and often preferred to walk the whole distance. Quite often, learners from the remote villages met together at a given point and walked to the centre in a group, which they considered a safety measure.

## C. Conclusions

The following major conclusions can be drawn from the experience of the Shivapur CLC:

- Knowledge of women's problems is essential for their families, particularly male members, to overcome their conventional ideas and prejudices, which lower the status of women.
- Understanding the financial situation of the learners is very important for the CLC.
- Cultural factors constrain women's fuller participation in CLC activities.
- Women's household responsibilities often interfere with their learning.
- Distance between home and centre has a great influence on wider participation in CLC activities.

## Dahlia CLC

# Indonesia

### A. Background

The national literacy policy combined with income generating programmes initiated in 1974 became a high priority in mid-1997 when Indonesia was hit by economic crisis. A serious effort got under way to improve out-of-school education as related to the informal sector of the economy in order to minimize the negative



effects of the crisis at the grassroots level. As a part of this effort, previously scattered out-of-school skill formation programmes were consolidated into *Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat* (Community Learning Centres), with the establishment of the first CLC in 1998.

A study of Dahlia CLC at Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara province, was undertaken to identify examples of good practice for promoting basic education and lifelong learning. Dahlia CLC was among the 27 best CLCs in the country, and won second prize in a national contest held by the Ministry of Education in 2001.

### B. Major Findings

Dahlia CLC was established in response to the low level of women's education, which contributed to a high infant mortality rate, early marriage (sometimes even at 12 years

*Target group*

of age) low purchasing power and low levels of knowledge about nutrition resulting in community health problems. Its target group comprised children, school dropouts, poor women, women of reproductive age, poor families and the disadvantaged in general.

### Activities

Researchers found the Dahlia CLC to be responsive to the learning needs of the community. Its programmes corresponded to the interests and choices of both women and men learners. These programmes encompassed a wide range of activities – *Kejar Packet A* (learning equivalent to primary schooling), *Kejar Packet B* (learning equivalent to lower secondary schooling), early childhood

education, and income generating activities, such as embroidery, sewing, agro-processing, motorcycle repair and electronics. The CLC was dynamic in adapting itself to the changing needs of the community over time. Before the economic crisis, both *Kejar Packet A* and functional literacy programmes already



existed, but later on skills training, especially in areas useful for earning a living like raising chickens, food processing, repairing cars, sewing and embroidery, came to the forefront.

The income-generating programme of Dahlia CLC attached equal importance to credit and marketing in addition to production. Because the husband's permission was necessary for a woman to receive a loan from the formal banking system, the Dahlia CLC helped women to form a co-operative that could act as an informal bank, lending money at a low interest rate to members. The community took advantage of its location near the Selaparang Airport to supply salted eggs and other processed foods to restaurants and shops there. The women also overcame

their shyness and used motorcycles to transport their products, an unusual sight in Indonesia. The centre's handicrafts were sold to tourists at the Senggigi Tourist Resort. There was also a women's co-operative shop selling daily household necessities.

The Dahlia CLC implemented its activities through close co-operation with almost all the stakeholders in education and community development. Ever since its establishment, it had always maintained a close cross-sectoral relationship with other organizations and had received funds to support its activities. Recognizing that only with mutual co-operation could most of the stakeholders in education be mobilized, the Dahlia CLC made use of the spirit of the Indonesian social system based on *gotong-royang* (mutual co-operation) as a relevant foundation for implementing out-of-school education programmes.

An important feature of the Dahlia CLC was the involvement of women in management. It harnessed the potential of local women as volunteer tutors, facilitators and trainers, which was consistent with the reality in the community. Women had a more flexible work schedule compared to their husbands. Furthermore, the majority of learners were also women. A good administrative system and a highly motivated management committee were vital to the success of the CLC. Many people were willing to become volunteers on a part-time basis, both short-term and long-term, to help develop the CLC to serve their community. One man served as a local resource person after undergoing training at the CLC. Other members took advantage of the training opportunities provided by the Government to increase the skills of those involved in the management of out-of-school education programmes.

Researchers found that remarkable changes had occurred among women after their participation in various programmes organized by the CLC. After receiving skills training at the CLC, they were not only able to save money by sewing dresses for family use, but also earned in-come for the household. An unpre-cedented degree of confidence while talking to men, parti-cularly from outside,

## Strategies

## Achievements

was noted among women, which was unusual in the context of Indonesia, especially West Nusa Tenggara. The credit co-operative increased the self-confidence and autonomy of women members, bringing decision-making power into the hands of women in the community – a positive step towards gender equality. After gaining new horizons through out-of-school education and also income-earning opportunities, women were no longer treated like second-class citizens in the family anymore.

**Weaknesses** Despite all these positive aspects reflecting the success of Dahlia CLC, some weaknesses and problems were in evidence. Not all community needs were being fully and optimally served by the CLC, although planning was under way to deal with them in future. The *Kejar Packet A* and functional literacy programmes of the CLC were severely weakened after the financial crisis in mid-1997. There was also a problem in finding a reliable manager who would work voluntarily or with a small honorarium. Additional funding to ensure a paid position as manager of the CLC might be necessary in order to better respond to community needs.

### C. Conclusions

We can reach the following conclusions based on the experience of Dahlia CLC in Indonesia:

- The CLC should be dynamic enough to respond to the changing needs of the community over time.
- Credit and marketing facilities are key to the success of CLC income generating activities.
- Women's role in CLC management should be recognized.
- A good administrative system and a highly motivated management committee are crucial for the success of a CLC.

## Chalab, Naser, Hemat Abad and Jihad Abad CLCs

# Islamic Republic of Iran

### A. Background

Following the establishment of the Literacy Movement Organization (LMO) in 1979, the literacy rate in Iran markedly increased (from 47 per cent in 1976 to 75 per cent in 1996), but showed a great disparity between rural and urban women, which later led to literacy programmes targeted specifically at rural women. A further shift in focus took place when the LMO concentrated its activities on post-literacy and functional literacy to prevent neo-literate rural women from lapsing into illiteracy. Four CLCs came into existence as a UNESCO pilot project to provide education opportunities in remote, rural areas lacking any educational infrastructure. The CLCs were set up in four villages, Chalab and Naser in Ham province, and Hemat Abad and Jihad Abad in Fars province.

A study of innovative approaches to basic education and lifelong learning identified these four CLCs as examples of good practice in promoting gender equality. An in-depth investigation focused on the various aspects of their performance in the course of launching education programmes for disadvantaged people.

### B. Major Findings

Established in poor remote rural areas, Chalab, Naser, Hemat Abad and Jihad Abad CLCs aimed at meeting the educational and developmental needs of disadvantaged people including women, minorities, and other rural poor.

Investigators found that the CLCs were implementing three main categories of programmes – basic literacy, post literacy and vocational training, which included a variety of

**Target  
group and  
activities**

subjects, such as religious education, health education, environmental education, animal husbandry, embroidery, sewing, knitting, making toys and weaving carpets. Other activities conducted by CLCs included counseling services (for example, family planning), providing day-care centres for learners' children, and organizing national and religious ceremonies, study visits, pilgrimage and sightseeing.

The types of literacy and income generating programmes launched by the CLCs were identified during assessment



of the educational and vocational needs of the target group. Community participation, networking and flexibility characterized the strategies employed by the CLCs to conduct their programmes. All of the activities were planned, designed and implemented using a participatory approach through group meetings

attended by the learners themselves as well as representatives of government organizations (related to agriculture, health, welfare, etc.), the village council chair, the school principal, paramedics and relevant CLC officials. Specifically, learners actively participated in the development of the curriculum. The CLCs established a strong relationship with different governmental organizations, such as those related to agriculture and health, which offered various education programmes. In addition, a network was established with international organizations integrating the CLCs' programmes with their programmes. Training modules and class schedules were flexible in order to respond to learners' choices and time available. The CLCs also used local people for teaching.

The study found that the CLCs played a very important role in providing learning opportunities for women subject to seclusion in Islamic society. After the establishment of CLCs, a large number of women and girls attended the

CLC programmes. Examination of the activities implemented by CLCs showed that 79 per cent of the participants were women. Men preferred their wives and daughters to go to the CLC, where women and girls were exclusively taught by women literacy teachers, particularly in cases where the village elementary school was for both boys and girls who were taught by male as well as female teachers. Moreover, women and girls could go freely to CLC classes unlike an earlier situation where the classes were held at rented houses or villagers' homes; men did not allow their wives and daughters to attend those classes.

The study identified various factors hindering women's participation in the CLC programmes. These included responsibility for very young or handicapped children, preoccupation with house-hold chores, the narrow-mindedness of male family members, illness or disability among women, and nomadic life styles. Similarly, men's participation in CLC programmes was restricted by work outside the village and the lack of interesting classes.

The study found that several perceptible changes took place after the establishment of the CLCs. Literacy courses conducted by CLCs increased the level of literacy in the community. Positive changes among women participants

included a growing awareness of their rights, greater participation in village council meetings and other social affairs, a readiness to participate in elections, greater involvement in family decision-making in matters related to number of children, children's education and marriage, increased earnings from selling hand-made garments, greater self-confidence, and better knowledge of matters related to hygiene and sanitation.

