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Organización
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para la Educación,
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Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

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"Alternative Community Education with T'boli Women
And Community in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato"



United Nations Literacy Decade

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Presented at the UNESCO sub-regional Conference *Addressing Literacy Challenges in East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific: Building Partnerships and Promoting Innovative Approaches*. (31 July - 1 August 2007, Beijing, China)

Programme name: Alternative Community Education with T'boli Women and Community in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato

Implemented by: Popular Education for People's Empowerment (PEPE)

Basic facts

Country: Philippines

Starting year: 2005

Outreach: 68

Target Population: illiterate T'boli girls and women

Language of instruction: T'boli is used by the local educators while the mentors use the regional language Ilonggo and the national language Filipino

Operating in: Lake Sebu, South Cotabato.

Main Funding: Oxfam Great Britain

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Brief Description

The programme is designed to help women acquire basic literacy skills and focuses on three major themes: Health and Nutrition, Culture and Family Relations and Livelihoods.

Rationale

The T'boli are indigenous people living in Mindanao in poor living conditions with low income and lack of access to health care. T'Boli women are often married early and deprived of access to full basic education. Significant changes nowadays alter the indigenous people's way of life and traditional ways of education. With the coming of migrants, new ideas on food, health and nutrition were introduced that affected

T'boli's traditional health beliefs, food patterns and traditional ways of healing. Illnesses like lung infections, dengue, pneumonia, measles and others became prevalent. In addition, the poor access to education affects the ability of the T'boli to access important information on health.

Objectives

The program aims at:

- Implementing appropriate learning programs addressing the functional literacy needs of girls and women who were not able to finish basic education;
- Developing education programs towards enriching contemporary continuity of indigenous knowledge system and beliefs amid T'boli's appropriation of modern lifeways;
- Contribute to the advocacy for recognition of indigenous knowledge system towards government's affirmative actions for indigenous education all over the Philippines;
- Continuously developing the capacities of local educators to conceptualize, implement and manage their own community education programs;
- Working in partnership with local government to access resources for community education.

Conceptual Model and Methodology

For all three themes, a curriculum and lesson plans were developed based on a combination of indigenous knowledge systems of the community and relevant modern knowledge. The curriculum on Health and Nutrition combines traditional T'boli remedies, Asian approaches to health and knowledge on affordable nutrition. In addition to the literacy classes and in order to demonstrate that proper nutrition and remedies can be harnessed in one's own backyard, Learning Gardens are set up both as an awareness and literacy tool. Tags are put near each plant using T'boli terms to encourage neo-literates to practice reading and correlating the words to the plant. In addition, the programme features cooking indigenous vegetables and preparing herbal remedies. Women are encouraged to use natural remedies for cough and colds.

Another effective methodology is the drawing-reflection sessions. Women find it difficult to draw but when they are encouraged to do so, and by thinking about their experiences and how to put them into symbols and drawings, they are able to reflect in the process. Drawings also put the attention of listeners to the drawing instead of the participant, thus making it easier for women to share even bitter experiences. Drawing-reflection, as with the other method, has to be guided by clear yet substantive guide questions.

Innovative features

The success of PEPE's community education programme in the T'boli community draws from the methodology used which trains women from the community to become trainers for other women and from the strong attention to culturally relevant contents through a combination of indigenous knowledge systems and modern health care.

Community education encourages facilitators and learners to reflect on the traditions and belief systems - the positive aspects that will enrich their identity as T'boli and to proactively using these in the learning sessions while reflecting on beliefs that they think are detrimental to their development as individuals and as members of the community. Modern beliefs and life ways (e.g. the introduction of formula milk, junk foods in the community) are discussed in parallel in order to confront them and deal with them critically instead of taking them on passively.