

Winning Stories



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Introduction

Universal adult literacy has been one of the objectives of UNESCO since its inception. International Literacy Day was first celebrated in 1966 and the first prize awarded in 1967. Since then 124 prizes have been awarded. Prizes winners vary from government departments to non- and inter-governmental organizations and civil societies, commercial companies, communities and sometimes individuals.

Through its advocacy of the cause of universal adult literacy, its thinking through of key concepts, its success in collecting and disseminating accurate statistics and its initiation or sponsorship of numerous action programmes using a wealth of approaches and methods, UNESCO is making a unique contribution to the spread of adult literacy worldwide. Awarding International Literacy Prizes and celebrating International Literacy Day are just one way in which UNESCO keeps literacy in the forefront of international and national concerns. UNESCO's work has been vindicated by the proclamation of the United Nations International Literacy Decade. A new impetus is being given which must not be lost.

Around the world, International Literacy Day (8 September) is awaited with impatience. It is on this day that the winners of the International Literacy Prizes are announced. However, it is not the monetary value of the prizes which is so coveted. It is the knowledge that an adult literacy programme has received international recognition. It is the culmination of so many years of hard, relentless, anonymous toil, very often in very difficult conditions and with little or no funding or assistance. But the prizes do more than just reward a few. Others see, realize and learn. All are encouraged to carry on knowing that their efforts are not always unseen and unheard. They know that their grass roots work, so very important and essential, is part of a larger plan. Only the International Literacy Prizes can produce this kind of multiplier effect. The only prizes to sing the praises of all our unsung heroes.

The ten stories in this volume are but a sample of the outstanding work being carried out. They have been carefully chosen by an independent International Jury. They represent a wide spectrum of geographical regions, cultures, approaches and methods.

From ActionAid based in the United Kingdom comes the story of CIRAC, a global network of practitioners. CIRAC helps to break down institutional barriers so that people in different contexts, countries, organisations and institutional environments can share experiences, learn together, generate energy and find practical solutions to old problems.

The experiences from Bolivia show how language, literacy and gender are related. For literacy to be fully accessible, it needs to be in the mother language of the indigenous population. This was certainly the case for the Quechua-speaking women who were double excluded and marginalized. Quechua literacy gave opportunities to these women to take advantage of structured learning for the first time.

To raise economic levels through literacy learning, China carried out extension surveys before launching their initiative and revising legal structures. Based on the results of the surveys not only women whose husbands were out working represented a large majority of the illiterate but so did the very elderly or the over 50s who were excluded from literacy programmes. Laws were enacted and now this valuable segment of society has the legal right to access literacy learning. Society now benefits because they, in turn, take it upon themselves to teach their families, their neighbours and their communities.

Two Caribbean countries, Cuba and Haiti, decided to pool their experiences to create a programme in Haiti in Creole, the mother tongue and official language by which traditions, religion, culture and ideas are passed on. Nevertheless, French, an elite and minority language, is also taught in the post-literacy part of the programme thus affording the opportunity for any Haitian to learn.

In New Zealand there was another kind of literacy problem; literacy demands of jobs in particular workplaces had changed. *Workbase* provides the opportunities for those already in work to improve their range of literacy communication skills. This programme has had a considerable impact on the confidence and competence of individual workers and the skill level of the workforce as a whole.

The Bunyad Literacy Community Council in Pakistan focused its work on young girls and women in rural areas. Non-formal education centres were set up to provide these young women and girls with a greater chance to finish or continue their education. The aim was to empower and forge independent women who would find their place in the life of their families and communities.

Cartegena in Spain is a place where cultures have always mixed. It is home to many minorities and immigrants. It is among these groups that the founders of the Carmen Conde Adult Education Association saw the need for education. They decided to do something about it and began to teach in some of the socially and culturally deprived areas of the city; among manual workers, long-term unemployed and young women, young people who failed at school and who have rejected anything to do with school, ethnic minorities and people who may have no particular need but enjoy learning and have a hunger for knowledge and discovering new things. They all had one thing in common: the need to obtain basic qualifications.

The mission of the Literacy and Basic Education organization of Uganda is to promote literacy and basic education choices for women and men in Uganda by innovative and community initiatives. The aim is to see a literate environment develop in which everyone participates, to enable people to take charge of their own learning and development. LBE offers training to other organizations and develops methods and materials for learning and teaching.

PANUKA in Zambia chose to work with the poorest of the poor – rural women relying on subsistence agriculture. In the Tonga language ‘Panuka’ means ‘wake up’. This programme addresses the real and pressing issues facing the women and their communities such as drought, polygamy and HIV/AIDS. Literacy is the starting point which leads to new hope and as a way of making a difference to the poverty, isolation and hopelessness of their situation.

The Adult Literacy Organization (ALOZ) of Zimbabwe works toward imparting literacy that functions well in people’s lives, that is relevant and can make an impact. Literacy that enables people to take a greater part in communication in their society and to improve the quality of their lives. Literacy that gives new chances to share and receive information. ALOZ functions through the development of partnerships that will ensure that literacy instruction is effective and of high quality. ALOZ also sees education as one way of empowering women to improve their livelihoods and the quality of their lives.

This volume is UNESCO's appreciation and homage to all the people who are generally forgotten. All those who work in the non-formal sector, viewed by many as the poor relation of formal education, but without whom there would be so many more forgotten and unreached adult illiterates in the world. The message to all these people is 'do not give up'. Your work is essential. There will be no 'Education for All' without 'Literacy for All'.

Namtip Aksornkool

Reflect: Revolutionizing Literacy

ActionAid

IN 2003 UNESCO awarded an International Literacy Prize to CIRAC: the International Reflect Circle. This was unusual as CIRAC is not an institution or an individual literacy programme but rather a global network of practitioners. CIRAC was created in 2000 as a democratic space at an international level to ensure that practitioners around the world can learn from one another and that evolving practice is documented and shared more widely. There are over 350 organizations from 60 countries involved in CIRAC, all united in having innovated with and creatively adapted the Reflect approach to adult literacy. CIRAC helps to break down institutional barriers so that people in different contexts, countries, organisations and institutional environments can share experiences, learn together, generate energy and find practical solutions to old problems.

The Reflect approach was developed in response to the excessive standardization of many traditional literacy programmes that were based around the use of a literacy primer. The approach evolved through 3 pilot projects co-ordinated by ActionAid in Uganda, El Salvador and Bangladesh, with the first of these, in Uganda, starting in September 1993. The initial idea was a simple one: to fuse the theoretical thinking of Paulo Freire with the practical visualization methodologies developed within Participatory Rural Appraisal. Each literacy circle develops its own learning materials through constructing different types of maps, calendars, matrices and diagrams to systematize the existing knowledge of participants and analyse local issues. At the same time as learning to read and write, people compile their own detailed survey of their local environment and develop practical local development plans.

Ten years on, Reflect has evolved in response to the huge diversity of countries and contexts where it has been adapted.

Over 2 million adult learners have participated in a Reflect process and the approach is continuing to spread rapidly. The costs of course vary from place to place, e.g. ranging from \$18 per capita in Bangladesh to \$55 per capita in El Salvador. In the rigorously evaluated pilot projects, of those adults who initially enrolled in Reflect circles, 65 per cent in El Salvador, 60 per cent in Bangladesh and 68 per cent in Uganda, achieved basic literacy over a one year period. Other significant outcomes include:

- ◆ challenging and changing gender roles
- ◆ improving health and hygiene
- ◆ increasing school enrolment (especially of girls)
- ◆ strengthening productivity (e.g. diversifying crops, increasing co-operative practices)
- ◆ increasing people's involvement in and control over community development programmes.

There is overwhelming evidence of transformation in people's personal lives – strengthening self-esteem and enabling people to engage in significant new personal and community development initiatives. A positive impact on gender relations within the family and wider power relations were reported from countries as diverse as Ghana, India, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, South Africa and Sudan.

"I have eight children, we live happily together with my husband, his two other wives and my mother-in-law. I'm a trader, I sell things like soap and cosmetics. Before I got involved with the Reflect group I felt out of touch with the world around me, but now I'm learning so much. We women didn't used to sit out with the men, speaking in front of them used to make me nervous, but now I'm in the Reflect group I have more confidence in my own point of view. I never used to leave Wayamba village. Now I go to the wholesaler in town – and find goods at a better price. We meet in the Reflect circle three times a week. The meetings are very flexible and we decide what we want to do – we are in control".

(Sanatu, Reflect participant, Northern Ghana)

The ABC of REFLECT

Reflect is based on a series of nine core principles that can be briefly outlined as follows:

... **power and voice:** Reflect is a process that aims to strengthen people's capacity to communicate by whatever means of communication are most relevant or appropriate to them. Although part of the process may be about learning new communication skills (e.g. literacy), the focus is on *using* these in a meaningful way. It is through focusing on the practical use that real learning takes place.

... **a political process:** Reflect is premised on the recognition that achieving social change and greater social justice is a fundamentally political process. It seeks to help people in the struggle to assert their rights, challenge injustice and change their position in society and as such requires us to explicitly align ourselves with the poorest and most marginalized. It involves working *with* people rather than *for* them.

... **a democratic space:** Reflect involves creating a democratic space, – one in which everyone's voice is given equal weight. This needs to be actively constructed, as it does not naturally exist – and is never easy to achieve. As such it is counter-cultural, – challenging the power relationships and stratification that have created inequality.

... **an intensive and extensive process:** The intensity of contact is crucial for a process that seeks to achieve social or political change. Groups usually meet for about two years, and sometimes continue indefinitely. Often they meet three times a week or more, usually for about two hours.

... **grounded in existing knowledge:** Reflect begins with respect and value for people's existing knowledge and experience. However, this does not mean accepting people's opinions or prejudices without challenge. Moreover there will always be a part of the process in which participants are enabled to access new information and new ideas from new sources. The key is to give people control over that process, and confidence in their own starting point, so they can be critical and selective.

... **linking reflection and action:** Reflect involves a continual cycle of reflection and action. It is not about reflection or learning for the sake of it, but rather reflection for the purpose of change. Neither is it about action isolated from reflection as pure activism rapidly loses direction. It is the fusion of these elements, and it can start with either.

... **using participatory tools:** A wide range of participatory tools is used within a Reflect process to help create an environment in which everyone is able to contribute. Visualisation approaches are

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of particular importance (maps, calendars, diagrams, matrices and other graphic forms developed by Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) practitioners and can provide a structure for the process. However, many other participatory methods and processes are also used, including theatre, role-play, song, dance, video or photography.

... **power awareness:** All participatory tools can be distorted, manipulated or used in exploitative ways if they are not linked to an awareness of power relationships. Within Reflect the multiple dimensions of power are always the focus of reflection, and actions are oriented towards changing inequitable power relationships whatever their basis.

... **coherence and self-organization:** Reflect needs to be used systematically. The same principles and processes that apply to others also apply to ourselves, within our own institutions and even our personal lives. The focus of the process should always be towards self-organization, so that groups are self-managed where possible rather than being facilitated by, or dependent on, outsiders.

"I am Josue, from a fishing community called Tamandaré in Pernambuco, Brazil. When I first participated in a Reflect workshop there were a lot of surprises, it was all very new. The way of speaking, of listening, the equality between those who knew a lot and those who didn't. Talking about ourselves, about our feelings, I'd never done that in a course".

(Josue, Brazil)

Diversity is Strength

Reflect is not a blueprint. Reflect is not something that people adopt but rather something that they **adapt** – creating something new in each context in which the approach is developed. Integral to the Reflect approach is **flexibility**; the importance of creatively adapting the approach to the real lives of participants. The most special characteristic of Reflect can thus be said to be its capacity to be adapted so that it is uniquely shaped and locally owned in each context. There are now local names for Reflect in 37 languages. Almost all Reflect processes operate in the mother tongue of learners, though the choice of language is always given to participants and some choose the dominant language or prefer to work bilingually. Some of the people using the approach include those involved in:

- ◆ marginal urban areas in Uganda
- ◆ land-rights work in South Africa
- ◆ capacity building for school management in Mali
- ◆ preventive health work in Ghana
- ◆ pastoralist communities in Kenya
- ◆ displaced people in Sierra Leone
- ◆ peace and reconstruction work in Burundi
- ◆ conflict resolution in Liberia
- ◆ cultural validation and micro-level planning in India
- ◆ community forestry in Nepal
- ◆ tea plantations in Bangladesh
- ◆ holding NGOs and local government accountable in El Salvador
- ◆ opposing domestic and sexual violence in Peru
- ◆ bilingual and intercultural education in Bolivia
- ◆ fishing communities in Brazil
- ◆ anti-racist work in the UK
- ◆ work with refugees in Belgium and The Netherlands
- ◆ monitoring poverty and social justice in Scotland.

The sustainability of Reflect as a whole arises from the huge diversity of organizations using the approach and the space that these organizations have to exchange experiences and generate learning at an international level through CIRAC. The quality of each specific initiative is enhanced by this continuous access to accumulated learning from around the world.

Reflect is implemented by a wide range of partners including small community based organisations, local, national or international NGOs, local or national governments, social movements and people's organisations. Governments have been involved in piloting / implementing Reflect in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and perhaps most notably Peru (where 180,000 participants were involved in a national programme, involving 55 partner organizations). A large number of donors have supported Reflect programmes in different parts of the world over recent years, and programmes are presently underway in 50 countries.

REFLECT in action

Protection and security: In Burundi Reflect has played an important role in rebuilding trust and social relationships following conflict, through creating space for communication and joint learning. All Reflect circles have two facilitators, one Hutu and one Tutsi, and all have participants from both communities, creating ongoing opportunities for interaction and dialogue. The circles have become places for both young and old, Hutu and Tutsi, to meet, reconcile and forgive. Reflect circles use discussion and graphics to identify obstacles to peace, which have included petty conflict, insecurity and displacement due to rebel attacks, rumours and mistrust. They have been able to challenge stereotypes, dispel myths and reconstruct a shared history and purpose. Communities have consequently become linked in solidarity against the political instability in the region, identifying themselves as 'poor people' with a common interest, rather than as Hutu or Tutsi. This has made it possible to build trust as the key foundation of a sustainable peace locally, even where violence and instability continue elsewhere. As well as building trust, literacy has been an important part of the programme, as one participant said: "It is important that we have learned to read and write. It means that we have been able to write letters. We have written letters to some of our community who are still in Tanzania asking them to come back and by telling them about Reflect. We write and tell them that they should not listen to the rumours and radio propaganda, life really has changed here. Three people came back last week because of the letters we were able to write". Juvenal Ndikumagenge (24)

Non-discrimination and social inclusion: In the Eastern Terai region of Nepal participants in a Reflect circle began conducting an analysis of the caste system and the situation of women. Groups discussed the importance of creating action plans to counter discrimination, seeking to define strategic actions that could challenge and reverse centuries of caste prejudice. A decision was taken by Dalits¹ to refuse to dispose of dead animal carcasses. This action became a turning point. It led to a backlash from the local elite like banning Dalits from local shops. The Reflect circles continued to reflect on the effects of their actions and define next steps. The local and national media were called in to witness the backlash and before long there was national press coverage. Dalit women created their own organizations – Sanghams – to follow through the analysis undertaken in Reflect circles. Before long a national movement had emerged, fighting for Dalit rights on multiple fronts, with national demonstrations outside parliament and successful actions taken to enable Dalit children to access mainstream schools.