## *Achievements*



Before the CLCs were set up, the divorce rate was very high, and some men behaved aggressively toward their wives. Girls had no right to choose their marriage partners. But after the CLCs were established, these conditions improved. Participation in CLC programmes made men aware of women's rights and changed their views of women's education dramatically. Changes in the division of labour on the farm, improvement in the relationships among family members and equal treatment of girls and boys in the family were other notable results of the CLC activities.

#### *Attitude changes among men*

- “My son did not allow his sister to go to the nearby village to study, but after the establishment of CLCs he agreed to let her go”.
- “My sister has participated in CLC programmes, and now I consult with her on some issues and approve her ideas”.
- “My relationship with my family has improved after participating in CLC programmes”.
- “Our relationship with each other has improved at the village level and even our customs have changed a little”.
- “I did not allow my wife to go his father's house, but now I have changed my mind”.

### **Weaknesses**

Despite the strengths described above, there were also some weaknesses noted in various areas of the CLCs' programme implementation. First, lessons in the field of gender equality were inadequate. Although the number of books that included gender equality related matters was relatively high, their content was not localized to be appropriate for different socio-cultural contexts. Moreover, men whose attitudes towards women had not changed were not given adequate attention.

Second, the vocational programmes had no predetermined textbooks or curriculum, and consequently did not cover gender equality, although they did play an important role in promoting gender equality through women's empowerment.

Finally, there were various factors contributing to the ineffectiveness of the CLCs. These included the absence of day-care centres, poor facilities (lighting, ventilation, furniture) and infrastructure (water, toilets and space), and the lack of teaching equipment, skilled trainers and recreational facilities. It was also noted that some of the learners were forced to leave the vocational courses because they were very poor and could not buy required materials such as cloth for sewing.

### C. Conclusions

The study, which focused on best practices promoting basic education and lifelong learning for gender equality in Iran through the interesting experiences of Chalab, Naser, Hemat Abad and Jihad Abad CLCs, reached the following conclusions:

- Holding separate classes for women and men and having women literacy teachers are crucial for ensuring women's participation in CLC activities occurring in conservative Muslim societies.
- In such societies, the place where literacy classes are held affects women's participation.
- Poverty adversely affects learning activities and hampers participation.
- The CLC is instrumental in reducing violence in the community.
- The lack of interesting classes for men hinders their participation.
- Gender equality training should target men as well as women, particularly those who have negative attitudes towards women.

## Phao and Sabouon CLCs

# Lao PDR

### A. Background

The education system in Lao PDR has not equally served rural and urban areas, lowland and highland areas, and women and men. Ethnic minorities in remote areas, in particular, are lagging behind. The enrolment rate of children is low and the dropout rate is quite high. These



children, especially girls living in remote rural areas, face the problem of speaking and listening to the Lao language of the majority when they begin their schooling. Parents do not appreciate the importance of education. The priority of boys' education is strengthened by poverty, doubly limiting girls' access to education.

At present, the Government and private organizations are attempting to upgrade people's education levels and promoting gender equality. Focusing on people who live in remote rural areas, a number of CLCs have been set up throughout the country. Two of them, located in two villages in Saravan province, were the subjects of a study of good practice for promoting gender equality in education. The sites were Phao village in Lao Ngam district and Sabouon village in Saravan district. The study described the impact of these CLCs by comparing individuals who joined CLCs with those who did not. A further comparison was made

between the situations “before” and “after” the CLCs began their activities.

## B. Major Findings

Both Phao and Sabouon CLCs were established in ethnic communities where gender inequality had long been a problem. Women in Phao village were not even allowed to give birth in the village. They had to go to the forest for delivery and stay there until they were allowed to come back. Participation in religious ceremonies was also prohibited. Both CLCs aimed at providing education to women, and collaborated with villagers, especially women, in planning, implementing and evaluating education programmes. Agriculture, health, and community and adult education were the areas the CLCs covered.

The study found that women showed a keen interest in CLC activities and participated actively and continuously. A comparison of women and men’s participation in training revealed that the participation rate for women was higher than for men. In food processing classes, all participants were women, and in gender equality sessions 81 per cent were women. On the other hand, men outnumbered women (52.6 per cent) in the pig-raising classes. The responses of the CLC participants “before” and “after” CLC activities indicated a twofold increase in positive attitudes toward gender



equality in matters related to education, vocational training, income generation, participation in meetings, decision-making within families and child care (before CLCs: 33 per cent; after CLCs: 65 per cent). In addition, 18.6 per cent of those who did not participate in CLC activities agreed that men have more rights than women, whereas the

*Target  
group and  
achievements*

percentage dropped to only 12.5 per cent among the CLC participants.

An important achievement of the CLCs was the improvement in village living conditions. The CLCs were able to make the villagers understand the importance of education. The villagers learned to love and help each other. In Phao village the practice of sending women to the forest to give birth was abandoned. The CLC built a house for women to have their babies and provided nurses and equipment to take care of mothers after delivery.

### **Weaknesses**

Although the CLCs contributed a great deal to the promotion of gender equality in education in the targeted communities, there were some specific shortcomings that required further attention. These included the weak integration of gender equality content into the curriculum, participation of women in gender stereotyped activities and the lack of variety in teaching methods.

## **C. Conclusions**

The study came to the following conclusions:

- Women's participation in CLC activities is high compared to men's.
- Traditionally women take more interest in preparing and processing food than men.
- Gender equality is still considered to be a matter related to women only.
- CLCs can change even strong taboos long existing in society.
- Ethnic and linguistic minorities are excluded and lack motivation to participate in CLC activities when the language of instruction is Lao.

## Rashaant Bag, Bulgan, Gobi-Altai and Uburkhangai CLCs

# Mongolia

### A. Background

At first glance, Mongolian women do not seem to face serious gender discrimination. Unlike elsewhere, the basic education standard of women is high, with a 96 per cent literacy rate, greater school attendance (girls constitute 70 per cent of those matriculating in higher education) and fewer school dropouts when compared with men. However, there are problems such as poverty among households headed by women, a low representation of women in senior government positions and high levels of abortion. Many parents continue to withdraw their children from secondary school. Even though basic education is free, increasing poverty is likely to reduce prospects for the poorest children, leading to greater inequality in schooling.

At the national level, a national basic education programme, non-formal education programme and national programme of action for the advancement of women constitute the cornerstone of the promotion of gender equality in the field of education. A host of women's organizations and movements, such as the Women's Brain Pool, World Vision, Peace Winds Japan, Women's Movement for Community Development and the Gender



Center for Sustainable Development, are involved in addressing gender issues in the country.

Researchers studied four selected CLCs implementing programmes for gender equality in order to describe good practice for promoting basic education and lifelong learning. They were Rashaant Bag CLC in Zavkhan province, Bulgan CLC in Bulgan province, Gobi-Altai CLC in Gobi-Altai province, and Uburkhangaigai CLC in Uburkhangaigai province.

## B. Major Findings

### *Target group and activities*

The CLCs' target group comprised households headed by women, rural women, jobless women, unemployed youth and elders, and fatherless children. A participatory approach was used to assess the community and identify the target group and its problems.

In the case of Bulgan CLC, gender inequality was addressed through skill development and small business training. Thus, women received training in small business technology and marketing, specifically related to textiles,

food preparation, retailing and other areas. In addition, health care education related to disease prevention in the family and community was provided with the assistance of local health care organizations.

In the case of Gobi-Altai CLC, income generation was identified as the priority area to overcome

poverty among both women and men. Thus, with the objective of increasing family incomes, training was offered in growing, drying, preserving and packaging vegetables in the home using local resources.

In the case of Rashaant Bag CLC, a major need was better social care for children and elders living alone, using local



human and material resources. Children were given an opportunity to go to school, live in the school dormitory and register with charitable organizations, with local people assigned to be surrogate parents. Similarly, a group of people was responsible for looking after the elders. In addition, the CLC provided local youth with training in how to use traditional methods of making clothes, knitting and baking.



In the case of Uburkhangai CLC, both women and men in the community received short-term gender sensitivity training on subjects such as the difference between the terms “gender” and “sex,” and the identification of gender inequality problems. Good training materials on gender education were also developed.

Thus, the CLCs had launched programmes for capacity building, equivalency, income generation, gender sensitivity, and information and communications technology, all of them serving women as well as men. They also developed self-learning packages on gender equality and a local curriculum for special learning groups.

The study found that women’s ability to manage household affairs increased following their participation in different kinds of training and other activities organized by the CLCs; this was crucial to promoting gender equality. The active involvement of women in development programmes and the creation of women’s associations were other notable impacts the CLCs made in the community.

The composition of the management committees indicate that the CLCs made an effort to increase the involvement of women (Bulgan CLC: 46 per cent women and 54 per cent men; Gobi-Altai CLC: 33 per cent women and 67 per cent men; Rashaant Bag CLC: 50 per cent women and

50 per cent men; and Uburkhangai CLC: 60 per cent women and 40 per cent men).