1. Dalit is the Hindi term for untouchable.

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Freedom and Choice: In the Anta Province of Peru a group have adapted Reflect to enable local communities to analyse and address domestic and sexual violence. The aim of the project was to promote a collective space for analysis of how sexual violence affects family relationships. At the start of the project, workshops with men and women were carried out separately. This helped to forge trust and closeness to discuss sexual and domestic violence in the family. Through analysing their perceptions, feelings and voicing their thoughts the participants managed to identify, honestly and critically, the way violence is manifested in their families, and in the wider community. For many people it was the first time they had discussed these issues – and it had a very powerful effect on those involved. Participants shared their analysis with others in the community through developing posters, radio slots, newsletters and even short videos for television. This broke taboos around a critical issue and in the process gave participants confidence in dealing with a wide range of different media and forms of communication.

“In earlier government development plans we were always left out because we were not organized and we were not in the planning process. Now we have changed this and have addressed so many issues, including housing for the poorest, drinking water provision, irrigation, accessing government schemes and much more. The key has been sustained dialogue.”

(Leader of Sunarijore village, Balangir; Orissa, India)

Some challenges

One of the problems encountered at an international level has been that any organization can claim to use Reflect, even if they do not accept its basic principles and core elements. As CIRAC promotes diversity and the creative adaptation of the approach it is not easy to challenge those who clearly misuse it, who co-opt the name and nothing else. One response to this would be to patent or copyright “Reflect” but this has been resisted as it would send out the wrong messages about control and involve a centralized use of power. Instead the strategy has been to strengthen networking and exchange between positive practitioners of Reflect and to ensure that good practice is highlighted and publicized.

Another problem that is inevitably faced by an innovative approach is resistance from those attached to traditional approaches or who take a reductionist view of literacy. In any sphere of work there are professionals who have built their reputations and careers around certain ways of working. For example, in having expertise in designing primers and textbooks or in linguistic stages in the acquisition of literacy. Reflect represented a challenge to these technical people, many of whom were in positions of power. It has taken time for these people to see the value of Reflect and to recognize that their skills are still valuable if creatively re-oriented in the context of a Reflect process. Maintaining an open dialogue between CIRAC participants and other literacy practitioners has been important in overcoming past tensions.

However, perhaps the largest single problem faced by Reflect and by CIRAC has been the historical baggage of literacy. The term “literacy”, and translations of this word in other languages, generates a complex set of images and expectations. Various solutions have been found to this problem. Perhaps most commonly practitioners encourage everyone, from co-ordinators to trainers, from facilitators to participants, to reflect critically on the term literacy – to problematize it – to unpack the baggage that comes with the term and to re-construct it with new meanings. Another means to address this has been by CIRAC promoting the relocation of literacy within the wider field of “communication practices”.

Finally there are always problems in keeping CIRAC fully representative of Reflect practice around the world. There is an increasing democratization of the whole process with national inter-agency Reflect forums nominating participants for different CIRAC meetings and regional networks selecting representatives from within their region to ensure a gender balance and a balance of institutions. The democracy and accountability of CIRAC, as well as its capacity to connect to grassroots practice around the world, inevitably depends on the effectiveness of the different regional and national networks. In a climate where funding is under pressure and institutions are competing with each other for resources, it is not always easy to prioritize this sort of open inter-agency collaboration.

Languages, Literacy and Gender:

Quechua-Spanish Bilingual Literacy

Bolivia

Introduction

With a population of 8.3 million, Bolivia estimates that over one million people are completely or functionally non-literate. Two-thirds of these are women. This makes the struggle for gender equality and the challenge of reducing poverty all the more difficult. Bolivia is also a multi-ethnic country with an indigenous population of 60 per cent. Forty-one per cent of the population is below the age of 15. The country is still experiencing a rapid population growth of 2.2 per cent per year. The urbanization process continues to accelerate in Bolivia; currently, 62 per cent of the population is urban. The population of the three major metropolitan areas is expected to double in the next 23 years.

Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in Latin America, with a gross national income per capita of about \$1,000 and an annual economic growth rate of 1.2 per cent. Between 1992 and 2001, the poverty rate was reduced from 70.9 per cent to 58.6 per cent and extreme poverty from 37 per cent to 36.5 per cent. However, in absolute numbers, extreme poverty has increased both in urban and rural areas. The maternal mortality ratio of 390 per 100,000 live births is the second highest in Latin America, with significant differentials between urban and rural areas.

Rural areas face severe problems due to population dispersion, difficult terrain and high illiteracy rates, especially among women. The female illiteracy rate is 41.2 per cent in rural areas and 9.6 per cent in urban areas. For males, the rates are 16.7 per cent and 2.5 per cent, respectively.

The Quechua-Spanish Bilingual Literacy Project aimed to tackle this problem in the rural and semi-urban areas of two of the poorest regions, Chuquisaca and Potosí. The targets set by the project were to give access to literacy to 100,000 people; 75,000 women and 25,000 men. Men were included because it was important to have their involvement and support in a project focusing on women. Relatively high mortality in childbirth was a particular problem in these areas which the literacy programme was to address. In 2000 the Project was awarded the UNESCO Malcolm Adiseshiah International Literacy Prize for its outstanding work.

Bilingual literacy

It is well known that people learn literacy best in their mother tongue, adding literacy in other languages later. This was, however, not the only reason for taking a bilingual approach. The project aimed not only to enable people to acquire literacy, but also to promote local development. This only takes place when local people have confidence in themselves and value their own culture and background. Literacy in Quechua gives new value to the language and to the culture, thus raising the self-esteem of learners. Language and culture are part and parcel of identity, both of the

individual and of the community. When people are at home in their own identity, knowing that it has value and is respected, they are ready to launch out confidently into new initiatives and learn from other cultures. Bolivia got the idea from Peru. There they had experimented with a bilingual approach of this kind and found that it strengthened cultural identity and shortened the process of learning literacy to five to seven months.

Implementing bilingual literacy meant training co-ordinators and instructors as well as preparing materials. Pilot groups generated words and phrases on which the literacy guides for men and women were based. Posters, syllable charts and true/false cards accompanied the guides. Learners also wanted notebooks to have a record of the new knowledge in reproductive health and gender issues.

For the project to work best a number of criteria were applied to choose the towns and districts where it would take place: presence of some degree of bilingualism, ease of access by road, a concentration of non-literate people and, if possible, people who had not previously taken part in a literacy programme.

A holistic approach

The project was not merely a literacy project. It focused specifically on three issues: reproductive health, gender issues and intercultural relations. Thus the basics of reading and writing were integrated with teaching on sexual and reproductive health, in the perspective of relationships between men and women.

There was a specific focus for women and another for men. With women the project included teaching on looking after yourself during pregnancy, care of new-born babies, what is needed during childbirth, and how to protect yourself against unwanted pregnancies. In this way the project enabled women to make decisions about their own sexual life and to obtain the services of the Basic Health Insurance. For men, the focus was on taking their responsibilities seriously with regard to the care of their children, treating the rights and health of women with respect and understanding what their needs are during pregnancy and childbirth. They also received instruction on protection against sexually transmitted diseases.

Literacy was thus a key link in enabling the poorest to take full advantage of opportunities and choices through which they could break the cycle of poverty. The various topics built up self-esteem and the ability to look after themselves and those around them.

Fighting entrenched attitudes

The project aimed specifically at gender equality – establishing new kinds of relationships between men and women, so that women receive the respect they are due as human beings and have all the rights and opportunities which enable them to develop their full potential. Gender is a social issue, however, and male attitudes must change where they are discriminatory or where they prevent women from seeking new ways to develop. Luis Ríos, Executive Secretary of the United Union of Rural Workers of Campero Province, commented to his colleagues on the impact that the project had on male attitudes to gender issues:

“The Biliteracy Project has made us think. As a provincial officer, I won’t hide what we have said so many times: ‘we don’t need women’, as if they were inferior to us. Isn’t that the truth, friends?”

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"Women beat us in work, they are more responsible, they work from dawn to dusk. Sometimes we drink, while our wives even if tired or sleepy serve us just the same, and still we beat them. Friends, this must stop!

"Here in our meeting there isn't a single woman, there is no women's organization. This Bilingual Project will help us wake up and recognize that our wives and daughters are equals and even better our friends; they need to receive training just like we do, so that together we can find a better life".

Communication for partnership

The Ministry of Alternative Education organized the project in co-operation with the United Nations Population Fund and the Turner Foundation. They realized that it was important to create and maintain a positive climate for the promotion of literacy, linked to gender and reproductive health issues. So the project included a heavy communication component aiming to generate strong political will and the necessary resources.

Priority audiences were decision-makers at all levels, international co-operation agencies, civil society, communication professionals, educators and the people benefiting from the project. For each audience they developed specific messages. For example, the messages for civil society were:

- ◆ the importance of bilingual, health and reproductive education, and gender issues for the quality of life
- ◆ dissemination of national and international policies which support the concerns of the project
- ◆ communication of reproductive and sexual rights
- ◆ communication of the main international agreements and commitments for Bolivia on women and gender issues.

For the project beneficiaries a detailed list of skills, attitudes and values was drawn up under the headings of: gender equity, care of your body and non-violence to women; sexual and reproductive health. Radio programmes, videos, publications, CD-ROMs, cultural festivals, educational days or weeks were all part of the communication strategy.

The focus of the programme at the municipal level resulted in improved reproductive health service delivery and better understanding of the relationship between issues of reproductive health and development in some municipalities. By 2000, over 40,000 people had learned to read and write and become more aware of their sexual and reproductive health and rights. The project increased the use of health services and saved mothers' lives. In the province of Chuquisaca, maternal mortality rates dropped 70 per cent in one year, from 13 deaths in 1998 to four in 1999.

Language, literacy and gender

The experiences of this Bolivian project show how language, literacy and gender are related. Literacy in Spanish, the language of wider communication, but not the mother tongue of the indigenous population, was a major factor in preventing literacy spreading in these areas. For literacy to be fully accessible, it needed to be in Quechua. This was certainly the case for women who have less opportunity to pick up Spanish through travel or other wider contacts. Thus, being a Quechua-speaking woman was a double cause of exclusion and marginalization. Quechua literacy gave opportunities for women to take advantage of structured learning opportunities for the first time and so find useful knowledge about reproductive health and rights to complement what they already knew.

A literacy facilitator from Sucre speaks...

"The Bilingual Education Project helps us a lot as mothers, not only to read and write, but also to instruct us about pregnancy, childbirth and how to care for our children. In the countryside there are many mothers who die at childbirth, they don't get any medical check-up, distances are big, but with the input which Bi-literacy gives us we can prepare by going to the health centre, better still by knowing that there is a Basic Health Insurance – before we did not know that this service existed and was free. When we country women see that we are pregnant we were embarrassed in front of other people, we had our baby alone, almost hidden in our house – many mothers died like that for lack of check-up and help. Now, with Bi-literacy, not only do we go to the health centres, we also speak freely about our bodies, our private parts... of course it was hard for us to decide to do that. Speaking of myself, I tell my husband everything that I learnt in the Centre and what I am teaching. He does not get angry, before he was a bit suspicious, but not now. Now he even says: "Oh, you are learning a lot of things, but I am involved in my work, I can't go anywhere." He would also like to go but he gets back very late from his work".

The project did not stop at Quechua, however. Quechua was the key learning tool, and literacy in the local language is one of the rights to which all indigenous groups are entitled.

Without losing or neglecting Quechua, literacy in Spanish was also offered. In fact, it became easier to add Spanish literacy because learners were already literate in their own language. In today's globalizing world, both the local language and a language of wider communication should be available to minorities and indigenous people – a multilingual approach.

Through bilingual literacy, both men and women came to realize the value of learning through both languages. One was not better than the other; they were just different means of communication, used in different contexts. Women had been marginalized by only knowing Quechua and that was looked down upon by some men. The project showed everyone that not only were men and women equal, but that equality does not depend on what languages you speak or read, but on being a human being, with the same rights, aspirations and potential.

Testimonies from women learners of the Quiriquihuisi in San Lucas Centre – translated from Quechua

"We are going to improve the literacy of our children. As we did not go to school, we didn't know, we only watched, we couldn't help them with their tasks, we couldn't correct them, we couldn't do anything. What we have learnt will help us in that. Now we correct them and ask them how they are doing. With this literacy, we are learning and all us women are going to go forward. Before, we were crushed into the ground, into a corner of the kitchen and into a corner of the house. Our husbands even exploited us, they didn't value us. I think that literacy helps us, we ask to speak up, we speak and by speaking we take courage, we can walk together with our husbands. Also some men are ignorant. They hold their women back and don't want them to go to the centre. Some push us to learn saying that at least we are going to write and sign our names. Some of us believe it is easier to learn Quechua and others find learning Spanish easier. Some people tell us we are going back to the old times and it is good to learn in the two languages. At least we are learning to hold a pencil. Those who don't know shake when they sign. There are many women who now want to start literacy, but it is already very late, they are not equal to it, and also there are no materials. There are many who have still not started and so they will just stay as they are without knowing. We want to learn more, we can't remain behind. It would be good if we could learn from one year to the next and that literacy is not lost and does not move to other places. We agree that it would be much better for us to learn to add, subtract, multiply. We want to learn more because in this rural area we can't even count money quickly. For us, this literacy is not like when it is taught in school. Here we have to gather courage. We have to ask to speak in big meetings without fear. Here we get the picture and then learn to reflect, with reflection we can have more courage and we lose our fear".

Raise Economic Levels

through Intensive Literacy Learning

China

Much has been done since 1985 when the Education Bureau of Tianshui launched its campaign to promote literacy in all rural areas. In 2000, the King Sejong Literacy Prize was awarded by UNESCO to the City for its remarkable achievements in this respect.