The most important point brought out by the study was that women's involvement in CLC activities could be increased by reducing their household workloads, creating more social work opportunities for them and making these opportunities directly beneficial to them.

### C. Conclusions

We can come to the following conclusions from the experiences of Rashaant Bag, Bulgan, Gobi-Altai and Uburkhangai CLCs in Mongolia:

- In order to increase women's involvement in CLC activities, there must be a reduction in women's household workload and an increase in opportunities to participate in relevant social work activities.
- Gender sensitivity training at CLCs should target both women and men in the community.

## The Micro-Credit Project for Women, Kyouun-ku CLC

# Myanmar

### A. Background

Unlike most developing countries in Asia, gender disparity in education is uncommon in modern Myanmar. Women in Myanmar have always been accorded recognition and a high status in the society.

There is very little discrimination based on race, class, colour and sex. However, there are regional and ethnic disparities in the seven states situated on the borders of the country, as well as in the seven central divisions located in the lowlands. Thus, the main thrust in the education



sector has been to promote better conditions in these areas by opening new schools and appointing a large number of teachers. With regard to non-formal education, various divisions have already established basic education programmes and have been implementing continuing education programmes through CLCs.

Researchers undertaking a study of innovative approaches to basic education and lifelong learning for gender equality selected five CLCs in Mandalay, Magway and Ayeerawaddy divisions. They chose the Micro-credit Project for Women at Kyouun-ku CLC, Pyapon township, Ayeerawaddy division, established by the Myanmar Education Research Bureau, as an example of good practice.

## B. Major Findings

### *Target group*

Income generating activities gave priority to women. These activities included agriculture, stock breeding and preparing thatch and bamboo mats. Eighty per cent of the learners at the CLC were women. Gender equality training was directed to both men and women training together (80 per cent), as well as to women and men in separate sessions (10 per cent each). Training was conducted using

community resources. However, the Kyou-n-ku CLC had no basic literacy training programme.



The Kyou-n-ku CLC learners, mostly from the economically active age group (15-60 years), had access to loans through a micro-credit scheme. Women learners (the primary target group) attending continuing

education programmes at the CLC could develop their small-scale enterprises with loans from the programme. The major reason for their need to borrow was the inadequacy of their husbands' incomes. The lower interest rate provided by the project was attractive to poor women. CLC members could receive loans (to be paid back in small installments within a year) only with the consent of fellow members and by demonstrating basic literacy skills.

### *Achievements*

The researchers noted that the involvement of women in economic activities was the major benefit of the Micro-credit Project for Women at Kyou-n-ku CLC. There were numerous impacts on the women themselves, their families and the community, and even on men as husbands. The project helped to promote women's income generating activities and alleviate poverty in the family. Women were able to share with men the burden of household expenses covering food, clothing, children's education and family health care. Women's contribution to household incomes

enhanced their position in the family and increased their decision-making power. Furthermore, the project helped women to become familiar with financial matters so that they were able to run enterprises on their own and borrow independently.

New earning opportunities for women had a clear impact on the household division of labour between women and men. Men took over some of the traditional tasks of women, such as looking after the children. In addition, they also shared in their wives' economic



opportunities. Thus, relationships between the spouses improved. In this way, women were empowered through their participation in the project, which by providing financial assistance to women benefited the entire family and the community they lived in.

It was also noted that the authorities concerned played a vital role in providing adequate infrastructure and a legal framework, creating an enabling environment for the micro-credit scheme.

### C. Conclusions

Looking at the experience of the Micro-Credit Project for Women at Kyouun-ku CLC, one can draw the following conclusions:

- Micro-credit schemes have a great potential to empower women through income generating activities.
- Men as husbands can also benefit from women's involvement in economic activities.
- The creation of an enabling environment by the authorities is crucial to the successful implementation of a programme.

## Amarapur, Budole and Lidhansa CLCs

# Nepal

### A. Background

A new era in Nepal began in the 1970s and 1980s when local and international non-governmental organizations joined the Government in working together to meet the education needs of school dropouts and other disadvantaged groups (including women) not well served

by the formal education system in the country. Following a literacy campaign, a number of CLCs were set up in many places as an effort to provide a permanent infrastructure for carrying out literacy and continuing education programmes. Later on, the World Terakoya Movement of the National Federation of



UNESCO Associations in Japan (NFUAJ) encouraged many NGOs receiving its support to establish more CLCs and launch community-based education programmes combined with development activities.

A study was conducted of selected CLCs in Nepal aimed at highlighting good practice in promoting basic education and lifelong learning for girls and women. These were Amarapur CLC in Bungmati, Lalitpur; Budole CLC in Budole, Kabhrepalannchowk; and Lidhansa CLC in Khokana, Lalitpur. Their establishment was supported by the National Resource Centre for Non-Formal Education

(NRC-NFE), which was set up through the joint consultation of 40 NGOs in response to the strong need for a national resource centre to provide them with guidance and training.

## B. Major Findings

All of these CLCs were established in areas where the literacy rate was very low, particularly among adults, and there was a high degree of gender disparity in education. Thus, after needs assessment surveys, the CLCs having women as their primary target group also worked to improve the existing situation in the community.

Aiming at mobilizing locally available resources, the CLCs focused on the unused potential of the community people, especially women, through integrated programmes related to literacy, income generation, health and sanitation, the environment, and raising awareness. These programmes addressed problems such as illiteracy, unemployment and lack of credit, as well as prevailing conservative attitudes.

The primary strategy adopted by the CLCs was to promote a spirit of teamwork by forming groups for specific activities (e.g., growing vegetables, raising water buffalo, fisheries, forest products, women's savings and credit). Women's groups were involved in various programmes ranging from skills development for generating income (animal husbandry, mushroom gardening, sewing, knitting, making incense, soap, flower garlands, etc.) to social welfare (e.g., controlling alcoholism among men), cultural and religious activities (modifying the tradition where needed) and environmental conservation activities.

Local NGOs supported the group formation, building solidarity and initiating group activities in the community. They started several programmes providing technical and financial support to women's groups for skill development training. The successful women's savings and credit group could receive support (technical and financial) from local NGOs, as well as the business sector and other institutions. Acting as a link between women's groups and women in the community, the local NGOs provided gender orientation training. The

*Target  
group*

*Activities*

literacy programme offered training in maintaining a savings account and using the group savings fund to provide credit to members, whereas skills training aimed at developing various skills to carry out income generating activities. The women's savings and credit programme was a model, having encouraging results from the perspectives of both CLCs and NGOs. Besides the programmes targeting women, the CLCs conducted leadership training for social development workers and local guide training and skills training for youth.

## **Achievements**

It was noted that in addition to literacy improvement the CLCs brought about remarkable change among women by making them economically more productive, particularly through the savings and credit scheme. Women were more interested in attending non-formal education programmes than men were. Literacy and skills training resulted in greater participation in income generating activities among women than among men in the community.

Various programmes organized by the CLCs also contributed to uplifting women in terms of awareness, knowledge and community participation. Women not only became more aware and knowledgeable about women's rights, the environment, health (both personal and family) and sanitation, and the preservation of places of cultural importance, but also actively participated in the related community activities.



Women's increased participation in community development was one remarkable result of the CLCs' activities. As one example of mobilizing community women, a forest consumer group with women members was actively involved in community forestry. The CLC programmes also

had a direct impact on the personal development of many

women. As members of the various groups, women became mutually helpful and better organized, as well as more forthright and articulate.

Analyzing changes at the community level, investigators found that literacy programmes conducted by the CLCs brought about unprecedented improvements in people's attitude towards women's education, their involvement in community development and their role as equal contributors to the overall process of development. Weakening men's domination of the family and shifting household and child-care responsibilities to the husband were other encouraging developments very important from a gender equality perspective. An increase in awareness, better communication skills, improved health status and a reduction in family size were other benefits the CLCs were able to offer the entire community.



On the whole, the CLC programmes were successful in substantially increasing the literacy levels of girls and women, in encouraging women to be more enterprising, in enhancing their earning ability and empowerment, and finally in improving their overall socio-economic status in society.

***A CLC changes the lives of community women:  
Ms. Laxmi Maharjan's experience***

I have five sisters but no brother. Our parents work in the field. We help our parents in their work. My mother tells me that before I was born, my family prayed for a boy. My parents were not financially well off, so they were unable to send us to school, but we wanted to study. I heard that Lidhansa CLC had started an adult literacy class. I asked my parents, but they did not allow me to join the class. One day, a facilitator from the CLC came to talk to my parents and changed their minds. The facilitator said that I would not only learn to read, write and calculate but also gain knowledge and skills to earn a living. Then my parents agreed to send me to the literacy class. After six months, I learned to read and write. I also learned how to make *masaura* (pellets of black gram and vegetables) and snack items. I prepare these things every day besides doing household chores. My daily income is Rs. 50. My parents are pleased. My other sisters have also started income generating activities like mushroom gardening and making incense. Because of me, my parents let them enroll in literacy and post-literacy classes organized by the CLC.