The prize has greatly encouraged all staff members working in the Education Bureau to make further efforts. After three years' hard work and joint efforts from 2000 to 2002, significant social and economic results have been attained through the campaign to eradicate illiteracy in the rural areas. This has won the unanimous support and recognition not only from farmers and other agricultural workers but also from people from other walks of life. During this three year period, 83,985 illiterates or semi-illiterates have learned how to read and write. The City's literacy rate has been increased from 94.34 per cent in 2000 to 98.01 per cent in 2002. The attendance ratio of school-age children increased by 3 per cent thus preventing the emergence of 15,000 new illiterates; 148 literacy and technology schools for farmers have been set up and 992 practical technology training and advanced literacy classes have been made available to farmers; 123,005 farmers who have become literate attended further training classes. The prevention of relapse into illiteracy of more than 40,000 farmers has effectively raised their literacy levels. The following is the specific work carried out.

Update literacy work records to provide comprehensive data

During the last decade there has been unrecorded information on changes in the population, literacy teachers and the management of literacy records. This meant that the files failed to show the exact literacy situation of farmers. To provide comprehensive and specific data for scientific planning and decision-making, in February 2002, 19,243 teachers and students were organized to carry out a thoroughgoing survey of the literacy situation of farmers through doing household interviews and keeping detailed records of relevant findings in each administrative village which included complete lists of illiterates, semi-illiterates, people enrolled in literacy classes, people unable to learn and literacy teachers. Difficult cases were specifically recorded to ensure that special measures could be taken for the smooth running of literacy work.

Key aspects for expansion of literacy work

Based on the results of the survey, the number and the special features of the remaining illiterates were analyzed and it was noted that women whose husbands were out working represented 61 per cent of illiterates. Not only did they have to work in the house but they also worked in the fields during the daytime. When they returned home they were too tired to take literacy classes. The remaining illiterates were either very elderly or were over 50 years old. Some of these illiterates

had lost confidence in themselves and decided that they were incapable of learning. Added to this, the State issued document entitled, 'The Working Rules and Regulations for Literacy Work' stipulated that the target group be the age group between 15 and 50. In 1994, the Government issued a revised version of the document, which stipulates that the target group refers to those born after the year 1949. So the change of policy deprived older people of the opportunity to become literate. In some remote and poverty-stricken areas what had been learned at the literacy school could not be practiced and was gradually forgotten. Based on the analysis of the special features of these remaining illiterates, a plan was devised consisting of each teacher or technician forming learning partners with a semi-illiterate or illiterate. The teachers would help them to learn how to read and write and at the same time the technicians would impart practical knowledge and techniques. Taking into account every individual's strong points and the local economic situation, they were taught different kinds of skills and techniques, such as rattan knitting, the cultivation of traditional Chinese herbal medicine, the processing of farming products, tailoring and so on. The teachers are all very patient and the farmers are very happy with the literacy work, which contributes to the smooth running and success of literacy work in every village within the City's purview.

Division of responsibilities

During the past three years, both the governments at all levels and the education bureaux have been allotted their own specific responsibilities for literacy work. Every year, in accordance with the Literacy Work Plan. Education bureaux and the schools would sign a 'target agreement' to eradicate illiteracy and to train farmers in practical farming techniques and skills. The township schools, literacy teachers and the target groups would also sign agreements relating to literacy learning. The responsibility of the Government is to provide funds for literacy work, mobilize the illiterates to attend classes and to organize the technicians to offer skills training and techniques to the farmers in their homes. The task education bureaux is to organize the teaching activities, to manage the literacy work and set up files of all the work having been carried out and all that needs to be done. At the end of each year all the organizations concerned with literacy work will be assessed to see if they have fulfilled their assigned tasks. The education bureaux will be responsible for the literacy work of other participating organizations and functionaries, such as women's federations, the Communist League, Departments of Agriculture, Science and Technology, and Science Associations.

Implementation of the Nine Year Compulsory Education Plan

Governments at all levels give equal priority to both literacy work and the implementation the Nine-year Compulsory Education Plan. In planning the work, two basic tasks, i.e. extension of the Plan and the eradication of illiteracy in the young and middle-aged, are listed as priority tasks for the education bureaux at all levels.

Firstly, in accordance with the national law for compulsory education, a system of notifying school-age children and their parents to register for compulsory education has been established. Fifteen days before the new school term starts, the township government will entrust certain departments with the responsibility of issuing a formal notice to school-age children, their parents or guardians. On receiving the formal notice, parents or guardians should send the children to the designated school. Implementation of this policy has greatly enhanced the entrance rate of school age children and radically reduced the increase of new illiterates.

Secondly, all the townships and villages have set up special work groups to visit poor families whose children have dropped out of school either because their fathers were work-

ing away from home or they were too poor to continue their education. Parents or guardians are persuaded to send the children back to school and some financial help from the Government is provided. This has effectively controlled the drop-out rate of pupils at schools and stopped the increase of adult semi-illiterates. For irresponsible farmers legal measures are taken to ensure that their children return to school.

Thirdly, despite financial difficulties, 197,827 square metres of classroom have been set up and 2,331 new teachers employed. Efforts have been made to provide high quality hardware for school age children and literacy work.

Fourthly, very clear records of all the school age children, including their birth-days, time of attending school and so on have been kept. For three consecutive years the entrance rate for school age children of the whole City is over 99.5 per cent and the consolidation rate exceeds 98.9 per cent. Mr. Huang He, Head of the central primary school of Shanmen township, Qing shui county, a poor rural area, because of his devotion to and love for education, visited villages and families, talked with parents and made friends with students and bought school supplies with his own money. Encouraged by his devotion and enthusiasm, the villagers all sent their children to school. For several consecutive years the entrance rates and consolidation rate of the students in the township are over 99.5 per cent.

Practice and consolidation

The City of Tianshui governs five counties and two districts. The five counties and one of the districts are state level poor counties or districts. The City has a population of 3,421,690 of which 1,610,180 are young and middle-aged of whom 98.01 per cent are literate. Generally speaking, it has reached the national standard of eradicating illiteracy, but it is not well balanced. Zhangjiachuan Hui Autonomous county and Qingshui county have not reached the national standard. These two counties are the main target counties for future literacy work. At present the core of literacy work in the City is to closely combine the literacy campaign for farmers with poverty alleviation, improved income and development of the rural economy. No purpose will be served by just eradicating illiteracy. Therefore, in order to consolidate the fruit of literacy work, develop and extend cultural and technical schools for farmers, each county and township has made its specific plan taking into account its own local situation. Diverse forms of literacy work have been adopted. When farmers are busy they will study individually and when farmers not busy they will learn in groups. For those living far from villages, teachers will be assigned to teach them at home so as to ensure that they learn how to read and write. At the same time 992 classes of various kinds have been opened which offer farmers lectures on tree and grass planting, domestic animals and poultry raising, fruit tree cultivating, pesticide and fertilizer utilization, dress making, processing of farm products and other practical skills and techniques. Approximately 123,008 learners are participating in the training classes. Some of the farmers have realized the importance of learning literacy and have asked to attend advanced classes for further education. Having mastered some skills and technology, they have become the backbone of local economic development. Guo Baoyin and Lei Jinlou from the Tianjia village, Shifo township, Bei Dao District, after becoming literate, have set up a glove knitting business, wholesaling and training personnel. They recently bought more than 200 glove knitting machines and provided in-service training to workers. So far over 1,500 persons have been trained and they have also helped farmers improve their economic situation. Li Xiaomei, from Dongshun township, Wushan county, after becoming literate, set up a tailor's shop and employed 10 young unemployed workers. For that she has been awarded the title of 'Model Worker' by the Tianshui Municipal Government.

Rapid economic development generates financial support for literacy work and education

During the past three years, in accordance with the national general plan to develop the west and the educational policies of the provincial government, the reform of state enterprises and rural tax has been terminated. This has activated the development potential of enterprises and promoted an increase in private enterprises. The reform has obviously alleviated farmers' economic burdens and increased their income. Highways have also been constructed linking several important national highways, of which 316 have shortened the distance between Tianshui and the other adjoining developed areas. This has improved communications with other cities and provinces in the fields of economy, information and cultural exchanges. All these new changes have promoted the economic development of the whole city. The financial income of the city continues to grow at the rate of more than 7 per cent per year, which provides strong financial support for the development of education and literacy work. Since 2000, \$3 million have been invested by governments at all levels in literacy work to hold meetings, set up files, help poor learners, buy textbooks, exercise books and pencils and establish cultural and technical schools for the farmers. All the townships and more than 50 per cent of villages have set up their own cultural and technical schools for the farmers. The farmers have their own base to study scientific and technological skills and practical techniques. As a result the general level of the farmers' cultural qualities has been greatly enhanced. Combining farmers' education with rural economic development has helped farmers to join and benefit from the development process.

Conclusion

The literacy work of the whole City has boosted the technical and literacy level of the farmers. They have been ideologically transformed. They have started paying attention to education, economic development through knowledge, are interested in familiarizing themselves with the state and province policies and in what has been going on in other parts of the country. The transformation of old ideas has instilled the vitality and energy necessary to the young and middle-aged farmers to better themselves financially. Those who used to be illiterate or semi-illiterate are playing a more and more important role in the development of the rural economy. Among them are wealthy businessmen, heads of enterprises, technical workers, ordinary workers and country technicians. They have all laid a firm foundation for their new careers by attending literacy classes. They often say it is the literacy work organized by the Government that has bought about what they are and what they have today.

Co-operating for Literacy

in the Caribbean

Cuba and Haiti

Haiti has a plan for renewing its educational system. Fresh efforts in adult literacy are part of that. The country has an overall literacy rate of 50 per cent - 47 per cent for women and 52 per cent for men. In 1997 initial contacts developed between the Haitian Ministry of Education and its counterpart in Cuba. This resulted, in 2000, in an agreement to co-operate in literacy work, using Cuba's experience in the field. Cuba has an adult literacy rate of 97 per cent with virtually no difference between men and women. Such co-operation between two countries of the same region was a sign of solidarity and friendship, as well as an indication of the joint commitment to the goals of *Education for All* presented in the Dakar Framework for Action.¹

Literacy by radio

In considering how to address the literacy needs in Haiti, a number of strengths and weaknesses or obstacles were observed which would have an impact on any literacy efforts by radio, as shown in the following chart:

Strengths	Weaknesses or Obstacles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political will of the government to develop fully inclusive literacy • Willingness of NGOs to play their part • Openness to change • Commitment to offer post-literacy following the literacy process • Possibility of fitting the method to levels of radio ownership in the population • Willingness to find ways of keeping monitoring and evaluation flexible • People are used to listening to the radio • Adults have a high level of concern for their children's education • Rural and urban populations are used to getting together • Possibility of training part of the literate population as guides and monitors • National organizations support awareness-raising • Literacy in the mother tongue with teaching of French as a second language as part of post-literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of exact population density data • Lack of reliable data on the literacy rate • Literacy is seen as an end in itself and not as a social and cultural development process • Previous literacy attempts lacked adequate planning, technical structures, statistical monitoring and an evaluation system • Lack of confidence of people in literacy efforts • Paucity of government schools, thus contributing to the maintenance of illiteracy, with children not going to school • Difficulty of reaching some provinces and departments • Predominance of Creole over French • Lack of radio station with national coverage

1. UNESCO World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 2000.

In planning the project, and based on Cuban experience, the use of radio for literacy was felt to offer a number of advantages:

- ◆ it reaches a large number of people
- ◆ it does not require a large number of technical personal or literacy workers
- ◆ it allows the participant to learn in their own home
- ◆ it fosters greater investment on the part of the individual and so contributes to higher self-esteem
- ◆ it does not need teaching institutions
- ◆ it increases family co-operation, fostering close links between children, youth and adults
- ◆ the facilitator is 'present' over a wide area
- ◆ high-quality input is guaranteed as the broadcasts are prepared by a specialized team
- ◆ it lowers the unit costs of literacy acquisition

Bilingualism – a particular feature

Creole is the mother tongue of Haitians. Not only is it the official language, but it is the one by which traditions, religion, culture and ideas are passed on. Creole is well developed, with its own writing system and literature. In Haiti everyone speaks Creole. French, on the other hand, was the colonizers' language – only a minority speak it and it is an elite language.

For these reasons, Creole was chosen as the language in which to learn literacy. This decision was also a clear sign of respect for the national identity of Haiti. Nevertheless, in order to give a chance to learn French to any Haitian who wants to do so, French is included in the post-literacy part of the programme, taught as a second language.

A four-stage strategy

The response to the challenges and possibilities of literacy by radio was a four-stage strategy:

- ◆ A socio-cultural survey of the country
- ◆ Experimentation and pilot projects
- ◆ Extension to two departments (Plato Central and Sudeste)
- ◆ Gradual generalization across the whole country

First Stage: A socio-cultural survey of the country

This included obtaining basic data on the country as a whole: geography, culture, social aspects, political life and so on. It also included a bibliographical search on areas of relevance to the project.

One particular place, Petite Place Cazeau, was selected for a thorough sample survey, with a house-to-house investigation. This touched on the density of the population, schooling levels, literacy rate, number of radio owners, preferred time for listening to the radio, and the power supply situation. In addition this phase included provincial consultations about teaching methods for basic literacy and on ways to raise awareness. This stage took place over two months.

A key question for literacy by radio is whether sufficient households have radios. This was part of the initial survey. In the Sudeste Department, for example, there was a large variation from place to place. In Koffe only 28 per cent of households had a radio, while it was almost double – 57 per cent – in Tyot.

Second Stage: Experimentation and pilot projects

Lasting eight months, this stage aimed at testing teaching methods and materials for literacy by radio, and the teaching of French as a second language. Government staff received training in basic literacy teaching and in co-ordinating and monitoring. Materials such as radio scripts, the learner's book and monitor's guide were also prepared. The monitors were the front-line personnel, bringing together 25 learners in a listening group. This gave opportunity even for those who did not themselves have a radio.

In preparation for the extension to two departments in the next phase, co-ordinators, supervisors and monitors received intensive and systematic training.

The work of survey and experimentation had the effect of giving Haiti a group of people, 140 in total, 20 for each of the seven departments surveyed - trained in survey and investigative methods. In addition more than 100 specialists in aspects of the programme received theoretical and practical training.