***Weaknesses***

The foregoing discussion shows that the CLCs generally had a positive impact on the communities they served. However, there were some negative features of both the centres and their programmes. Literacy classes held at night created problems for women who wished to attend and there were no child-care facilities. In some cases, training was poorly organized and of low quality. Marketing was not covered at all, nor was any marketing facility made available. In addition, there was no information dissemination and the participatory method in needs assessment was ignored. Finally, the centres lacked libraries. Regarding management and gender equality,

women's participation in CLC management committees was very poor.

### C. Conclusions

We can make the following conclusions from the activities of these three CLCs:

- Women take more interest in attending non-formal education programmes than men.
- Women play a meaningful role in changing the behaviour of men related to social development.
- Women perform well in savings and credit activities.
- A CLC can effectively mobilize community women for environmental conservation, particularly for community forestry development.
- Women's participation in CLC activities is adversely affected by night classes and the lack of child-care facilities.
- The lack of a marketing facility hampers the effectiveness of skills training for generating incomes.
- The CLC needs to provide women with opportunities to participate not only as learners but as managers and members of the CLC committee.

## Bunyard CLCs

# Pakistan

### A. Background

The literacy rate of women in Pakistan is among the lowest in the world. Hence education development in the country must focus on illiterate women between 15 and 35 years of age who have been passed over by the formal school system and who make up a large proportion of the total population of women. In the existing situation of direct government involvement in formal schooling focusing primarily on children's basic education, NGOs, religious bodies and individuals are playing a major role in promoting adult education in the country.

The Bunyard Literacy Community Council (BLCC), an NGO dedicated to strengthening the development of rural communities through multi-sectoral programmes targeting the poorest of the poor in society (especially women and children), had established four Bunyard Community Learning Centres (BCLCs) in rural Punjab. Researchers studied these four sites as examples of good practice in promoting gender equality in basic and lifelong education in the country. The four CLCs were NATT CLC in Lahore, STEP (Social Team for Education and Environmental Prosperity) CLC in Kabirwala, ILM CLC in Shujabad, and Anjuman Falah-O-Behbood CLC in Muzafar Garh.

### B. Major Findings

#### *Activities*

The researchers found that in emphasizing the role of women's education to promote gender equality, the Bunyard CLCs focused on poverty alleviation and women's empowerment (although men and children were covered

to some extent) through literacy and skills training. The CLCs embarked on a variety of programmes, ranging from health and sanitation (first aid, reproductive health, treatment of common diseases, etc.) and micro-credit services to social and recreational activities. The community was made aware of different issues, including political ones, through seminars, workshops and forums. The CLCs developed linkages between the community and government departments to equip the community with modern information technology. Colleges and universities in partnership with the Bunyad CLCs held a series of training sessions related to micro-credit. A major part of the CLC activities was devoted to the formation of groups leading to supportive networks in specific areas.



The membership and management of the Bunyad CLCs showed a commendable degree of women's participation (60 per cent in STEP, 52 per cent in Anjuman Falah-O-Behbood, 50 per cent in ILM and 30 per cent in NATT). In a social environment that did not allow women to participate at the community level, such representation at the CLCs resulted from a very positive effort on their part to attain gender equality by providing local women with the opportunity to identify actual needs, especially related to learning. The centres not only had an innovative and effective strategy for reaching out to members of poor rural communities, especially women, but also a viable and sustainable approach to integrated development. These CLCs were successful in mobilizing local resources to acquire land, manpower and technical expertise to carry out their activities.

## Achievements

As a measurable impact of the CLCs, the researchers took note of women's greater participation in basic education at the grassroots level, which was obviously a result of women's representation in the CLC administration. This representation was a sign of the prominent and influential status of women at the policy level. The adoption of a cross-sectoral approach (basic education combined with vocational training and micro-credit) had a direct impact on women's empowerment.

The CLCs' micro-credit scheme was successful in developing leadership abilities both at the group and community levels, apart from creating self-reliance among women. It also improved their ability to handle money and keep records and thus empowered them as decision-makers.

Other remarkable achievements included the promotion of a learning atmosphere in the local community and the establishment of links between the community and modern information technology. The dissemination of cross-sectoral training methods to other centres and programmes was another positive development. The CLC

programmes were also more focused on local problems of a specific nature.

The NATT CLC selected for study presented a remarkable example of how to overcome the problem of women's low participation in CLC activities due to socio-cultural constraints. The

formation of the Family Education Committee, made up of women in the learners' families, helped to ensure women's participation in basic education in a situation where social and cultural barriers existed. One positive impact of this CLC on the community was the establishment of health centres in response to the basic needs of the local women.



The ILM CLC exemplified how the formal and non-formal education systems could benefit by sharing experiences with each other.



In addition to arranging training programmes and offering refresher courses for the formal schools, the CLC tried to increase the enrollment of out-of-school children and readmit school dropouts. Many government teachers provided the CLC with voluntary services as its permanent members. The case of Anjuman Falah-O-Behbood CLC presented a vivid example of acquiring funding independently for its operations, demonstrating its achievement in capacity building.

### C. Conclusions

The study reached the following conclusions:

- Women's representation in the CLC administration is very important both in terms of policy and needs identification.
- Women managers act as role models and encourage the participation of other women in CLC activities.
- Micro-credit schemes are useful for developing leadership ability among women, in addition to making them self-reliant.
- Mobilizing women in the families of learners is an effective strategy for ensuring women's participation in situations where socio-cultural factors hinder their involvement in basic education.
- A CLC can provide a platform for formal and non-formal education systems to play a complementary role.
- The ability of a CLC to tap resources for continuing its activities depends on leadership, capacity building and the capacity to establish partnerships.

# The Non-formal Education Accreditation and Equivalency Learning Support Delivery System

## The Philippines

### A. Background

The Philippine government's intention to develop non-formal education programmes in response to the learning needs of poor and underserved communities became a

reality with the Non-formal Education Accreditation and Equivalency (NFE A&E) learning support delivery system, the result of efforts by the Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE), Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS).



Committed to breaking the links between illiteracy

and poverty, the NFE A&E system provides opportunities for economically depressed and disadvantaged people to upgrade their skills, knowledge and competencies, and obtain elementary and secondary certificates in order to improve their lives and the lives of their families.

Researchers conducting a study of various programmes of the BNFE identified the NFE A&E learning support delivery system as a good example of practices in providing CLC-based basic education and lifelong learning for gender equality. In order to bring the success story of the NFE A&E system to light, the researchers drew on information gathered from a field survey of three selected CLCs, namely

Sandiwaan CLC in Tondo (Manila), Mandaue CLC in Mandaue, and Bugbog CLC in Bugbog (Abra).

## B. Major Findings

The NFE A&E learning support delivery system is a unique, although recent, model of non-formal education in South-East Asia as whole. It provides an alternative means of certification to Filipinos age 15 years or above, who are unable to take advantage of formal schooling or who have dropped out of elementary or secondary school. It also tries to reach differently-abled men, women and girls, and those who belong to ethnic minority communities.

The NFE A&E learning support delivery system offers an alternative pathway for out-of-school youth and adults to earn a certified education qualification comparable (but not parallel or equivalent) to elementary and secondary formal schooling. It consists of an accreditation and equivalency testing system designed to assess levels of literacy and other non-formal learning achievement covering basic and functional education skills and competencies. Once they exit from the NFE A&E system, learners may wish to return to the formal school system. Otherwise they have access to a range of vocational training opportunities

Sandiwaan and Mandaue CLCs were located in urban areas, with women learners belonging to socially disadvantaged groups and migrants from rural areas. The majority of them were school dropouts who had become part of the urban labour market. They included housewives, factory workers and vendors, among others. Scavenging was the only means of income for the learners at Sandiwaan CLC. Ninety per cent of the learners at Bugbog CLC, mostly women, were indigenous people called *Itnegs*.

Researchers found that there were several skills training programmes conducted by various agencies. These programmes were directly linked with the CLC activities and specifically designed to meet the learners' economic needs. These included high-speed sewing, food processing, cosmetology, electronics, tailoring, ornamental

**About NFE  
A&E**

**Target  
group**

**Activities**

plant production, mushroom culture and culinary arts. In addition, the CLCs focused on environmental awareness, health education, family planning, drug awareness and the like. Women and girls underwent training in gender sensitivity, responses to sexual harassment, the education of female children and other relevant topics. NGOs in the community were responsible for providing this training.

The study also highlighted the linkage established by the CLCs with GOs, NGOs, people's organizations, youth organizations, and other institutions and agencies in the community. The programmes received strong support (financial and otherwise) from such organizations. Individual NGOs, local government units, state colleges and universities, and people's organizations helped to provide

education services. It is worth mentioning that women at the Mandaue CLC, who themselves were learners, were instrumental in securing funds for a project they felt was of need. The CLCs tapped local resources and experts. They also sought outside resources where appropriate.