Third Stage: Extension to two departments (Plato Central and Sudeste)

This stage saw the following activities:

- ◆ Selection of community or local radio stations: in some areas there is no radio reception. In those areas monitors conducted classes directly, using the same materials as classes that followed by radio.
- ◆ Production of cassettes: 52 separate lessons are available, plus two for awareness-raising.
- ◆ Training of monitors in communes and neighbourhoods: by 2002 the project had trained 10,000 monitors. Radio classes were used for monitor training also.
- ◆ Activation of monitoring and evaluation processes.
- ◆ Transmission of radio programmes.
- ◆ Evaluation of results.
- ◆ Design of post-literacy curriculum: this resulted in 62 radio lessons for French as a second language, with publication of a learner's manual and teacher's guide.
- ◆ Distribution of teaching materials: 10,000 guides for monitors (*Anseye*) were sent out, and 300,000 learners' books (*Apraun*) were published.
- ◆ By the end of 2001 a total of 6,250 people had taken part in literacy by radio in the two selected departments.

Fourth Stage: Gradual generalization across the whole country

This stage started in May 2002 and saw the activities of the third stage extended to other departments.

Radio classes – establishing dialogue

Giving instruction in literacy by radio means making a connection with each learner. Each radio broadcast must enable the learner to know exactly where to find the examples and exercises in their writer materials. But more than that – the link between the teacher on the radio and the learner in the house needs to be as personal as possible. In Haiti the radio broadcasts used a style of personal dialogue between teacher and learner, as the following sample lesson shows:

Signature tune

- Introducer** How are you today? I'm sure you're very well, waiting for the next class. Good! I'm happy because you are progressing with learning. And what are we going to talk about today?
- Teacher** We're going to continue talking about the family.
- Learner** You asked me yesterday if my family is here, if they live with me. Yes, teacher, my family is here. My family lives with me: my husband and my three sons.
- Teacher** Very good, because when the family is together, it can better carry out its educational role.
- Learner** And what are we doing today?
- Teacher** As I told you earlier, we're going to continue looking at new words. Today is Wednesday, shown by a moon in your book. Have you found it? Look carefully, beside the moon the number three appears. If you look closely you'll see that today's exercise is also number three.
- Learner** Teacher, but this page doesn't have a photo like the earlier ones.
- Teacher** Exactly, in the two exercises before there was a photo of a Haitian family. As we are going on talking about the same theme today, we don't need to put that photo again, but if you want you can turn back to look at it in the last exercise.
- Gentle music*
- Teacher** Underneath the moon there's a photo with an ear and a mouth. Listen to what I'm going to read – it's written beside this picture.
Fanmi lala la, lila, li liu sa a
Repeat after me (Teacher reads again)
Let's read it again.
- Learner** I still can't read without your help, teacher.
- Teacher** Don't worry. That's why I'm here. I just need you to go on listening and looking. Look closely at the darkest letters. Listen and look.
Li sa a
i a an a
- Background music*
- Introducer** Listen to this proverb which is very sensible: XXX that I'm in a hurry. Do you get it?
- Learner** Yes, teacher, I understood. That means that we should work little by little in order to learn to read and write quickly.
- Teacher** Very good. You're really intelligent. Now let's move to the second picture: it's an ear and an eye which means listen and look.
e fanmi ou, kote li?
And where does your family live?
e an i ou o i
- Learner** I want to read on my own.
- Teacher** Very good. Have a go. I'll give you some time to read slowly.
- Gentle background music*
- Learner** I've already finished. I found it very easy.
- Teacher** Now there's another picture, of a football pitch. I think I can read it on my own.
- Gentle music*
- Introducer** Good! You've just arrived at the end. You read really well.

Winning Stories

Conclusion

This programme is an example of much needed south-south co-operation, offering expertise based on practical experience. Since radio-based literacy is low-cost and wide reaching, it can be adaptable to many new situations. The Cuba-Haiti-, co-operation provides a basis both for implementing an innovative approach and for building local capacity for sustainable literacy and development work. International recognition was received for this programme when it was awarded the Honourable Mention of the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize in 2002.

Literacy at work

Workbase

New Zealand

Everywhere jobs and work are changing. Companies are linked closely with others halfway across the world. Employees take more responsibility for seeing that the quality of their work is maintained. Flexible teams tackle a variety of tasks. Computers feature in almost every kind of work. These changes require skills of communication – speaking, listening, problem solving, creative thinking - as well as the basics of reading, writing and numeracy. All this adds up to a complex set of workplace skills which we call literacy. Studies carried out in 1999 showed that in the industrialized countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) there was a particular kind of literacy problem. It was not that people failed to meet literacy standards when they entered the workforce, but that the literacy demands of jobs in particular workplaces had changed. People needed new and better skills for these new jobs. In New Zealand *Workbase*, the National Centre for Workplace Literacy and Language, developed to tackle this problem. Its programmes do not prepare people to obtain work but provide opportunities for those already in work to improve the range of communication skills known as literacy. *Workbase* has a significant impact on upgrading the confidence and competence of individual workers and the skill level of the workforce as a whole.

Motivated to learn

1990 was International Literacy Year and it saw a series of small pilot projects in workplaces in Auckland undertaken by the Adult Reading and Learning Assistance Organization (ARLA). Before then most adult literacy provision was based in community organizations; there had been no national initiative. From the pilot projects came *Workbase* at a time when extensive changes in the workplace called for a greater push to upgrade skills. The increasing use of information technologies introduced new demands on workers' literacy skills. There is now a much greater variety of text and literacy processes to deal with and more front line staff are expected to interact with technology as a regular part of carrying out their job. Dealing with unfamiliar multi-media texts creates a new challenge for employees already uncomfortable with handling print in the workplace.

Against this background the International Adult Literacy Surveys (IALS) came up with some revealing statistics in 1997. Up to then it had been assumed that New Zealand, along with many other OECD countries, had a literacy rate of about 99 per cent of the adult population. However, the survey used detailed tests to assess not only how many were literate, but also to what level adults were literate, using five levels of competence. For New Zealand this showed that:

- ◆ 20 per cent of adults were at the lowest level of literacy (level one), a further 25 per cent had poor literacy skills (level two), and fewer than 20 per cent scored at the two top levels (levels four and five)
- ◆ groups that were more strongly represented at the lower levels of literacy included the unemployed, Maori, Pacific Islanders, those for whom English is not their mother tongue.

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As the Executive Director of *Workbase* commented: “Findings from these national surveys prove that literacy can no longer be considered a third world issue. Industrialized countries are seriously disadvantaged by low literacy. Literacy skills play an important role in the economy. These surveys draw clear links between literacy skill levels and productivity and earnings”.

Learn where you work

The programme in each workplace is grounded in the language and daily working practices of the participants. So before any learning starts a thorough survey is carried out to discover what communication takes place in a particular work environment and how workers use literacy and numeracy skills. A typical survey looks at the documentation that employees need to read and understand, holds interviews with managers and representatives of workers to identify where current difficulties lie and what future skill needs are emerging and observes people on the job to see what the practical literacy requirements are. Each industry has its standards and qualifications, so the design of a learning programme also takes into account any links with the need to obtain or upgrade qualifications. It is important to assess the full range of literacy requirements by including everyone in the survey, not just the people or departments where it is felt there may be problems. This extensive preparatory work means that programmes are tailor-made to each work situation. This ensures that learning is made immediately relevant to the needs of the workplace and that is a motivating factor for learners. By avoiding general literacy or numeracy programmes, it also means that learning can be applied immediately and directly to useful purposes.

Workbase works with companies to make programmes as user-friendly and accessible as possible. Sessions take place within the workplace, often during work time, and are entirely voluntary. Rather than calling them ‘literacy classes’ programmes often have titles which emphasize the broader purposes of learning – ‘Communication Skills for Teams’ or ‘Communicating for Success’. Finding the right venue is crucial. It is difficult to focus on learning if sessions are conducted in a noisy cafeteria or in a place where people constantly pass by.

Sometimes learning is designed on an individual basis. A group of caregivers received tuition one by one because of the difficulty of organizing care rosters and family responsibilities. Their tutor commented, “Everyone put in a tremendous effort. My admiration for their commitment grew because I knew they were juggling family, work and the programme. They took a lot of work home to do. I watched them become more confident as they began to believe in their own abilities as learners and for me this was a great achievement of the programme”.

Many of those requesting literacy are of Maori or Pacific Island background, speaking languages other than English as their mother tongue. In some workplaces literacy in Maori is offered in addition to English, whereas elsewhere learners adopt their own strategies of understanding the English material, “I sometimes saw groups sitting around the table helping each other and the Tongan or Samoan staff explained problems to each other in their own language”, observed one tutor.

Companies and their managers have sometimes been surprised at the effects of improved literacy, not realizing before that some difficulties which employees experienced were due to either lack of communication skills or lack of confidence in using them. One manager reported enthusiastically:

“As the programme evolves, literacy training really becomes industry training. The courses are built around trade skill requirements and there are opportunities for staff to go on learning to levels two or three and advance their careers.”

Auckland PlasticsCompany

"We've seen a sharp rise in employee skills, confidence and morale. Our procedures and processes are properly documented which has resulted in higher quality and efficiency and the ability to tackle more sophisticated products. Improved literacy skills have been a key contributor to all this. We have proper lines of communication, we can organize our business better and we have procedures for everything. You're really talking about a major change in culture. We definitely have fewer problems in terms of rejects and late deliveries. Reject rates have fallen by more than 50 per cent and at least half of that is due to improved skills of staff, including literacy skills".

Siosina's story

Siosina has been a caregiver at an Auckland hospital for the elderly for nearly four years. Apart from a short time out of work, she has been working as a caregiver for over 20 years since she arrived from Tonga as a recent school leaver in the early 1980s. These positions have included work in a surgical ward and hospice care in hospitals and rest homes in Hamilton and Wellington. Siosina finds caregiving a very rewarding, but demanding job.

In her 20 years of experience as a caregiver, she has seen a steady progression of changes, such as the greater demands of the work, the increasing numbers of private providers and the decrease in the numbers of religious providers. Although she has always had to write reports as part of her work, Siosina says that this component of her work has increased and become more demanding, "...because everything has to be in writing – incident and accident reports..."

At school in Tonga, Siosina passed her Tongan Higher Leaving Certificate in five subjects that she said "wasn't satisfactory". When she was invited to be part of a new workplace literacy programme in her present job, Siosina was initially cautious about what it would entail and how she would cope with it.

"... when they were going to introduce it, first I thought it was compulsory, but it wasn't and I thought that was really good. So I just took it because it's an ongoing learning thing and working – you learn as you go along with your job".

Siosina's greatest apprehension about the programme was that it was taught in her second language, English. Although she finds similarities between the programme and her schooling experience, she is adamant that there are also important differences.

"It does feel like I'm going back to school, except this one, it's a stage forward. It makes you think hard and is more like everyday things. Yes, because it's in English and not in my language."

The literacy components of the course have helped Siosina with the demands of reading and writing English in her job and especially her English grammar, which she finds difficult. Attending the programme has not always been easy for Siosina either, as she needs to fit her attendance around the busy demands of her job and roster issues. Sometimes she has come in on her days off to attend but is happy to do this because of the enjoyment and benefits she sees coming from her learning. Siosina feels that it took most of the first year before she made significant progress with her learning.

Siosina's greater self-confidence has meant that she is also more assertive in her work environment.

"I became more assertive and very positive... Before I used to be very shy at asking questions. Sometimes I feel there are questions that are a bit rude to other people, but now I'm more assertive and I say not rudely, but I prefer to say and voice what I think".

Te Whare Ako: House of learning

Nestled behind the cafeteria at the heart of the Norske Skog Tasman paper mill in the central North Island town of Kawerau is the on-site learning centre Te Whare Ako. In the early 1990s the company was feeling the draught of international competition and needed to make changes in order to keep their place in the industry. In order to respond to new learning needs in a changing environment, *Workbase* worked with the machine operators to document their processes.

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This resulted in a competency checklist, a team leaders' manual, a workplace dictionary and diagrams of the whole processing cycle. These steps formed the basis for learning materials linked to industrial qualifications.

As the programme grew it became integrated into the company with its own learning premises and resource centre. Use of computers and information technology spread to all parts of the paper mill. All staff needed to be computer literate. Operators needed word processing and spreadsheet skills. They had to be able to read and respond to data about the plant and its systems. Te Whare Ako staff responded by developing computer training that staff could work on at their own pace in the centre, at their work-station or from home. The move to a computer-based environment meant that computers also became the context for teaching literacy skills.

How did learning become part of the corporate culture? At the start employees were suspicious of yet another 'good idea' from management. Learning was voluntary and the Te Whare Ako on-site centre was a friendly and helpful place where people could drop in to see what was going on. Many workers were Maori and all the trainers were Maori women, providing a non-threatening environment in a male-dominated workplace, and demonstrating that they were completely distinct from management. Employees could choose between training and assessment in English or Maori. Workers of ten and twenty years' experience took up learning opportunities:

*Ki mai koe ki
ahau he aha te mea nui
o te ao? Maku e ki atu ki a
koe - he tangata he tangata
he tangata.*

**If you asked me what is the
greatest thing, I would tell
you - it is people,
it is people,
it is people.**

"I've worked here for 20 years and in that time my job has completely changed. I've got a lot more responsibility now, more confidence and more interest in my job. Confidence is an important part; knowing what you are doing and why you are doing it. If I was a boss I'd be more likely to employ me now than I would have been five years ago".

The company continues to operate Te Whare Ako, the House of Learning, recognizing it as a key investment in its business and in the future. It has resulted in a more proactive and responsible workforce. Employees have gained not only greater skills but also more self-confidence and understanding of themselves and the work environment. By contracting training out to *Workbase* the company has benefited from a professional corps of trainers able to keep pace with the changing training needs of the industry.

In 2002, the national Management Award was awarded to Norske Skog Tasman for their support of "Te Whare Ako", an eight year *Workbase* workplace literacy programme. Te Whare Ako has become an integral and respected part of the paper mill at Kawerau.

A question of standards

Quality and standards are a key issue. Learning and the application of learning depend on them. This presents a major challenge for *Workbase*. They would like to expand the workplace literacy sector. To build momentum but without losing sight of quality. The first steps have been taken by government with the publication of "More than Words - The New Zealand Adult Literacy Strategy" and with government funding initiatives and policy work. At present, demand for workplace literacy programmes, while uneven, still threatens to outstrip the capacity and capability of programme providers. The dramatic increase in awareness of the issues needs to be accompanied by a realistic, if optimistic, assessment of the effort required for provider organizations and tutors - regionally and nationally - to reach an effective standard of provision. For *Workbase*, this involves continued advocacy of best practice lessons from New Zealand and overseas. It also

involves ongoing work to develop flexible and robust approaches to integrated literacy education in workplaces, approaches which can be adapted and developed in relation to the characteristics of different workplaces and industries and in relation to the individual as well as cultural and linguistic needs of learners.