To ensure the delivery of relevant programmes, the participatory approach played a strategic role in needs assessment and project implementation. Advocacy and social mobilization helped to raise people's awareness and demand for the NFE A&E system, and community assembly was the common strategy used. The orientation of key government officials, education service providers, the business sector and other stakeholders was also emphasized. Attention was given to gender concerns in areas where girls were not given full educational advantages. The NFE A&E learning support delivery system was characterized by flexibility in entry and exit, programme requirements, programme components, learning modes and selection of modules. It catered for

different types of learning pace, mental ability, and learner educational and cultural background. It also accorded learners' work and personal experiences high recognition.

Data gathered revealed that the NFE A&E learning support delivery system at the three sites was able to serve a large number of learners, which indicated its social acceptability. Addressing women-specific needs, the system helped promote gender equality in several ways. The CLCs brought about positive changes in women's lives, an improvement over previous conditions where the majority of women were less educated than men, were paid less and worked more hours suffering from poor health and nutrition. Improvements in gender consciousness led to an understanding of the equal rights and responsibilities of women and men, and a demand for the creation of equal opportunities for them in the labour market.

A higher functional literacy rate, along with increasing realization of the importance of education, led to the augmentation of family incomes through income generating activities, which subsequently improved the standard of living. Increased self-esteem and confidence were other significant contributions the CLCs made in the communities they served.

The study revealed that discernible changes took place in the personal and community lives of the learners, particularly women, following their participation in CLC programmes. These were geared to empowering women to play a positive role in their own development, and in the development of their families and communities. Women were able to recognize their urgent needs and problems, and express their concerns to others because of better communication skills. In addition, they better understood their human rights and autonomy within families and communities, and gained more control over their own lives in matters relating to marriage, reproduction and livelihood. Furthermore, women became more active in getting their daughters to attend school (unlike their mothers) and in counseling children on matters such as schooling, family planning and relations with the opposite sex.

## *Achievements*

As a remarkable impact of CLC activities, a number of new business establishments in the areas served by the CLCs, particularly Sandiwaan, started up as a direct outcome of the income generating skills and entrepreneurial training the learners acquired from the CLCs.

Because of their exposure to the different training modules, especially those dealing with community development, community members were actively involved in activities, such as planting trees, waste management and recycling, environmental sanitation, drug awareness, prevention of



AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases, and family planning. Learners at the Sandiwaan CLC, whose means of livelihood was garbage collection, learned a lot from the NFE A&E modules on garbage recycling. CLC members also chose to exercise their voting rights, as well as attending village and PTA meetings. The

learners also acquired new perspectives on work that embraced discipline, ethics, respect for others and teamwork.

With regard to the sustainability of CLC activities, researchers found that the CLCs sought support for their programmes from national and local government. The Sandiwaan CLC sustained its activities partly by being involved in national programmes for the urban population, especially slum residents. This involvement increased access to education, particularly among young mothers. Bugbog CLC planned to sustain its activities with proceeds from farm income in addition to support from local government.

The study also identified some problems mainly related to the management and administrative components of NFE A&E implementation (for example, timely completion of reports). Failure in monitoring the programme at the regional and divisional levels was also noted. Moreover, learning hours were too short (in the case of the Mandaue CLC) and the modules on mathematics lacked detailed explanations of the content.

### ***Weaknesses***

### **C. Conclusions**

The experience of the NFE A&E learning support delivery system enables one to make the following conclusions:

- A CLC should address the immediate needs of learners, particularly those relevant to their livelihoods.
- Women learners can be instrumental in acquiring funds from various sources to support their activities.
- A CLC can sustain its activities by involving itself in local and national programmes initiated by other organizations.

## Huay Paoyong CLC

# Thailand

### A. Background

Realizing the necessity to provide access to education for all people, both women and men in urban and rural communities, the Royal Thai Government, in addition to offering several non-formal education programmes for the people, established a total of 35,000 village reading centres

through the Department of Non-Formal Education. Some of these centres were later renovated and transformed into CLCs.



A study was initiated to identify a model CLC that was active in reducing gender inequality in basic education and lifelong learning. Huay Paoyong CLC, located in Doi Lor

district of Chiang Mai province, was deemed worthy of more in-depth study because of the outstanding characteristics of its non-formal basic education and lifelong learning programmes.

### B. Major Findings

#### *About Huay Paoyong CLC*

In 1999, the Huay Paoyong CLC was established for local people to participate in the Vocational Education Curriculum Programme (VECP), which was equivalent to lower secondary education. Later this centre organized other kinds of vocational and skills training for the people in Huay Paoyong and four nearby villages, namely Ban

Bang Kham Pom, Ban Dong Pa Wai, Ban Pak Tang Samakki and Ban Rai Bon. The basic education and lifelong learning programmes at this CLC were based on the Strengthening of Community Empowerment Project (SCEP) initiated by the Doi Lor District Non-Formal Education Service Center (D-NFE-SC).

What made Huay Paoyong CLC unique was its organization of a number of public forums for people to discuss their concerns and find ways to solve problems related to the quality of life in their community. These forums enabled them to identify the areas of basic education and skills training they wanted to be involved in. The Huay Paoyong CLC implemented activities that responded directly to the needs of the people following broad discussion among the community members. This CLC was considered to be very effective in organizing non-formal basic education for community empowerment, and included both women and men in its activities.

Investigators found that the public forum was an important component of the CLC's activities. It served as a mechanism to encourage the participation of community members in the development process. There were three types of forums – major public forums, forums for the exchange of learning, and small discussion groups. Participants included community people and representatives of agencies and organizations in the community. These public forums often resulted in the formulation of an action plan or project to be implemented in the community. The public forum also provided a venue for mobilizing available human and material resources in the community to carry out development activities.



## *Strategies*

### **Activities and achievements**

The CLC functioned on the basis of partnership with various organizations providing necessary assistance, such as the District Fisheries Office for breeding fish and the Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives for obtaining loans to raise cattle. The CLC, in response to the local people themselves, formed groups specializing in different activities. These included floating basket fisheries, raising cattle, making artificial flowers, weaving, and integrated pest management (IPM) for growing fruit (longan).

Investigators found that training organized by the CLC focused on skills to make a variety of products including cloth, pumpkin pastry, micro-organic (EM) fertilizers, and shampoo, hair conditioner and dish washing detergent using locally available materials. Both women and men were free to participate without any restriction based on sex. However, people seemed to participate in those areas

that they perceived to be both culturally and physically suitable for them. Thus, there were more women participants in weaving and artificial flower making, and more men in the IPM and fisheries groups.



The Huay Paoyong CLC performed a variety of activities for community members. In addition to a place of learning, it served as a venue for community people to exchange views and share ideas, as well as a marketplace to sell community products. CLC activities resulted in greater community participation, greater cooperation between community people and development agencies, an increase in critical thinking ability, self-reliance and empowerment and, above all, higher education levels.

*Impact of the CLC on the lives  
of community men*

Mr. Intorn Pimmasorn was a young village man who had completed upper secondary education. Prior to the introduction of the CLC programme, he did not pay any attention to public matters at all. However, Mr. Intorn's life changed when another young man in the village, Mr. Yanyong Sitisen, replaced the existing teacher at the centre. Because Mr. Intorn was an acquaintance of Mr. Yanyong, he came to observe what the new teacher was doing. He also participated in public forums and was asked by group members to present their ideas at the forum. He made a positive impression on people and, in subsequent meetings, started assisting the teacher in various areas.

When the village chief resigned and the people had to choose a replacement, they proposed Mr. Intorn as a candidate. People had taken notice of his participation in the CLC's public forums. Eventually, he was appointed as the new village chief and began to play an active role in the public sphere.

Among the programmes offered, the programmes for IPM, weaving and producing detergents were doing fairly well. The application of IPM to growing longans resulted in a dramatic reduction of the investment costs to only a quarter of the previous expenditures. At the same time, group members' incomes increased considerably. Other groups involved in raising fish, making artificial flowers, weaving, and making shampoo and detergent consumed these items themselves, thereby reducing household expenses, or earned some income from their sale. However, marketing these products was identified as a problem faced by the community.

The researchers examined the impact with respect to gender equality in terms of access to basic education and

skills training programmes and the roles in CLC activities. In public forums both women and men equally participated in discussions. They had an equal opportunity to identify problems and needs as well as propose solutions and activities. Some programmes and activities were culturally appropriate for women (e.g., weaving, making artificial flowers, pumpkin pastry and shampoo). At the same time, activities suitable for men (e.g., breeding fish, raising cattle and producing EM fertilizer) were also open to women. The basic education and lifelong learning programmes organized by the CLC embraced both women and men in equal proportions. Both were active in the formation and operation of the vocational groups.

### C. Conclusions

Based on the experience of Huay Paoyong CLC, one can come to the following conclusions:

- Public forums are instrumental for ensuring greater community involvement.
- The effectiveness of skills training for income generating activities is limited by the lack of a marketing facility.
- The dedication of a teacher to his or her work leads to acceptance regardless of whether he or she comes from inside or outside the community.
- Without gender sensitization, both women and men tend to take part in gender stereotyped activities.