A number of initiatives seek to respond to these concerns, for instance through working with government agencies to develop a national policy infrastructure. The aim is to establish a Quality Standard for workplace literacy providers, an Adult Literacy Achievement Framework for tracking learners' achievements and an Adult Literacy Educators' qualification. Researching and documenting the lessons of experience is part of ensuring quality in the future. Thus *Workbase* has conducted research on e-learning in workplace literacy programmes that is currently transmitting information on initiatives in developing on-line professional development support for literacy and vocational tutors. Another area of research focuses on strategies for promoting engagement with workplace literacy issues and to improve service quality. One such project is investigating employers' perceptions of barriers to workplace literacy programmes. Another is developing approaches to documenting and reporting to diverse stakeholders on direct and indirect forms of returns on investment from literacy programmes. 'Stakeholders' include business, government, learners and providers of training.

Workbase supports adult literacy practitioners throughout New Zealand by offering a free library service based on its extensive collection of books, teaching resources and research on adult literacy. This service aims to ensure that this relatively under-resourced sector is able to access the latest thinking on adult literacy teaching and learning methods.

Promoting the literacy message

It cannot be taken for granted that everyone recognizes the importance of literacy! As the National Centre for Workplace Literacy and Language, *Workbase* seeks to raise awareness of issues of workplace literacy with a range of groups including employers and industrial groups, government as well as other vocational education providers by intensifying and expanding the development and dissemination of information. This includes developing a Literacy Portal and other online services, and adding to the quality, depth and range of curriculum and teaching resources available to the New Zealand workplace literacy sector.

An important focus is to develop and support other workplace literacy programme providers. In this area *Workbase* administers a Ministry of Education subsidy, the 'Workplace Basic Skills Development Fund' and supports programme providers to access this subsidy by offering them networking opportunities and training. The fund supports literacy-focused workplace learning programmes for learners with low levels of literacy. *Workbase* is also working on several projects in support of vocational training provider organizations to develop their capability in workplace literacy training.

Businesses with fewer than 50 employees make up close to 45 per cent of New Zealand's workforce and their small size constrains their capacity to implement training programmes. *Workbase* worked with "Business New Zealand", a national organization representing business interests, to launch a booklet detailing how literacy issues affect a small business and is conducting a second project to increase awareness and capability to implement literacy programmes among enterprises with under 50 employees.

Workbase's Programmes Unit currently delivers twelve Workplace literacy programmes in manufacturing and food processing firms. The Unit continues to be a national leader in designing, implementing and evaluating workplace literacy programmes. To promote awareness, several recent publications for national distribution documented and publicized this

Winning Stories

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work. Case studies “Speaking for Ourselves” document learners’ views. Most recently, “Voices from Management” documents employers’ perspectives on the value and contribution of literacy programmes in their firms.

Conclusion

The experience of *Workbase* illustrates clearly one of the principles in recent thinking on literacy; that people use literacy for their own purposes and it is the use of literacy that is of value, not just learning the skill. In the New Zealand experience, workplace learning does not go by the name of literacy at all. That is because it is part of broader purposes: upgrading professional skills, becoming a better communicator, making better use of computers or growing in self-confidence. Literacy becomes one of the strategies people use to communicate, to access and share information, to keep track of their lives. It is interesting to note that people learn these practices on the job. Workplace learning increases the effectiveness of using them.

By undertaking detailed surveys of literacy use and needs *before* starting a programme, *Workbase* builds on where learners are now and tailors the programme to their particular learning needs. The best literacy programmes are those which are most directly relevant to adults’ experiences and knowledge and which connect with useful and practical learning outcomes.

People do not always get what they expect from literacy. Many of the *Workbase* learners went into the programme with mixed feelings, wondering if they could cope, questioning whether it would be useful, hoping to improve their skills, maybe threatened by ‘going back to school’. Many achieved good results in their professional spheres, but many also found that the learning experience gave them greater confidence in communicating or helped them be more assertive. Companies noticed that employees developed a greater sense of responsibility as a result. These benefits are intangible but nevertheless real and highly significant. They lay the basis for better relationships, for critical thinking and confident decision-making, for taking initiative and handling disagreements and conflict. Although neither learners nor their employees were looking for such outcomes at the start, they all recognized their value. Why is it then, in literacy and adult learning programmes around the world, that these basic considerations of human development are hardly ever seen as compelling reasons for promoting literacy? The New Zealand experience should teach us to give greater prominence to such aims.

In 2001 the programme received the UNESCO International Reading Association Literacy Award for its achievements.

Giving Girls Hope

Bunad Literacy Community Council

Punjab Province, Pakistan

Take a group of ten girls growing up in the Punjab province of Pakistan today; only four of them are likely to go to school. Once they are in school, the chances are that three of them would drop out before completing primary education. In this kind of situation it is no surprise that only one in four women in Punjab can read and write. The other three have no real access to literacy and any benefits it might bring.

This situation led to the creation of the Bunad Literacy Community Council in 1993. The Council received the 2003 King Sejong Literacy Prize.

Punjab Literacy Facts

Total population: 72 million
(Pakistan – 140 million)

Women's literacy rate: 26%
Number of non-literates
(over 10 years): 38.8 million

Total no. of children 5-10 years:
11 million

Total no. of primary schools:
55 000

Enrolment rate in primary schools:
55% (59% for boys, 41% for girls)
Girls' dropout rate: 78.8%

The founders of the Council realized that there were many poor women and children who would not have an education in the formal school system. Girls in particular were unlikely ever to go to school.

There are a number of reasons why this is so. The school system itself cannot expand to meet demand because of lack of financial resources. So rural areas do not necessarily have a functioning school. Private schools, which have developed to supplement what the state can provide, are too expensive for many people. Of course, girls are often needed in the household. A girl's time is likely to be more valuable than a boy's. She may be needed to look after younger children, fetch water and fuel, tend the livestock, and help with processing food, all of which are female responsibilities in rural Pakistan.

Alternative Education

Meeting the *Education for All* (EFA) goals of equality of basic education for girls and ensuring that primary education is universal by 2015 is not a straightforward task in Pakistan. Creative and alternative approaches will be part of efforts to reach all children, including those in remote rural areas. This is part of the vision of Bunad – keeping the 2015 goals in mind as a target to aim at.

Bunad decided to work at community level, using non-formal education (NFE) approaches. They set up 20 non-formal education centres to start with. These grew to 2,808 centres in 1,886 villages by 2002. The programme aims to provide primary education for children aged 6 to 14, and for young women aged 15+. In particular, Bunad targets those in rural areas who have never been to school or who dropped out before completing primary level. The aim is also to reach street children and children working in soccer-ball stitching, carpet weaving or the manufacture of

surgical instruments. The NFE centres follow a flexible timing agreed between the teacher and the learners, amounting to 2 – 3 hours a day of structured learning time.

These educational activities are linked to skill development in other sectors, such as micro-credit, health and sanitation, and reproductive health. There are examples where people have obtained new skills and so have been able to give up the hazardous occupations mentioned earlier, such as carpet weaving and stitching footballs. Some have used micro-credit to start their own enterprises and generate income. In one locality, Sialkot, more than six thousand children in soccer ball stitching have given up their work and are either in mainstream schools after completing primary education at Bunyad's centres or have acquired a new skill.

Nassr Sohail, who runs many of Bunyad's Punjab programmes, said the organization had to work hard to persuade many parents to send their daughters to school. «Traditionally, female education has not been viewed as important and this is reinforced by very realistic fears about the safety of girls if they have to travel distances to schools», he said. «This was overcome through careful explanation of the benefits of having a literate girl in the family and by making sure that we had a lot of small, local schools. In many cases we were pushing at an open door».

Getting Organized

A particular feature of Bunyad's work is the way they organize education. It does not start with teaching! Rather it starts by identifying non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which can help develop awareness in rural villages. It is important that the desire for education comes from the village itself. Where that is the case, the next step is to find a suitable person as a teacher. Bunyad asks the village to identify a young woman with matriculation level of education to become the teacher. The teacher then works with the women of the village to identify the children, 30 young girls or working children, who will come to the centre. This process builds strong ownership and strengthens the commitment of parents to the education of their children.

The selected teachers receive five to seven days of training before they start to teach and then take part in refresher workshops every three months. This ensures that teachers learn from their own practice and from the problems they encounter. There is also more opportunity to work with teachers so that they can work on good practice and correct unhelpful practices.

As the centre begins to operate, two kinds of supporting committees are created: the Village Education Committee (VEC) and the Family Education Committee (FEC). The VEC has the purpose of improving the output of the non-formal education centre and providing facilities for the learners and the teacher, including a place to hold sessions. The FEC is a group of the mother and female relatives of each child. Their role is to take a regular interest in their child's attendance and performance. They also become involved in extra-curricular activities and community development.

These first phases of strengthening NGOs, raising consciousness and motivation, and setting the basic criteria for opening a centre are lengthy. They rely on painstaking work by Bunyad staff, using NGO skills and local knowledge, building trust and calling on Bunyad resources. These steps are an investment in local ownership, the one thing that will keep the centre going.

Input from Bunyad

Apart from starting off the process, what then is the role of Bunyad? Just as the work is well organized at village level, so it is at broader levels. A local NGO supports up to 20 centres in a geographic cluster. A grouping of 100 centres at markaz level is supported by Bunyad which is responsible for teacher training, school furniture, teaching and learning materials and for problems not solved at the field level. Part of Bunyad's role is also to build the capacity of the smaller NGOs with which it co-operates. A system of monitoring and reporting operates at each level. Teachers report on the

progress of learners and also include information on attendance, dropout and reasons for it? and extra-curricular activities.

Bunyard has therefore both a training role and a networking role. In its networking activities it relates to smaller NGOs and community-based organizations, as well as to larger NGOs, government and donors in an effort to enable greater access to resources and services. Bunyard endeavours have always been to share and exchange experience, learn from those of others and forge collaborative alliances in the promotion of social development.

Impact on Lives

The programme has had a positive impact on the lives of girls and young women. Literacy has had an effect in positive ways such as improvement in self-image, in self-confidence, in personal appearance and in home environment. Attitudes to educating girls have also changed. When the programme started, parents were reluctant to send their daughters to school. A follow-up study of 100 NFE centres for girls in Hafizabad district indicated that 34% of the girls who completed the primary level in Bunyard's centres were pursuing further education. Most of the others desired to do so, but could not because there were no middle schools nearby.

CASE STUDY

Safia Bashir (14) is the youngest daughter of a shopkeeper. She has six brothers and five sisters. Three married brothers work in the embroidery shop and the younger ones work on carpet weaving looms. Because of the low family income she is compelled to work on a loom with her mother. She earns Rs. 450 per carpet per month. They eat beef once a fortnight. They live in a joint family system but her brothers do not give a single penny to her parents from their earnings. Low income prevented her and her brothers from going to any formal school. When Bunyard started an NFE centre for carpet weaving children in Mairajpura, she was able to get admission to it. She attends the school regularly in the afternoon and is studying in class 4. She said, "I used to sit on the loom from fajr (dawn) to maghrib (dusk) but now I am free to study after 12 noon". She is a confident, hard working student. Her parents leave their money with Safia as according to them she is literate enough to manage the household chores. Bunyard has provided her with vocational training, and she wants to become a vocational instructor. According to her she will purchase a sewing machine and teach others. Now she is happy and content with her life.

CASE STUDY

Mehwish is 13 years old and has four sisters and five brothers. All her brothers are labourers earning a daily wage. She lives in the village of Natt and belongs to a very poor family. She works in three houses as domestic help to earn her living. She returns home at the end of each day.

They do not have basic needs of life like education, food, and pure water for drinking. Mehwish's father is an old and sick. Her mother is also working in other peoples' houses to earn money. Because of overwork and insufficient rest she is ill and cannot afford medical treatment. Mehwish is receiving an education from the Bunyard Educational Centre Street/Working Children's Centres and is in class 6. She feels happy and confident as, according to her, she is respected a lot by her parents and other elders. She wants to become a doctor after completing her education.

Samina (12) lives in a neat and clean one-room house with her mother, father and other family members in Rasoolura, Jandiala Road Sheikhpura. They have no latrine. Her mother does all the cooking in the courtyard. They now have electricity and so have a fan and a tap. She works on a carpet weaving loom in a neighbour's house. Because they are so poor, they are only able to eat meat on the Eid festival. Her favourite food is "Aloo Gobi". They supplement their income with the earnings from keeping a goat and hens. Her father used to punish his children if they asked to go to school as he used to think that education was meant only for well-off families and not for the poor.

Prior to the opening of the Non-formal Education (NFE) Centre, Samina used to work on the loom from 6 in the morning until 8 in the evening with one meal break. Her spare time, if any, was spent in helping her mother in the house. Her other sisters also work on the loom.

Now she and one of her sisters go to the NFE centre in the afternoons from 2 to 5 p.m. She is in class 3 and her sister is studying in class 1. She earns Rs. 100/- per week. All the earnings are kept by her father and he gives her Rs. 5/- as pocket money which she likes to save. She teaches her younger brothers and sisters what she has learnt in the NFE centre. She wants to become a teacher.

Innovative Features

Bunyad's work is an initiative which gives girls an opportunity that the state education system or the private system do not provide. What has made the difference? A number of principles and innovative features are clear:

- ◆ Bunyad focused on a particular target group – out-of-school girls – and designed strategies to address them.
- ◆ Recognizing the extreme poverty of some communities, education was introduced in ways that enabled economic activity to continue, while curbing abuses of child labour. Thus education linked up with vocational skill training.
- ◆ Bunyad worked intensively with communities right from the start to ensure full understanding of what was proposed and put the selection of the teacher in the hands of local people. This early ownership of the initiative meant that communities took ongoing responsibility for the education of their girls. How many projects fail because the so-called beneficiary community has little say and no control over how things will be done?
- ◆ This high level of ownership did not remain a matter of individual commitment. The committees that were set up made the responsibility a collective one, and provided a group of women and men who could serve as advocates for education.
- ◆ Local young women received training and took up the important social role of teaching. They provided role models to the girls of what women could achieve. Given the huge influence that teachers can have on young lives, the impact of their example cannot be underestimated.

Out of the Silence

Carmen Conde Adult Education Association

Cartagena

Murcia, Spain

Cartagena, a city of south-east Spain, has always been a place where cultures have mixed; from the Romans who built a theatre there, the Arabs who left their mark on many buildings to the generations of the local population whose towers and churches dot the city. The same is true today. Cartagena is home to many minorities and immigrants. There are large numbers of North Africans as well as a sizeable Romany population and people of other origins. These groups are among the poorest and most disadvantaged in the city along with other low-income families who have little opportunity to escape the cycle of deprivation. It is among these groups that the founders of the Carmen Conde Adult Education Association saw the need for education.

Beginnings

As the Association began its work, the members realized that there were at least four groups of people who were missing out on education:

- ◆ those who did not obtain a basic education certificate when they were children, mainly for economic reasons. These are generally manual workers, long-term unemployed and young women
- ◆ young people who failed at school and who have rejected anything to do with school. They have low motivation and find it hard to take part in activities
- ◆ ethnic minorities, especially from North Africa, Eastern European and Latin America, who need to learn Spanish or acquire particular skills like a driving licence
- ◆ people who may have no particular need but enjoy learning and have a hunger for knowledge and discovering new things.

However, the Association started off when a few primary school teachers realized that there were areas of Cartagena, and in the wider region of Murcia, where there was a high illiteracy rate and a lack of basic education. They decided to do something about it and began to teach in some of the socially and culturally deprived areas of the city. That was in 1973-1974. They received support from the local parish priest of one of the poorest areas of the city who made the parish hall available as a venue. The teachers realized they would need new methods for this kind of teaching as well as materials appropriate for these groups of learners. They looked to Paulo Freire's adult education approaches and began to develop their own learning materials.

A year or so later, the building they were using was so dilapidated that they had to move. Another parish hall was found, this time in the centre of the city. The following three years were a time of growth in what the association offered with more teachers volunteering to add new courses and events. In addition to regular classes, the Association began to offer talks, workshops and debates. New types of students began to attend, such as young people in danger

of losing their jobs, shop assistants, textile workers and cleaners. They all had one thing in common: the need to obtain basic qualifications.

This could only happen if the Association had some kind of recognition for its courses. The educational authorities granted legal status to the Association as a school attached to the Public Centre of Adult Education which meant that learners could obtain their Primary Certificate. To offer this equivalency, the Association put more emphasis on literacy as well as upgrading methods and resources. It also meant new ways of working, including the participation of learners in managing and developing the programmes. The association also began to form co-operative links with other agencies, for example with the *Escuela Equipo* (Team School) in the Murcia region.

Expansion

Yet again the building the Association used was in need of repair so they had to move once more. This turned out to be positive as it resulted in locating in a more deprived area. With the help of a community association, they moved into the Ensanche area of Cartagena where there are blocks of social welfare housing, built to tackle the problem of cave-dwelling and shanty-town houses. A lot of young working-class families live in this area. Many did not attend school when they were young and they are relatively poor. In the same area many also dropped out of school, resulting in illiteracy both among young people and the middle-aged population.

There are two reasons why this move turned out for the best: first, there was a big increase in demand, and second, the Association obtained permission to run evening classes in the public school. More courses were on offer and their quality increased, when new well-qualified young teachers arrived. They had a vision for the project and injected a great deal of creativity with the development of:

- ◆ specific groups for young unmotivated people
- ◆ workshops on radio, arts, history, women, theatre
- ◆ new courses for those having obtained their basic education certificate, thus launching a self-learning process, for example in environmental care, integral health, drug abuse
- ◆ new teaching materials, internal seminars, summer schools and social events in the area.

There was also geographical expansion into new districts. Ciudad Jardín, Villalba-Llanos and Las 600 were further deprived areas of the city where the association offered

Growth of a movement in Cartagena

1973	Group of primary school teachers recognize lack of basic education – classes start in run-down parish hall of Santa Maria la Vieja
1975	Move to centre of city – parish of Santa Antonio Maria Claret
1973-76	Growth in number of teachers new courses offered
1978	Repairs on building force move to parish of Santa Florentina, a more deprived area
1980	Classes started in Ensanche area – blocks of social welfare housing, using public school 'Carmen Conde'
	Extension to Las 600 area of city
1983	Work on regional adult education plan
1984	Establishes regional adult education association ACEARM, together with other organizations
	Wins fourth prize in 2nd competition of Literacy and Cultural Promotion of Adults of the Ministry of Education
1988	Officially recognized as 'Adult Education Association Carmen Conde'
1989	Requested to begin classes in Ciudad Jardín
1993	Extends work to Villalba-Llanos district
2001	Awarded Miguel Hernández Prize
2002	Awarded the UNESCO Honourable Mention of the King Sejong International Literacy Prize

learning opportunities. Innovative programmes have been added: the 'Driving Licence and Literacy Programme' aims to improve reading and writing skills starting from the learners' interest in obtaining a driving licence, and the 'Access to University' course for those over 25 is increasingly important as Cartagena now has a technical university. Courses in information technology have also been developed.

Values and Culture

Carmen Conde is committed to the values of education and the total development of people enabling them to participate actively in society and to confront the problems of the world around them. Emphasis on creativity helps develop self-confidence, participation, expression and communication, building on the personal interests and concerns of the learner. Activities such as drawing, origami, theatre, cinema and newspapers foster creative abilities.

A number of initiatives offer women special opportunities. Many are middle-aged and often lack self-confidence and have no economic independence. Workshops, collective reading, Women's Day activities and literacy are available and include attention to women with psychological problems, as well as Spanish for immigrant women.

Celebrating Women's Day 2003 "Women for a culture of peace"

- ◆ reading and interpreting pictures
- ◆ reading and critical comment on topical writings
- ◆ watch, comment on and debate a documentary on violence against women, war, etc
- ◆ read and interpret data graphs/charts on relevant issues
- ◆ create murals on the theme
- ◆ disco-forum with songs about war, violence, injustices
- ◆ write press releases in various newspaper styles and send them off
- ◆ reading press articles, classifying them into violent and non-violent
- ◆ using new technologies: make a programme, create a drawing, investigate news on the web, write summaries, find statistics on women's participation
- ◆ dramatising situations of violence and non-violence.

Reflecting the diversity of the backgrounds of learners, the Association fosters cultural pluralism within a context of co-operation and solidarity. This follows Freire's approach of active and personal involvement in the transformation of the world. Some of the communities where the learners live are deprived and dislocated and so special efforts are made to give new value to popular culture. This gives people the freedom to be more creative and to participate with a greater sense of solidarity towards their social environment.

One particular innovation supports literacy and encourages both self-expression and the reading habit: annual literary seminars. These take place at the end of term when four days are devoted to works of Spanish authors such as Gloria Fuentes, Mario Benedetti, Federico García Lorca, Rafael Alberti. Open to any interested person, the seminars let participants discover, analyse, understand and feel the literary tradition, using groups of various levels. Engagement with literature has led to concrete knowledge and creativity, greater interest in writing and a sense of human continuity.

Regional and national networking... and beyond

Building on its work in districts of Cartagena, Carmen Conde collaborates with other agencies in the city, the region and across Spain. It has also developed some international links. It was particularly active in the Murcia region where it helped found the Regional Association of Adult Education Groups (ACEARM) in 1984. Through active involvement in shaping the Regional Plan of Adult Education at the same time, Carmen Conde has continued to take part in projects and initiatives leading to improvements in the quality of adult learning in the region. As part of ACEARM, the Association was instrumental in establishing the National Federation of Adult Education Groups (FAEA) and sits on its governing council.

Through FAEA, Carmen Conde is taking part in a 'Socrates' project of the European Union, together with *Peuple et Culture* (People and Culture, France), National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE, UK), and *Escuela Equipo* (Team School, Spain). The Honourable Mention of the Honourable Mention of the UNESCO International King Sejong Literacy Prize awarded in 2002, conferred international recognition on the Association.

A WOMAN REFLECTS ON ...

"My experience of the Carmen Conde Association"

I began in the Carmen Conde Association with the 97-98 course in order to obtain my school certificate; I was 34 years old, and very insecure because of my lack of knowledge and lack of time, as I was looking after my two sons, a house and my husband was almost always away working, so I didn't get much help.

But the schedule, the motivation and the help of some teachers whom I will never forget enabled me to carry out all those objectives which at first I thought I could never achieve. I joined the drama group, and we succeeded in putting on our play – I can't express in words the personal satisfaction I felt when so many people enjoyed themselves with us in the play, something that would have been impossible without the work and support of the teachers and assistants.

We had literary days. What I liked best was Federico García Lorca, and the most important thing was that I began to know a lot of things I didn't know before. I used to read on the stage, and I could comment on it, whereas two months earlier I had no idea what was the generation of 27 or 98.

Another topic which I really liked was the work we did during each course, regarding Women's Day on 8 March and the reason for celebrating it.

I finished the course with my school certificate, with many friends, feeling secure in myself now that, with new knowledge, I had clear ideas whenever I made an observation of any kind, on literature, politics or society.

I couldn't stop going, so in the following course I enrolled in computing and I'm going on with that. Even in the next course, my intention is to do Professional Training (FP) and get the FP1 certificate in some module if time permits. Never again do I want to feel insignificant next to someone just because they have a career and are more educated.

I think that no person is better than another just because of having had more opportunities. More tolerance, respect and education are needed. It is such opportunities that this association offers us, through teachers and people who devote themselves selflessly in order to give us a culture and a respect for ourselves and for others.

This is only the opinion of a simple learner who feels happy and satisfied to belong to this association.

Teach others – be a learner yourself

Carmen Conde set out to teach others, but has found that teaching requires much learning on the part of the organization. It had to evolve and develop new structures as it began to offer formal qualifications. Learner needs grew and changed, so the Association had to learn new skills, acquire new expertise and find creative solutions. Through its networking it had to come to new understandings of the social situation in Spain, adopt new teaching methodologies, upgrade its teachers' skills and broaden its curriculum. The Association undertakes collaborative research with the Universities of Murcia and Barcelona, evaluation of its own activities, and development of new learning materials. All these lead to questioning approaches, analysing experience and putting new knowledge to work. This organizational learning is currently formalized through working groups for all the staff. Three groups are established: basic training and literacy, Spanish for immigrants, women and literary seminars.

An organization like Carmen Conde faces the challenge of continuing to offer education freely to the most disadvantaged. Here are some of these challenges:

- ◆ making sure that learning approaches and methods are suitable for learners with the greatest difficulties, such as women, people with disabilities, minorities or immigrants. The staff working groups constantly address these issues, reflecting on the best way to help people overcome barriers to becoming all they can be
- ◆ finding funds to keep the courses open. Carmen Conde would like to see a sustainable agreement with local and national government to support its efforts on behalf of the excluded
- ◆ breaking down the barriers between learners and teachers, holding joint groups and classroom assemblies, for example, to promote full participation
- ◆ finding volunteers who can give personal attention to learners who need it
- ◆ updating information technology skills and making sure that teachers have them too
- ◆ holding special courses for 16 to 21-year-olds who have dropped out of school, so that they can find work
- ◆ finding the time to design and update reading matter relevant to the local area, with learning activities for the basic training level.

The Carmen Conde Association has come a long way in its thirty year history, from small and humble beginnings to a professional organization which has achieved national and international recognition. However, the dream remains the same. As the Deputy Co-ordinator said when Carmen Conde received the UNESCO prize, their dream is to “go on serving, with increasing quality, the most disadvantaged groups: young people at risk of exclusion, women, ethnic minorities, immigrants, people with learning difficulties”. The challenge is to see others come to share the same dream.

With Learners and Government

Literacy and Adult Basic Education – LABE

Uganda

Uganda made a huge leap forward in education in 1997 when primary education became free. As thousands more children started school, there was a real sense of hope that at last everyone would have a chance to engage in learning in a structured way. There was hope that literacy would be available to everyone. The situation of those who had not had the chance to acquire literacy was even starker and in 1997 they added up to 37 per cent of the Ugandan population, about seven million adults plus children. Female illiteracy stands at 49 per cent. This is what LABE works to change – to see a literate environment develop in which everyone participates, to enable people to take charge of their own learning and development, and to see parents encouraging children in their education.

But the story of LABE did not start in 1997. Already in 1989 a group of people at Makerere University launched a volunteer initiative to promote literacy. By 1995 this had evolved into a registered national non-governmental organization (NGO) working in partnership with national, local and international NGOs, government departments and local communities.

However, LABE does not itself run literacy programmes or organize literacy classes. Rather, it offers training to other organizations and develops methods and materials for learning and teaching. Through a national network of like-minded NGOs, LABE speaks up for literacy and seeks to influence government policy. In 2002 LABE received international recognition by winning the Noma Prize, one of the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes, for outstanding work in literacy.

LABE's vision and mission

Vision: a better-informed and literate society, able to participate actively and direct its own development.

Mission: to promote literacy and basic education choices for women and men in Uganda by innovative and community initiatives.

Quality literacy

Literacy for adults frequently receives few resources. Consequently the quality of learning can be low. LABE recognized this problem and gives emphasis to increasing the quality of literacy learning. Training is the key.

1. Figures from Uganda poverty Status Report, 2001.

In Uganda many different NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs), as well as faith-based groups, are engaged in literacy work. LABE supports them in improving the quality of their teaching and materials. Literacy instructors receive training in teaching methods so that learning is active, pleasant, fun and productive. The teaching strategies that fulfil these incorporate thoughtful planning, acceptance of all, honesty, sharing, communicating and co-operating. Literacy instructors learn to integrate reading, writing and numeracy skills with a variety of learner-centred interactive methods. These include the use of traditional folklore such as songs and proverbs, games and small group work based on participatory approaches.

However, LABE cannot train all the literacy instructors that Uganda needs! So they developed the 'LitKit' – holistic portable literacy training in a box. This is a resource for trainers of literacy instructors; a set of materials to be adapted to particular needs presented in modules that are highly illustrated and easy to use. The materials include illustrated cards, cartoons, photographs and charts together with an accompanying guidebook. The 'LitKit' benefited from the input of literacy professionals before being put into use.

Joseph Nambago, Literacy Programme Manager in Kamuli district

"I grew up in a small village in Kamuli, deep in the country, called Busoga. At that time my father was very poor and there was always too much work to do in the garden. I was the eldest and they looked to me to get an education and save the family. We are a family of six and unfortunately, as things have turned out, I got my education at their expense. My father could only pay for me.

My sisters were married off a little early. I realize so many girls are like my sisters and these things go on haunting me. I feel as if I am always trying to answer the question: how do I help my sisters, who dropped out of school because of me? That is how it seems to me: I got my education at their expense.

It was after I got my Masters degree at Makerere in community development in 1995 that I got the job here. That was when I first had training in adult literacy. LABE sponsored my training. Before, I had looked at community development as outside literacy, but when I came to adult education I found there are a lot of relationships.

I have a real attachment to this community. The satisfaction I get is when a woman or a man who originally did not know how to write their name at the age of 60 or 65 comes to me proudly and says: 'Look at this. Now I can write my name'.