## The Micro-credit Programme in Karakalpakstan

# Uzbekistan

### A. Background

The status of women in Uzbekistan has worsened during the transformation of the command economy to a market economy. The decrease in the living standard of women is considered to be one of the major negative consequences of market reform. With the revival and strengthening of patriarchal attitudes towards women's role in society, economy and politics, there has been a significant strengthening of gender inequality in all spheres of life. Women's access to paid jobs has decreased considerably. Although women were active at the initial stage of democratic revolution, they were soon superseded by men.

In order to deal with the situation, the Association of Business Women of Uzbekistan (ABW), the first NGO in the country and in Central Asia as a whole, has been working to create a favourable economic environment for women. The ABW has launched various programmes related to education, business and legal affairs with the co-operation of the Government and international organizations. All of these programmes are implemented through CLCs.



Researchers carried out a study of its micro-credit programme in Karakalpakstan as an example of good

practice for promoting gender equality by ensuring women's equal rights in the labour market through vocational and business training at CLCs. The basic purpose of the programme was to improve the living conditions of local communities through micro-financial services for small business development. The training was conducted at various places, one of them the CLC in Nukus district.

## B. Major Findings

### *Target group and activities*

The micro-credit scheme targeted women in remote rural areas of Karakalpakstan having low educational status and low family income. Researchers found that they had large families and that their husbands were unemployed. The majority of families were involved in trade, small manufacturing and services. The majority of the beneficiaries had no opportunity to borrow cash. Those who did had to pay high interest rates and the money borrowed was mostly spent on family necessities, not for purposes of business. Those lacking opportunities to borrow money had to rely on usurers.

For a variety of reasons, such as a lack of information and the difficulty in getting necessary documents, it was very hard to obtain credit from commercial banks. The micro-credit scheme provided women living in these miserable conditions with access not only to credit based on group solidarity, but also



to vocational and business training to develop their entrepreneurial skills. Helping them to adapt to the emerging market economy, the programme trained unemployed women to rationally use credit, establish and manage their own businesses, and market their output.

The programme involved the local community in identifying problems. One of the factors behind the success of the micro-credit programme was that it secured co-operation from all interested organizations. Various international organizations provided assistance in training trainers who further conducted training for village women. This initiative reflected a strong co-operation among NGOs, CLCs and INGOs, expanding the potential of ABW through an increase in membership and the establishment of new branches in rural areas.

Covering the whole spectrum of change that occurred in the community after the introduction of the micro-credit programme, the study concluded that this programme was a model that could be replicated in other parts of the country. It contributed to the development of the local economy by creating employment and helping village women to generate incomes.

A significant difference between the trade turnover before and after the programme indicated a notable expansion of entrepreneurial activities in the community. Subsequently, the programme had positive effects on living conditions, particularly for poor and very poor families. Average family incomes from business were twice the income from other sources, which resulted in improved nutritional status and the ability to purchase durable consumer goods such as televisions and carpets. The majority of families were unable to meet even basic needs without income from business.

Women became confident and full of enthusiasm after their participation in the programme, which helped to alter the stereotyped image of women in business.

As an important impact at the governmental level, researchers found that the Government had begun to

## *Achievements*



design a legal framework for credit unions and financial institutions. A substantial proportion (78 per cent) of the beneficiaries was in a position to continue operating their businesses without the support of the programme. Moreover, helping to establish registered enterprises with the Government, the programme transformed the status of women from mere recipients of social benefits into taxpayers and contributors to the national income. Quick and appreciable results with few resources and extremely powerful demonstration effects were other remarkable features of the programme.

### C. Conclusions

The following conclusions are evident from the experience of the micro-credit programme in Karakalpakstan:

- A micro-credit programme has a strong potential for improving the socio-economic condition of rural women provided the entrepreneurial activity chosen is feasible in economic terms and the women receive sustained capacity building to manage their businesses.
- Its capacity building, if sustained long enough, can make the community self-reliant without requiring any support from the programme at a later stage.
- A CLC may have an impact even on the national legal framework.
- Strong and sustained co-operation among NGOs, CLCs and INGOs has been vital for strengthening and expanding the project.

## The Integrated Project of Literacy and Income Generation for Poor Women

### Viet Nam

#### A. Background

The Vietnamese government, as stated in the nation's constitution, has committed itself to achieving the EFA goal and gender equality. Since 1998, the Government has promoted CLCs as institutions for providing lifelong learning opportunities for all people in the community regardless of age, sex, ethnicity or economic condition. CLCs have become learning centres for disadvantaged people (the poor, women and girls, ethnic minorities, out-of-school children, etc.). These CLCs have helped to decentralize basic education and lifelong learning opportunities throughout the country. Recognizing the benefits of their activities, various development agencies have started to support and co-operate with CLCs in providing learning opportunities.

The Integrated Project of Literacy and Income Generation for Poor Women, implemented in two communes (Cao Son, Da Bac district, Hoa Binh province, and Tan Dan, Soc Son district, Hanoi province), was selected for study as a successful example of activities promoting basic education and lifelong learning for gender equality through CLCs at the grassroots level. The project was jointly developed by the Ministry of Education and Training and the Viet Nam Women's Union, with technical and financial assistance from UNICEF. Using the results of a field survey, investigators compared living conditions before and after the project to highlight its achievements and impact.

## B. Major Findings

### *Target group*

Implemented in poor rural and ethnic minority areas, the Intetrated Project of Literacy and Income Generation for Poor Women targeted poor, illiterate or neo-literate mothers with priority given to those having mainourished children (up to 6 years of age) or children who had dropped out of school.

### *Activities*

The investigators found that the literacy and post-literacy activities of the project covered a variety of topics related to women's everyday reproductive and productive lives, such as nutrition, child and maternal health care, family planning and income generation. As relapsing into illiteracy is a serious problem in Viet Nam, the project also developed simple booklets, leaflets or posters on these topics, particularly for neo-literates.

Classes were held at the school or in villagers' homes normally at midday or in the evenings to enable working women to participate. In addition, the scheduling of classes was flexible depending on the season. During the busy time of transplanting and harvesting, there were no classes.



Technical knowledge and skills were imparted to women to improve their

productivity. The diversified training packages were suited to the demands and actual needs of women, as well as the specific conditions of the region. The content included aquaculture, livestock and gardening (VAC) techniques, processing agricultural and forest products, and the promotion of traditional handicrafts. A savings and credit scheme managed by poor women themselves at the community level was an important feature of the project. Women received guidance in how to handle loans, build up the habit of saving and organize their production.

Primary school teachers, secondary education students and other volunteers from the community with good education backgrounds, such as border army officers and women cadres were mobilized for teaching. Local teachers and experts from different development agencies and government organizations such as the Department of Agriculture, Department of Health Care and the Viet Nam Women's Union in the locality were involved in developing literacy materials. Gender awareness training was organized to enable them to be more gender sensitive in developing these materials.

The union, together with other locally based organizations, provided detailed advice to borrowers about ways to best use their loans. In co-operation with the commune school, it was responsible for mobilizing people and organizing classes. In this way, the project established a harmonious relationship with various organizations – both government and non-government – in the process of carrying out its activities. Furthermore, participatory teaching methods, such as group discussion or brainstorming replaced academic lecturing in the teaching-learning process. Dancing, singing and games were offered to stimulate learning activities.

Researchers also found that the project had established home-based day-care services to facilitate women's participation in basic and lifelong education. Mothers could join project activities knowing that their children were well taken care of.

The project had a significant impact on literacy, income, nutrition and health in the target communes. Illiteracy among women was eliminated completely. In addition, the percentage of women who completed Grade 4 rose from 59 to 90.5. Prior to the project about 34 per cent of the women had children who had dropped out of school, but after the project almost all children attended school.

Increases in women's income were also noted (92.5 per cent in Cao Son and 90 per cent in Tan Dan). Consequently, the percentage of families in Cao Son reporting insufficient food dropped from 98 to 7.4, and from 88 per cent to

## *Achievements*

10 per cent among families in Tan Dan. Before the project 42.5 per cent of the women in Cao Son and 36 per cent of the women in Tan Dan were malnourished and anemic, but after the project these proportions dropped to 24 per cent in the former and only 1 per cent in the latter.



Similarly, the percentage of women suffering from gynecological diseases decreased sharply (from 33.3 per cent to 14.5 per cent in Cao Son and from 15 per cent to 2 per cent in Tan Dan). There was also a decline in the number of malnourished

children after the project. Literacy and lifelong learning activities fostered production and spending patterns that were more diversified and nutritiously beneficial, especially for children. In the target communes, there was a 47 per cent increase in household incomes spent on food.

Highlighting the project's impact, the study revealed that it had given women increased access to basic education and lifelong learning and changed local attitudes towards women's education and other issues of gender equality. Men began to share the burden in both housework and farm work, participating in transplanting, clearing weeds, fertilizing and harvesting, tasks previously performed only by women. This reflected an improvement in the relationship between husbands and wives in the family. Women began to take part in decision making about important family matters, such as building houses, purchasing expensive equipment and borrowing loans, all of which were previously the prerogatives of men.

In addition, the project encouraged women to participate in community activities and local organizations, particularly the Viet Nam Women's Union. Women became assertive in expressing their views at meetings. Many women broke with tradition and started breast-feeding during their

children's illnesses and recovery. Better time management coupled with basic education allowed women time for rest, especially after child bearing, which was not the case previously. However, in some cases, women willingly worked longer hours, as credit opened the door for production increases. Both types of situations showed that the project had a great impact on the empowerment of women in Cao Son and Tan Dan communes.

As a noteworthy impact experienced at the farm level, some households were shifting from marginal activities, such as collecting and selling firewood or working as hired labour to relatively lucrative activities. Borrowers were advised to invest in items that provided regular and immediate return (for example, ready-to-lay chickens and ducks) so that they could repay their loans regularly and quickly, and in long-term investments like fertilizer for rice.

The study raised some important points with regard to the sustainability of the project, which was guaranteed by a revolving fund. The interest earned from this fund was able to cover the administrative and other costs of the project. The mobilization of savings was a means of accumulating funds for long-term operations.

### C. Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from the study:

- A savings and credit scheme managed by poor women themselves is crucial for obtaining fruitful results from income generating activities launched for women.
- Women's participation in CLC activities can be increased through the establishment of a day-care centre for children.
- CLC activities can have an impact at the farm level through changes in household production behaviour altering the traditional gender division of work.
- A savings and credit scheme using the mechanism of a revolving fund can guarantee the sustainability of a programme.

# Lessons Learned from Good Practice



*A. From a General Perspective*

*B. From the Gender Equality  
Perspective*

**Part III****Lessons Learned  
from Good Practice**

From the review of these examples of good practice in basic education and lifelong learning for gender equality through CLCs, a number of valuable lessons have emerged. They fall into two categories – those lessons that are important from a general perspective, and those of specific relevance from the perspective of gender equality.

**A. From a General Perspective**

Organizing programmes in response to community problems or according to the needs of the people is crucial to the success of CLCs. Only if they respond to local needs will people continue activities after completing vocational training at CLCs. These needs frequently change in conjunction with socio-economic changes in a given locality. Therefore, continuous needs assessment is required to ensure the wider acceptance and success of CLC programmes.

The adoption of a participatory approach is key to the success of CLCs. Community members – men and women, children and elders, literate and illiterate, those with land and those without, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and individuals belonging to all socio-economic groups – must be involved in identifying their needs and the skills they desire. The participation of local people should not be limited only to the identification of problems and needs. They must be involved in the implementation and evaluation phases of a programme as well. Their assistance in policy making and planning is equally important.

*Demand-  
responsive  
programmes*

*Participatory  
approach*

### ***Partnership with GOs, NGOs and INGOs***

A strong relationship among all the stakeholders in the field of education is a powerful stimulus for the implementation of CLC programmes. The success of “Education for All” depends on “All for Education.” The CLCs, GOs, NGOs, INGOs and the community must come forward and work together, negotiate their different agendas and nurture a relationship geared towards educating and training the disadvantaged members of the community.

This partnership is a prerequisite for holistic community development. The concerted involvement of all stakeholders in CLC programmes also opens the door to material and moral support from various organizations, enabling CLCs to provide the needed educational services. Those who are involved in the management of out-of-school education programmes can benefit from the training opportunities provided by the Government to improve their managerial capabilities. Moreover, the participation of local authorities can encourage the full participation of community members.

### ***Advocacy and social mobilization***

Effective advocacy and social mobilization are needed for raising the consciousness level of all stakeholders. They are two interconnected processes, which bring together all possible and practical allies to raise people’s awareness and demand for NFE, strengthen community participation; mobilize local resources and facilitate the delivery of services. Orientation is also needed for the representatives of GOs and NGOs. With regard to community awareness, CLCs should work in co-ordination with GOs and NGOs in the locality to prepare materials such as flyers and posters in the local language of the learners. The literacy rate can further be increased if the CLC teachers, supervisors and facilitators themselves are involved in motivating illiterate community members to participate in literacy activities.

### ***Mobilization of local resources***

The mobilization of resources available in the community has special importance for CLC activities. Local resources include manpower, land, equipment and sometimes funds as well. Educated men and women willing to spend some of their time to help develop CLCs in their communities can be ideal literacy instructors. This helps to reduce costs

and at the same time increases the effectiveness of the programmes through the participation of local people.

Community development is a long process of social change that requires sustained financial and technical support. Mobilizing bilateral donors, other UN agencies besides UNESCO, and INGOs to work closely with communities and local bodies has proven successful in building capacity and therefore promoting sustainability.

Sound administration is required for the proper functioning of CLCs. This means good organizational skills and a clear division of labour among the people involved in planning, monitoring and supervision. In addition, sound administration requires having a clear vision of what the community wants to achieve.

The sustainability of CLCs depends on the degree of involvement of the community. An effective CLC enlists the direct participation of the target groups. Such community participation is generated only when CLCs respond to community needs. Other factors that determine sustainability include leadership, management style, partnerships and linkages, and the dedication and vision of community leaders. Above all, building the capacity of the community is crucial for sustainability.

## **B. From the Gender Equality Perspective**

Poor people are ready to bear the opportunity costs of sending boys to school, but less willing to devote time and money to educate girls. Establishing CLCs in rural areas, especially in remote areas that have no suitable education facilities for girls and women, is one strategy that can promote gender equality. Many women and girls who are deprived of formal education can receive a basic education from literacy classes at CLCs. Poor marginalized women can learn to make decisions for themselves and their families as well as become change agents for the development of their communities. Because CLCs recognize that it is never too late to learn, they act as one of the most effective initiatives for women's empowerment

***Mobilization  
of external  
resources***

***Sound  
adminis-  
tration***

***Ensuring  
sustain-  
ability***

***The CLC: an  
institution  
that provides  
lifelong  
learning  
opportunities  
for girls and  
women***

***The Cross-sectoral approach: an entry point to promote gender equality***

by providing education and skills training at any point in their lives.

Integrating literacy with skill development is important to ensure a greater impact on women's empowerment. Basic education and lifelong learning programmes must be integrated with other programmes dealing with women's three major roles – productive, reproductive and membership in a community. Women are attracted to CLC activities when learning programmes encompass areas such as nutrition, hygiene, child-care, family planning, enterprise development and community activities (for example, community forestry) that have direct bearing on their everyday life and its improvement. The aim is to generate incomes and at the same time to promote literacy, which in turn helps to increase incomes, create better living conditions and help women to have a more important role and position in the family and society.

In this regard, most CLCs respond to women's practical needs and immediate perceived necessities, which are an entry point in a continuum of gender equality and empowerment. Strategic needs such as issues related to legal rights, domestic violence, HIV-AIDS prevention and political representation are often perceived by many women as part of a natural order and not immediately identified by them as needs. An external facilitator or a community member that has experienced a different culture can help women to articulate more strategic needs that relate to gender divisions of labour, power and control. In this sense, the CLC has a potential to respond to women's basic needs but moving beyond them to transform unequal gender relations in their homes and communities.

***Needs-based and flexible programmes***

The development of programmes culturally appropriate for women's needs and problems as well as for their limited reading skills can help arouse their interest in learning and also in maintaining their literacy. Skills training programmes in areas of interest such as hair styling, sewing and embroidery are important in this respect. A teaching-learning process involving informal seminars, reading sessions and group discussions, but not necessarily tightly

structured classes, can overcome learning difficulties and language problems among women learners.

The organization of learning for women must be very flexible and diverse. The places of learning for women should be near their homes, convenient and familiar. Classes should take place at times when they are free from work (evening, noon, off-season). Holding night literacy classes creates problems in many cases.

Continuous sharing and networking among all the GOs, NGOs and INGOs working in the community are crucial for the promotion of non-formal education through CLCs. Specifically, co-ordination among all the agencies providing education and development assistance to women is of the utmost importance. This can play a pivotal role in the promotion of non-formal education for out-of-school girls and women in the community. The value of this partnership increases considerably in situations where socio-cultural factors restrain women's participation in learning activities. Launching functional literacy campaigns in conjunction with health education, family planning education, environmental preservation, and income generating programmes by NGOs is thus vital. NGOs with gender sensitized women workers can be instrumental in motivating girls and women to participate in education and skills training.

Although women take more interest in CLC activities than men do, there are many hurdles to their full participation in literacy classes. These include child-care responsibilities, heavy household workloads, cultural biases against women, lack of family support, lack of awareness, low self-esteem, difficult geography, and migration, especially among indigenous people. Even if they join literacy classes, the dropout rate is often high among women.

Child-care facilities at CLCs are thus very important for increasing women's participation in literacy and skills training activities. Organizing various educational and entertainment programmes for children when their mothers are in class is another useful support activity. Family support,

*The pivotal  
role of  
Women's  
Organiza-  
tions and  
NGOs*

*Support  
facilities for  
women's  
partici-  
pation*

### ***Complementary strategies in income generation***

especially from husbands willing to share the housework, is equally significant.