My friends in Kampala say, where are you working now? And when I say, 'Kamuli', they say, 'where is that?' I say, 'it's with my people. I'm working with my people.'"

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We are together, we are many: adult literacy in rural Uganda.
(WUS(UK) and LABE).

Providing literacy opportunities is not only about teaching. The whole process has to be organized and co-ordinated. So LABE also runs courses in planning and building co-operation, in curriculum development, in producing local language materials and in advocacy. Seminars for partners in a particular district encourage a co-ordinated approach and training for community volunteers draws yet more people to help. With the sharp increase in primary school enrolment in 1997, LABE recognized a new challenge: how to ensure that pupils received a quality education and remain in school? While the government set up several initiatives to address these concerns, they also recognized the role that parents and the community can play. For this reason LABE, in partnership with local government education staff, developed the Family Basic Education Programme (FABE). The aim was to improve the academic performance of lower primary school pupils by increasing the support their parents give them. Teaching child-oriented topics in adult literacy

Winning Stories

classes and holding joint parent-child sessions brought home and school closer together: ‘a family that learns together builds together’. LABE has observed a strong relationship between increased literacy skills on the part of parents and support for their children’s school learning. One of LABE’s key concerns is to see women acquiring literacy as a learning tool. This has resulted in women being the majority of learners in the programmes of LABE’s partners. In the five years up to 2000, 82 per cent of learners were women. In terms of literacy trainers and instructors, 47 per cent of trainees in these categories were women in 2000-2001.

Keeping it relevant

As adults we learn best when learning is linked to our daily lives, to the situation we live in and to topics that interest us. LABE uses this principle in designing literacy. LABE promotes literacy in the local language, the one most accessible to the learner. In Uganda there are about 43 languages, including some which are also spoken in neighbouring countries. In the 12 districts where LABE works some minority languages have very few materials in print, whereas larger language communities have a good number. In the minority communities LABE trains learners and instructors to produce texts in their languages in different formats, comics, posters, booklets and calendars. Where the literate environment is well supplied, learners and instructors are trained to identify materials that already exist and to adapt them to suit literacy learning tasks. The box below gives an example of how LABE used newspapers in various Ugandan languages in this way.

However, learners also want to learn English, the official language of the country and the one in which much of the economic and political life is conducted. LABE has responded to this need by introducing English literacy classes, beginning by training fifteen government trainers and private training instructors. The aim now is to develop a specific curriculum for these courses and to integrate English instruction with initial literacy in Ugandan languages.

Levels	Reading skills	Writing skills	Numeracy skills
Beginners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• look at photos and talk about them; what feelings do they provoke?• look through the paper to identify its major parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• practice copying capital and small letters from the paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• identify page numbers from the paper
Elementary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• read headlines & match them with photos• sort selected headlines according to sections they fall under, e.g. sports, business, home news, ...• home news: identify places mentioned from a map of Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• write various captions for a photo – one funny, one sad, ...• write dates correctly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• find the dates mentioned from a real calendar• identify the price of the different papers
New literates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• what news is most interesting? – read out to others• look at TV/radio section: what will you see/listen to at what time!• look for mentioned countries/cities in the atlas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• filling puzzles• letters of complaint or appreciation to the editor• application letters for jobs advertised	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• forex rate conversions• comparing prices of items for sale in adverts section

1. Source: LABE *The Lit Newsletter*, January 2001.

Shaping policy

Tackling the literacy challenge in Uganda is not just about choosing the right strategies and methods. It is also about mobilizing the efforts of all who can contribute to the work. LABE took the initiative in advocacy for literacy and now spearheads the Uganda National Literacy Network, known as LitNet. LitNet is a coalition of international, national and district NGOs, researchers, educational institutions, religious organizations, media and private literacy businesses, with a common mission of “enhancing a conducive environment for adult basic education”. Initially LitNet saw itself involving everyone interested in adult literacy including governmental departments. However, it evolved into a network of civil society organizations, plus the private sector. In 2002 LitNet had 41 members. As such, it engages in constant dialogue with relevant government departments.

In 2002 the main subject of dialogue was the shape of the National Adult Literacy Strategic Investment Plan (2002/3 – 2006/7), known as NALSIP. The Government developed this Plan and, after representations by LitNet, consulted civil society. Thus LitNet held four workshops and three regional consultations where civil society could come to a common position. In October 2002 LitNet published a full-colour booklet summarizing the views of donor agencies, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and civil society. LitNet agreed with the provisions of the Plan that literacy cuts across several ministries and that quality of learning needs a special focus. On the other hand, LitNet pressed for civil society organizations to play a role in co-ordinating literacy efforts in Uganda since they are key players in providing literacy.

Apart from aiming to unite civil society views on literacy and give input into NALSIP, LitNet also works to ensure that literacy has a strong place in national education policy. It also keeps a database of civil society organizations working in literacy so that they can better network with each other. There are plans for training in advocacy skills with the production of a ‘how-to handbook’ called the ‘Advocacy Kit’.

LitNet faces two particular challenges. First, to mobilize all literacy organizations of civil society in Uganda to play a full and active role in the network and second to give *LitNet* a strong independent profile distinct from LABE which is the host organization and supplies the editor for the LitNet bulletin entitled LitAdo. However, *LitNet* is active not only at national level. Literacy organizations in a number of districts have joined together to lobby councillors and other leaders at that level. In addition, LitNet expects in the future to lobby through the media and via the internet.

VOICES OF LEARNERS

Jamila...

“I am 25 years old and I have three children. I began this class four years ago. I was one of the pioneers when this class began here. It was 15th February 1996. I wanted to get some general knowledge and to learn to read and write, so that I could be free to communicate, to read instructions in the hospital and directions on the vehicles.

Now, I can write my name, where I come from, and my children’s names, in my local language, Lusoga. And we are learning to count in figures. I would like to learn English too.

I had no schooling. I lost my father and mother when I was not yet two. I have no brothers or sisters.

I grow maize, millet, cassava and pumpkin. In classes we learn about growing green vegetables and local spinach and peas”.

Lwasi Muhamadi (34 years old)...

"I am a farmer and have a business as a butcher.

I was born in this area and I never had any formal education. Since I joined the class I have learned to read in Lusoga and Luganda. I read at night at home. If a word skips my mind, I go to the instructor in the morning and ask him. I have ten children. My wife is a learner too".

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Living with change

As well as working on the national literacy plan, the Government of Uganda has taken steps to decentralize its administration. As changes were implemented, LABE needed to pay closer attention to the external environment. This meant re-assessing how to work with district government more closely. As a consequence the role of LABE evolved; moving away from service delivery to taking a more facilitatory role and supporting others to deliver services. These changes had a positive impact in two ways. First, LABE and other civil society organizations were successful in lobbying for their participation in planning and implementing new literacy and adult education policies. Such participation is now written into the national plan. Second, government decentralization means that there is a better chance of adult literacy being integrated into plans at district and sub-county level. Although these changes slowed down training and other activities in the end they were an investment in promoting a more favourable environment for literacy work.

At the district level, LABE worked jointly with local communities and government departments to initiate a detailed literacy planning process. As a pilot project, planning sessions were held in a number of sub-counties and even at the lower level of the parish. These plans then became part of the district-level planning, where resources are allocated. It is government policy to push planning down to local levels, but people have little experience in doing it as yet. For literacy, all kinds of questions arose: what do you put in a plan? What will it cost? Where will the finances come from? What kinds of people are needed? Who needs to know what is going on? Who will give political backing to literacy? The plans suggested answers to these questions and were published for all to see. Thus literacy planning became a capacity-building exercise which will bear fruit in other areas of community life.

In conclusion

LABE clearly has an important role to play in literacy in Uganda. It is by no means the only organization active in adult learning. Indeed it made particular efforts to bring other organizations together to lobby and dialogue with the Government. To do this meant maintaining a flexible approach to what the role of the organization should be, seizing opportunities as they came up. For LABE this meant new priorities and new roles for staff, never a straightforward process. For instance, decentralization led LABE relocate staff from Kampala to the districts. The result is a better climate for adult learning and literacy and that translates ultimately into better opportunities for the women, men and children of Uganda to gain the literacy tools they need to sustain their own learning.

Wake Up to Literacy and Development!

The PANUKA Trust

Zambia

PANUKA means 'wake up' in the Tonga language of southern Zambia, a name chosen to show that rural women have the potential to change their situation and improve their lives. Literacy was the starting point which led to new hope in a desperate situation and to new chances where luck seemed to have run out.

The development statistics for Zambia in the 1980s and 1990s make depressing reading. Almost all the indicators were in decline according to the Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper produced in 2000:

- ◆ Economically GDP per capita fell by a third from US\$438 in 1975 to US\$300 in 1997 and deep poverty affects people in rural areas: almost 90 per cent of small-scale rural farmers fall into that category. Poverty levels are rising, particularly among female-headed households.
- ◆ Life expectancy, due to the ravages of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other health issues, fell to only 40 years in 1999, and has now fallen to 37 years.
- ◆ Malnutrition is on the increase, with over 50 per cent of Zambian children malnourished or stunted in their growth.
- ◆ Between 1992 and 1996 both child and infant mortality increased from 191 and 107 in 1992 to 197 and 109 in 1996 per 1,000 live births respectively.

Zambia's Southern Province, where PANUKA is at work, is no exception. The area relies on subsistence agriculture and has been badly affected by persistent drought and animal disease which has wiped out the cattle. In common with many rural areas, facilities and social services are scarce or remote. There is no electricity or water supply, the nearest health clinic is 12 km away, and the closest hospital 60 km from the ten villages which make up the Nkandela settlement. Nkandela lies 30 km to the west of the town of Pemba, which is situated 230 km south of the capital, Lusaka.

The PANUKA Trust was founded as a community-based organization in 1997 as a way of making a difference to the poverty, isolation and hopelessness of the situation.

Women for rural development

There are particular reasons why PANUKA chose to work with women in the Nkandela area. In the Southern Province of Zambia, where polygamous marriage is practised to a great extent, a man may marry as many as five wives or even more. This became common during the colonial era when maize farming was introduced, increasing the demand for family labour. Along with cattle rearing, this gave an income to the region and it became known as the nation's maize belt. Polygamous marriage continued to grow, for reasons of prestige as well as for economic reasons.

In a polygamous marriage, the wives are not allowed to own assets, have no access to land and require permission if they want to engage themselves in a business venture. With an average of six children per wife, there will be about thirty children plus a number from other mistresses in such a family. Looking after such a big family becomes impossible for any man, even more so as cattle disease and drought have reduced food supply and slashed family income. As a result, with a lot of hardship, women are left to fend for their children and must also provide for their husband.

Educating children was never regarded as a priority and this resulted in large families with little education or literacy skills. Girls and women bore the burden of producing food in increasingly difficult circumstances, as well as carrying out the usual household duties, so they were the least likely to go to school or to benefit from any learning opportunities.

Against this background, PANUKA's main aim is to initiate village-based women's literacy centres in order to give women and girls a chance to recover their lost educational opportunities. In spite of the huge challenges facing such a venture in this part of Zambia, PANUKA set some ambitious goals:

- ◆ To achieve 85 per cent literacy rates among rural women of the Southern Province by 2020.
- ◆ To professionally manage a village-based training centre for human resource development and capacity-building.
- ◆ To facilitate the formation of a Women's Literacy and Basic Education Network.
- ◆ To develop long-term partnerships with donors committed to the improvement of livelihoods of rural women and children.
- ◆ To increase staff and organizational capacity in management and evaluation.

It is notable that PANUKA's literacy goals go beyond the 2015 horizon of the *Education for All Dakar*¹ targets, an indication both of the difficulty of the challenge and the determination to make a real difference.

PANUKA's vision and mission

Vision: Gender-sensitive rural communities where females and males enjoy equal opportunities, liberty, dignity and peace.

Mission: To develop human resources for the promotion of a mass rural women's literacy education campaign.

Getting started

PANUKA started by constructing a building to accommodate literacy groups and to provide a focal point for learning. Women's functional literacy activities started in 1999 with more than 200 women from the Nkandela area. An adult education specialist from the University of Zambia trained three women and one man as literacy facilitators who organized instruction four days a week for two hours each day in the afternoons. The programme later extended to four new areas. All the participants are women, aged between 15 and 75 years. The content of the programme comprized three elements:

1. UNESCO World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 2000.

- ◆ Reading, writing and numeracy
- ◆ Health education, including issues such as water and sanitation, nutrition, HIV/AIDS, alcohol/drug/substance abuse, and sexual/reproductive health.
- ◆ Leadership skills

PANUKA recognized that learners had different needs, particularly as regards exposure to previous schooling and knowledge of English as a second language. Since there are no agreed national standards in adult education, PANUKA divided learners into three groups, based on individual assessment tests:

- ◆ *Group 1:* participants not able to read or write, so accessing literacy skills for the first time, through the mother tongue. Learners in this group were mostly elderly women and young mothers between 15 and 30 years old.
- ◆ *Group 2:* participants are able to read and write in the mother tongue and have a basic knowledge of English, up to grade 3 level. This was the largest group.
- ◆ *Group 3:* participants work at the level of grades 7 to 9, with excellent mother tongue literacy skills and a good command of English.

Over the six years of implementing this programme, PANUKA has identified some specific problems and constraints. In terms of the larger environment, the work has suffered from the lack of an overall national policy on adult education, resulting in weak government commitment to improving adult learning and the absence of any co-ordinating body. In addition, donors have not shown strong commitment to support adult literacy efforts. On the ground, limiting factors included a lack of skilled personnel and materials.

Some women were concerned that their children were left at home when they came to take part in the literacy groups. These children, of nine years of age or above, had dropped out of school for a variety of reasons. In order to give them a new chance, community school classes began, using the same building in the morning as the adult literacy groups used in the afternoon. A further community initiative under consideration is to open a pre-school component for parents and children in the government school situated next door to the literacy facility.

The four trained literacy facilitators worked with neighbouring communities to open their own literacy centres. This created further training needs and led to workshops in instructional techniques in functional literacy. Building capacity and extending training have become a priority. In response, PANUKA has created a Rural Women's Development and Education Training Institute. This provides a centre to produce materials, hold training events, support the development of the 'Women's Education Revolution Network in Africa' (WERNA), mobilize communities and develop health and HIV/AIDS awareness strategies. As a resource centre for rural women, it also supports the improvement of educational opportunities for rural children.