Women are very enterprising if they are given the opportunity. Their entrepreneurial potential can be served very well through skills training and the promotion of small enterprises. However, the skills learned can only be put to use if women have resources to invest in income generating activities. Therefore, it is necessary to organize support services, such as marketing facilities and the provision of low interest loans. Moreover, for fruitful results, skills training and credit should be arranged in such a way that they complement each other. The loans should be sufficient to ensure that beneficiaries use them to develop or retain the skills they received during training. Experience shows that women do very well in savings and credit programmes. The establishment of credit co-operatives and village banks to mobilize the savings of savings and credit groups can play a crucial role in this regard.

Marketing is another crucial factor contributing to the success of income generating programmes. Showing women how to market their products is equally important in enabling them to make a profit. Organizing exhibitions, establishing showrooms for community products and setting up marketing co-operatives can help overcome marketing problems.

### ***Social awareness among both women and men***

Gender equality can be achieved only through social awareness among both women and men. It is necessary to encourage and persuade women. At the same time, in order to enable women to participate in basic and lifelong learning activities, family members, especially husbands and mothers-in-law (in joint families), must be convinced of the importance of women's education. Parent education is also important for promoting children's education, particularly for girls. Special motivational and gender awareness raising programmes for men are necessary, especially for those who are unsympathetic to women's empowerment.

Education and training related to issues such as domestic violence should involve both men and women. Such programmes can also produce fruitful results by giving attention to the reduction of alcohol and drug abuse, which often contribute to domestic violence. HIV-AIDS preventive education programmes need to be progressively incorporated into literacy materials and made a part of awareness raising campaigns and cultural events.

Women must be directly involved in making policies, plans and programmes that are feasible and progressive. Adequate representation of women in CLC management is very important in order to ensure that their problems are addressed. Women also need to be involved in programme monitoring and evaluation. Women's voices are heard and their problems addressed only when their participation is ensured from the beginning, starting at the policy level.

Harnessing the potential of local women as tutors, facilitators and trainers is of special significance. When women become literacy instructors and skill trainers, the benefit is twofold. These women become empowered by assuming the role and duties of teachers. In addition, the presence of women teachers results in the greater participation of other women in literacy classes. Training women to become trainers themselves can open the door to a greater involvement of women in both teaching and learning.

Gender is not just an issue concerning women, but has implications for the family, community, society and nation as a whole. Dealing with this issue calls for a rethinking of social values and perceptions, as well as fresh relationships among all the relevant actors. The CLC as an institution to facilitate basic education and lifelong learning should address the gender issue as a prerequisite for development. In addition to the learners themselves, CLC personnel, such as directors, supervisors and teachers need to become more sensitive to gender relations and problems to enable them to deal with women's as well as men's issues in various aspects of the CLC's programme implementation.

*Due  
recognition  
of women  
at the policy  
level*

*Women as  
teachers*

*Gender  
sensitivity  
training for  
CLC  
personnel*

# Recommendations

# IV

**Part IV****Recommendations**

After reviewing examples of good practice at CLCs in 14 countries of the region, we can make a number of recommendations to improve the effectiveness of these institutions in the delivery of basic and lifelong education for gender equality. These recommendations are general in nature, and their applicability depends on the actual situation in the CLC, community and country.

**A. Adopt a gender mainstreaming strategy for the planning and management of all CLC programmes and activities**

CLCs must recognize that women's and men's different needs are to be systematically considered in the planning and management of all programmes and activities, including monitoring and evaluation. Most programmes have responded to women's practical needs but not to strategic ones. Women's access to literacy programmes and income generating activities has improved their socio-economic condition and their status in the community but often without transforming unequal gender relations.

**B. Build the capacity of CLC personnel to promote gender equality**

Adopting a gender mainstreaming strategy requires that the staff responsible for planning, developing and monitoring education programmes possess or acquire the necessary skills to use gender analysis systematically in order to ensure that the distinct needs of boys and girls, men and women, are addressed and their barriers to their full development removed. Training in gender analysis and gender mainstreaming needs to be provided to different types of personnel working at CLCs, such as education managers, supervisors, facilitators, extension officers, instructors and community leaders.

### **C. Establish partnerships with local NGOs working with gender equality issues**

Gender equality is not a one-off goal. Progress can be very easily eroded if political will is weakened. Gender mainstreaming requires that capacity building for gender equality is sustained over a long period of time. For this purpose, CLCs can establish partnerships with local NGOs working in the area of women's empowerment. These local NGOs would be responsible for providing services to the CLCs, training CLC personnel and community members, developing gender guidelines and literacy materials, and helping to raise local awareness. In short, they would ensure that CLCs become gender-responsive mechanisms for delivering non-formal education.

### **D. Develop gender responsive teaching-learning materials**

Most CLCs have an urgent demand for non-formal education teaching-learning materials. The demand is particularly acute in the areas of gender equality and HIV-AIDS preventive education. Both those materials specifically dealing with gender equality issues and those materials covering other matters in a gender responsive way need to be developed.

### **E. Declare a commitment to gender equality backed by appropriate budget and resources**

Gender mainstreaming as a strategy of empowerment and development needs to be backed by an appropriate budget. CLCs need to consider the costs of training, appropriate materials and other requirements derived from implementing gender equality in their planning of activities.

### **F. Develop adequate indicators to measure gender equality changes**

Gender responsive indicators, both qualitative and quantitative, need to be developed to allow programme staff to see where they are in terms of reaching their gender

equality goals. Sex disaggregated data and gender analytical information needs to be collected at the community level and appropriate indicators developed. Adequate indicators will help programme staff to set their objectives, design strategies and follow up on their projects and programmes in order to make improvements in gender equality. Monitoring of these indicators needs to continuously occur to ensure feedback during implementation and to allow responsible persons to re-orient their strategies if necessary.

### **F. Involve more female CLC personnel to motivate women**

Women frequently lack the time and motivation to participate in CLC activities, especially if they are already overloaded with their “triple role” (productive, reproductive and communitarian). Therefore, CLCs should adopt effective strategies to encourage more women to join literacy, skills training and other CLC activities.

One such strategy is to involve CLC female personnel themselves in the needs identification process. Some women may feel more comfortable communicating with other women than with men. In a needs identification process, female supervisors and teachers can better identify the needs of female users, thereby leading to the development of appropriate and relevant literacy programmes that will increase the motivation and participation of women. In cases in which men are not motivated to participate, male supervisors and teachers can take the lead in identifying their needs and motivating them.

### **G. Promote women’s involvement in the decision-making process**

Women’s involvement in the decision-making process is very important for ensuring that the programmes are really beneficial to women. CLCs should directly involve women in making policies, plans and programmes relevant to their

empowerment. Moreover, women's role in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes should be recognized.

One of the reasons given for not having more women in leadership positions and on CLC committees has been the lack of a critical mass of trained women capable and willing to take up these tasks. CLCs should take responsibility for preparing women to become leaders by providing them with leadership skills and gender equality training. In addition, CLCs need to raise awareness about the role women can play in decision-making processes and highlight the advantages of having women's views heard and acted upon.

## **H. Encourage more women to become literacy and skill trainers**

Women's role in teaching and skills training is crucial in terms of their own empowerment and ensuring women's greater participation in CLC activities. This role is especially important in communities segregated by sex. When trainers are female, women belonging to these conservative communities are more willing to take part in CLC activities.

Women trainers are particularly important when teaching women in traditionally non-female activities, such as leadership skills, science, new technologies, managerial skills and others. They can act as effective role models and encourage the participation of others. Therefore, CLCs should encourage women to become literacy instructors and skill trainers by providing them with appropriate training and other facilities.

## **I. Develop or strengthen credit and marketing facilities**

Skills training for women can produce fruitful results only if it is accompanied by a variety of supporting activities. Therefore, CLCs should not only focus on skills training, but should also give attention to credit and marketing. They should make women's savings and credit schemes central to their activities. At the same time, skills training and

credit provision should complement each other. Village banks and credit co-operatives to mobilize the savings of community women can play an important role. CLCs should also organize exhibitions of community products and set up marketing co-operatives. In addition, to increase women's entrepreneurial abilities and skills, training in such areas as enterprise planning and management, accounting, and marketing is no less significant.

### **K. Provide child-care through day-care centres**

Child-care is a major responsibility that demands considerable and continuous time and attention on the part of women. This task limits their participation in CLC activities. Thus, CLCs should make arrangements for taking care of children when their mothers are engaged in learning activities. They should organize various programmes of education and entertainment for children.

### **L. Decrease the household workload of women**

Women bear a heavy burden of housework on their shoulders, with responsibility for cooking, taking care of children and livestock, cleaning, washing and many other tasks. Housework is considered women's sole responsibility with men virtually absent in the fields. This leaves women with little or no time to take part in CLC activities, depriving them of learning opportunities. To overcome this problem, CLCs should encourage men to share housework with their wives. CLCs should also intensify attempts to educate and make men aware of the importance of women's education and skills training for the betterment of their families and society at large. Once men become more involved in the domestic sphere, the relationship between women and men also improves. The introduction of new technologies for doing housework can also help to reduce the workload of women.