Beyond literacy

It soon emerged that literacy on its own was no solution to the problems of improving the quality of life for rural women. This became clear from the attendance at the literacy groups. In the dry season between July and December the food supply becomes very scarce. Women take every opportunity to increase their income in order to buy food, finding any possible means to do so. Thus it became essential to include learning on income-generation. Pig breeding, vegetable gardening and cereal/crop growing became elements of PANUKA's programme.

- ◆ With assistance from the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), 44 women received materials to construct pigpens; each woman received

one or two sows, with two boars for the whole community. However, difficulties in feeding the animals during periods of drought meant that most died and some were sold, being replaced with goats.

- ◆ Vegetable gardening benefited 26 women who were, supplied with treadle pumps for irrigation, seeds and a donkey for transport. A water supply was developed by renovating an old dam, since boreholes are reserved for domestic use in the condition of persistent drought. While PANUKA fought for and obtained government assistance in rehabilitating the dam, ongoing conditions of drought meant that it has never filled up.
- ◆ Cereals and other crops are already cultivated in the area, but the provision of more seeds was intended to boost production for human consumption and animal fodder. Maize, sorghum, groundnut, cowpea and sunflower seeds were distributed to more than 100 women. The failure of the rains in 2001-2002 in the whole of the southern African region meant that there was no yield from the crops.

Of these three projects, the only sustainable improvement was the use of donkeys for transport. Able to survive through the drought, women use them for transporting water, firewood, relief food and other products, instead of having to carry them on their heads. The Zambian Ministry of Agriculture gave the women involved two weeks of training in donkey management.

A matter of partnership

In a resource-poor environment like Zambia, PANUKA needed to develop strong partnerships. This was all the more necessary because their own staff consisted entirely of volunteers: a co-ordinator, 20 literacy facilitators (three of whom were women) and five area co-ordinators. Partnerships depended on clear and feasible plans, realistic targets and an overall vision which was relevant to the needs of rural women. PANUKA's networking efforts brought in a wide range of partners to support different aspects of its programme:

- ◆ The Dutch Embassy assisted with the construction of a classroom block;
- ◆ The United States Embassy funded a bakery/shop building and an open market;
- ◆ GTZ¹ supported the training of literacy facilitators;
- ◆ FAO provided inputs for the pig breeding and gardening projects;
- ◆ The Japanese Embassy helped with the construction costs of the Training Institute.

The Noma Literacy Prize, awarded by UNESCO to PANUKA in 2003, was a further recognition of PANUKA's work and an endorsement of their vision of a literate and learning rural society.

Linking literacy and development

PANUKA has described women's education as the 'missing link' in sustainable development. And it is indeed a link – between the potential of rural women and the new opportunities they can create. PANUKA's work shows clearly that literacy on its own does not achieve the goal of improving the quality of life. Yet without literacy, there is no new confidence to act, no chance to make connections, no possibility to participate fully in wider society. Literacy is the communication

1. Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (Association for Technical Co-operation).

tool which women use to claim their rightful place and the necessary resources in the wider environment. It is significant that PANUKA's process started with literacy, but did not stop there. As new needs emerged, the programme was flexible enough to create new opportunities and add further learning options. The confidence women gained through literacy learning led them to take bolder initiatives, to start bigger projects, to broaden their goals for their community – in short, to look to new horizons and believe that a better world is possible!

“Sustainable development is about how people think, what they do and how they do it. Therefore the focus for social development is people – people who have a voice.”

*Viness Lourens Mangoye
President
PANUKA Trust*

Literacy that Functions Well

Adult Literacy Organization (ALOZ)

Zimbabwe

Literacy that functions well is relevant and makes an impact on learners' lives. It enables people to take a greater part in communication in their society and to improve the quality of their lives. It gives new chances to share and receive information. How far this actually happens depends on whether literacy is fully connected with key concerns in people's lives. Literacy has no meaning apart from what it enables communities and individuals to do better. In Zimbabwe the overall literacy rate is 88.7 per cent (women 84.6 per cent, men 92.8 per cent), although rates in rural areas are lower. The Adult Literacy Organization of Zimbabwe (ALOZ) works towards the goal of literacy that functions well in people's lives especially those who are disadvantaged in their opportunities: particularly rural women, unschooled adults and those infected with the HIV/AIDS virus. It does so not by engaging directly in instruction or organizing classes, but by developing partnerships with church organizations, government ministries, industry, women's clubs and urban and district councils. These partnerships aim to ensure that literacy instruction is effective and of high quality.

Prior to independence in 1980, the colonial government never adopted a policy of adult literacy. Government expenditure on adult education was seen as being wasteful, eating into the resources of children's formal education. Due to the non-supportive stance of colonial policy, a few interested individuals undertook to begin adult literacy work. In 1970 they formed a local non-governmental organization (NGO) called Adult Literacy Organization of Rhodesia (ALOR) which became the Adult Literacy Organization of Zimbabwe (ALOZ) in 1980. Since then ALOZ has co-operated with the government and with international agencies to enhance literacy opportunities throughout the country. The recent economic and political difficulties in Zimbabwe have not only reduced partnership with government to almost zero, but have drastically curtailed the scope of what ALOZ is able to do. Travel to rural areas, where literacy needs are greatest, is affected particularly badly and high inflation has eaten into resources.

Focus on rural women

ALOZ sees education as one way of empowering women to improve their livelihood and the quality of their lives. Non-formal education (NFE) is more accessible and more available to poor, non-literate women in rural areas which are remote from the centres of population and it is a means of strengthening women's knowledge and skills to cope with their multi-faceted tasks and their difficult conditions. To tackle this challenge ALOZ set up a Functional Literacy Programme (FLIP) in 2000 with the twin goals of poverty reduction and women's empowerment. It is easy to talk of such goals in vague and unmeasurable terms so the programme laid out specific aspects of women's lives as areas to which literacy ought to contribute:

In terms of poverty reduction:

- ◆ apply literacy to everyday life, particularly for economic benefit

- ◆ record transactions
- ◆ make home budgets
- ◆ operate savings accounts
- ◆ understand and keep simple accounts
- ◆ measure and calculate
- ◆ estimate costs
- ◆ follow simple instructions.

For empowerment women need to:

- ◆ make decisions affecting their everyday lives
- ◆ be involved in decisions affecting family and children
- ◆ increase personal income and retain control over it
- ◆ take part in community, civic and school parent-teacher activities
- ◆ understand and take part in governance of organizations.

The role of ALOZ was to plan the programme, to train the tutors and to supervise implementation. This included follow-up visits, in-service training and evaluating learners. The report of the project presents a chart of individual women learners, showing how their situation has changed; the following is an extract:

Extract from Evaluation Report of Functional Literacy Programme

Name	Centre	Before	Learners' achievements
Mrs Mapite	Njovo Matsikidze Mutenda	The husband took advantage of her illiteracy and gave her only Z\$10.00. She was not aware of how insufficient the money was and was content with that.	She is very happy because she now knows how much money she needs to buy this and that. She can tell her husband how much money she needs to buy things.
Mrs Zvarimwa		Was illiterate.	Has changed life style. Is now hygienic. Now has a garden and no longer wastes money buying unnecessary things.
Mrs Manatsa		Has never been to school. Used to travel with someone for company.	Is now literate. Can now travel on her own and can read and identify house numbers in town.

Reports from the three programme areas, Binga, Masvingo and Nyanga, speak of the impact of the very first learning session where women learnt to sign their names and to read bus destinations and street signs. Further learning resulted in practical action: participation in savings clubs with well-kept written records, income-generating projects where women calculate costs and benefits, helping children with their school work, gaining confidence to participate in community organizations and take leadership roles. Gender relations changed as women took control of finances and challenged their husband's dominance.

Winning Stories

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ALoz has developed a practical system using the multifaceted interests of women included in the specially written primers. Learners become involved, make decisions, and plan for their own individual or group projects. But the basis is an efficient ability to read, write and calculate. They become empowered to break the cycle of poverty.

Women's lives are changed in Masvingo, Zimbabwe...

"I was blind but now I can see. I entered a dry cleaner, I asked for a loaf of bread. The man there told me, 'Woman, are you mad? Can't you see there are clothes here?' I was embarrassed and walked out. But now my eyes have opened. I can read and write. Thank you FLIP". Mrs Man'ombe, Matsikidze School.

"I was illiterate because of culture. My father educated boys only. Thank you FLIP. Now I can write to my children asking for assistance. I was privileged to attend an organic workshop. I got skills I am now implementing and use natural manure instead of fertilizers. I look forward to harvest during this drought. I now have knowledge of herbs". Mrs Manyangadze, Chikava School.

"My husband used to write love letters to local women. And I was ordered to deliver the letters. Innocently I delivered them to girlfriends with money enclosed. When I was able to read and write I became suspicious about my deliveries. I opened the letter, Z\$500 dropped from the envelope. I was forced to read the letter. And surely it was a letter to a girlfriend. I kept the letter and used the money. After a long silence my husband finally discovered that I had opened the letter. He asked me about it, then I challenged him. He kept quiet and realized that I was now literate and empowered."

Mrs Matorere, Matsikidze School.

Literacy and HIV/AIDS

Zimbabwe as a nation has become acutely aware of the devastating effects of the growing HIV/AIDS pandemic, although it was ignored for a number of years. At the end of 2001 Zimbabwe had an HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of 34 per cent, with women making up 60 per cent of cases and a total of 2 million infected adults. Because of this very serious situation, life expectancy will drop from 66 years (1997) to an estimated 35 years by 2010. Some 780,000 children under 15 have become orphans because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

This situation impacts every aspect of life and ALOZ is no exception. It has meant absent learners as they lost interest or were unable to continue, either because they were infected or because they were caring for a person with the virus. Many simply started to feel hopeless, as most people in Zimbabwe see HIV/AIDS as a fairly immediate death sentence, since there is no known cure. In addition to loss of a family member, there is a heavy impact on the economic status of the family, with job loss, endless cost of medicines and treatment, as well as the emotional and mental strain of caring for a desperately ill person. Children are taken out of school, particularly girls, and the cycle of poverty and deprivation deepens. Where HIV/AIDS is suspected, despair quickly sets in.

This spurred ALOZ to take some specific steps. Since the use of expensive drugs is out of the question, even if they were available, ALOZ teamed up with another NGO to develop a holistic approach to alleviating suffering and working with people so that they could live positively with HIV/AIDS. Awareness and skills training aimed to demonstrate that healthy nutrition could improve life quality and life expectancy. The first step was training for ALOZ staff, covering HIV survival skills and organic growing. They then went to affected areas with a message of hope and practical instruction in growing nutritious food. This had the additional impact of improving food security in rural areas threatened with famine conditions. Other family members, particularly chil-

dren, benefited from the improved diet. Extending the meaningful life of those with HIV enables them to continue contributing to the family welfare and economy and permits children to grow up with parents and siblings.

Working for quality literacy

Effective literacy acquisition and its relevant use depend to a large extent on the quality of instruction. Learners everywhere respond to a good instructor, one who can enable the learner to become autonomous in putting her or his new learning to work. This has required able literacy tutors who effectively become social leaders in their communities. ALOZ provides an intensive course, supervision, annual refresher course, monitoring and helps any NGO interested in providing literacy in their own programmes. In summary, the contribution of ALOZ to high-quality literacy is to:

- ◆ train adult literacy tutors
- ◆ provide supervisory services for literacy programmes
- ◆ produce reading materials for the programmes.

The training of tutors is done through five schemes. Scheme A involves training of tutors for illiterates and semi-illiterates and Scheme B offers training in commerce and industry. The other three training schemes offer further training for those already involved in literacy instruction, as follows:

Scheme	Target Group	Objectives	Content	Duration
Scheme C	Adult literacy tutors	To equip with principles of adult learning within a functional literacy approach	Teaching skills and management of learning; topics in gender, human rights, poverty, HIV/AIDS, family planning	9 weeks, or 3 x 3 weeks
Scheme D	Experienced adult literacy tutors	To equip tutors to monitor and supervise other tutors	Basic monitoring and evaluation skills	not indicated
Scheme E	Adult literacy tutors and monitors	To share experiences, reinforce skills and concepts, introduce new adult education practices and ideas, discuss and resolve common problems	Participatory discussion and activities on existing skills and concepts, new methods and practices; papers by relevant experts	1 week

ALOZ struggled against the usual method of learning which most often meant that the teacher simply asked learners to “Repeat after me...”. Instead, ALOZ promotes participatory methods, such as Participatory Rural Appraisal and Reflect, which enable the learner to ask questions, to reflect and to analyse. Learning to read and write becomes active training in critical thinking. Using pictures of relevant situations with initial learners, the literacy workers pose a series of targeted questions:

Participants’ recognition: *What do you see happening here?*

Description: *Why is it happening?*

Relevance: *Does this happen in our own situation? And how?*

Analysis: *Why does this happen?*

Cause: *What are the causes of the problem?*

Solutions: *What can we do about it?*

Action: *Who will do what? Where? When? How?*

Winning Stories

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This scheme gives literacy tutors a structure which will give opportunity for interaction with the learners and feedback from them. It also allows for a variety of learning methods: discussion, drama, writing, reading and others. Learners build on their own knowledge of the local situation, affirming and validating their life experiences. ALOZ is also involved in the development of appropriate functional literacy and post-literacy materials in Shona, English and Ndebele, also publishing and distributing the materials to the various literacy centres at subsidized cost. From 2000 to 2002, ALOZ distributed 20,670 pieces of reading material. However, more recently their publishing and distribution exercise has been hampered by lack of funds.

ALOZ keeps track of progress in all the programmes it supports. Monitoring literacy is part of its core activities. In 2001, for example, ALOZ made monitoring visits to 67 literacy centres around the country, where a total of 1,550 learners were enrolled.

Functioning well into the future

ALOZ has been part of adult literacy for more than 30 years and each year numbers of learners have found new opportunities, as they have been able to take part in the written communication practices that surround them. The focus on functional uses of literacy has meant new vocational and income-generating possibilities. But it is not literacy alone that enables such progress for individuals and communities. Favourable policies, supportive institutions and available resources are all part of the picture. Zimbabwe is going through hard times – HIV/AIDS, the threat of famine, unstable institutions, social disruption and a crumbling economy. These hardships make it arduous both to instruct and to learn, and it makes forward planning almost impossible. Nevertheless, the literacy competence which individuals and communities now have is a tool to use in any circumstance, now and in the future.

Conclusion

ALOZ experience has shown that partnerships with all interested parties is, not only an important but an essential factor for the success of any programme, literacy or otherwise. This partnership also includes the learners themselves whose participation in the planning of and decision-making within their own particular group is fundamental as is the high quality training of tutors and instructors. This type of partnership with grassroots level organizations has ensured effectiveness of ALOZ