

Knowing and doing

Literacy for women

Krystyna Chlebowska



U N E S C O

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The author is responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this book and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

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Preface

The World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien (Thailand) in 1990, sounded a note of alarm when it stressed the urgent need to reduce illiteracy among women. Women account for more than half of the world's illiterates, still outnumbering men. In response, UNESCO is now more determined than ever to make women's literacy one of the top priorities of its programmes.

What role can literacy play in the empowerment of women? How can they be given literacy training? Is a specific approach necessary? What would be its goals? How could they be achieved?

These are the questions which this essay sets out to answer in straightforward and practical terms. It is primarily addressed to those directly engaged in the difficult and often thankless task of providing literacy training for women, as well as to all those, men and women alike, who may still not be altogether convinced of the importance of this task.

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Foreword

Literacy training for women is in very many instances not distinguished from the training provided for mixed groups. Learning methods and the contents of literacy training materials are generally designed for a public of male and female adults alike. Even in literacy groups where there are more women than men or in groups composed exclusively of women, little heed is paid to the specific needs and interests of women learners.

It is true that literacy training is still, all too often, education's poor relation. Methods and programmes specifically geared to the purpose are seen by most countries as a luxury which they cannot afford. The population of illiterates, most of whom are poor, often have no choice of textbooks or instructors, or the way in which they are taught. Countless literacy groups possess a single textbook that is handled with the utmost care and is jealously preserved by schoolteachers who volunteer, or are paid, to give up part of their time after school to teaching parents to read and write.

It can be seen, from a quick glance at the breakdown of statistics, that one adult women out of three can neither read nor write and that illiteracy is still more widespread among women than among men. One of the reasons for this situation is the feminine dimension of illiteracy, to which it has not been possible to find an answer. The different methods adopted for combating illiteracy generally conceal the differences in gender roles

and the inequalities to which they give rise, invariably working to the disadvantage of women.

The time has come for women illiterates to be recognized first and foremost as women, with all the specific connotations that this implies. Women are primarily seen as child-bearers, but they have to come out of their ghettos and win recognition as producers *per se* who make a major contribution to the prosperity of nations, communities and families. They also have to win acceptance of their rights: to equality, to independence, to active participation – along with men – in the development of society, in decision-making and in exercising the power they are denied. As they become aware of their own potentialities, their aim should be to join in political, economic and social life on an equal footing with men.

Education is the surest way of making it possible for women to acquire the knowledge, know-how and life skills – in other words the confidence, independent outlook and self-reliance – necessary for them to be able to define themselves as social beings. Literacy is the decisive stage in this process. Because of its flexibility, its scope for adaptation and the practical results that can be achieved in a relatively short space of time, adult education is always a harbinger of change. It can help women to strengthen their position in society, contribute to the development process and ensure that they too can exert control over it.

Fresh thought needs to be given to what is generally current practice in literacy training for women, pushing it beyond the mere acquisition of straightforward reading and writing skills, and redefining it on the basis of more equitable and democratic criteria. A new approach to literacy would acknowledge the right of women to equality, with due regard for the specific nature and wide variety of their roles and their creative potential; it would help them to win the recognition and respect to which they are entitled and which modernization may have taken away from them. Teaching methods would come up with approaches geared to the aspirations of adult women, catering for their demands for greater justice and for their need to play an active part not only within the family but in society and public and political life generally.

In this connection, three key components of literacy programmes or projects can be defined:

1. Learning reading, writing and arithmetic. This component is common to both men and women; it affords access to skills, enhances everyday activities and develops critical faculties. This stage is the springboard for all further educational endeavours.
2. Acquiring useful functional skills, with the aim of improving production capacities, increasing income and enabling people to live better or even just to survive. This aspect of literacy training is particularly important for women as prospective producers, whether they are recognized as such or not. It is especially true of women in rural areas, who form the bulk of illiterates in the developing countries and who are involved in many aspects of agricultural production.
3. Making women aware of their condition and of the rights, authority, responsibilities and power of which they have been generally deprived. This is instrumental in fostering or restoring their self-confidence and in helping to convince them of their own value and their ability to take part in public life. It is the most important way in which literacy can have a liberating effect and is highly relevant to all illiterate or newly literate women. It calls for careful thought and an effort of critical analysis on the part of women learners, prompting them to query what they are taught in the light of their aspirations, and generating an endogenous socio-cultural awareness rooted in their real-life experience and environment.

This essay is addressed to all those engaging in literacy training for women. It proposes the implementation of the principles laid down by the different United Nations agencies to integrate the gender issue into development programmes and projects. It is based on UNESCO's many years' experience in literacy training, especially for women. Its aim is not to put forward models but rather to endeavour to demonstrate how literacy training can help to empower women so that they may lead fuller lives, rediscover and enhance their creative potential, and demand the right to make use of that potential on a par with men.

The planning stage

Few countries have set up and applied a national literacy policy, and even fewer have made it plain that they are politically committed to literacy for women and have drawn up a strategy for the purpose.

It is only recently that illiterate women as a target population have become a focus of interest or even a source of concern to decision-makers. However, since the Jomtien conference, changes in attitudes to education for women can be seen to have emerged. Those in charge of planning and education are attaching increasing importance to the problem of illiteracy among women and are more inclined to propose appropriate solutions in national development plans. Yet women's literacy programmes and projects are still inadequate when one considers the rise in the number of illiterate people in the world.

Planning literacy training is not an easy task. Non-formal education, as its name suggests, implies flexibility, diversity and imaginativeness. Apart from a handful of national campaigns launched in connection with far-reaching social and political transformations, literacy training has often consisted of one-off activities organized by associations and groups which, while admittedly being motivated, have in most cases only limited technical resources and funds at their disposal. With very few exceptions, literacy for women is hardly ever visualized as being a specific national goal.

Quite apart from the lack of interest or the feelings of helplessness

displayed by political leaders at the enormity of the task, there is a variety of reasons why literacy for women remains a dead letter. In the first place, the insufficiency of national budgets in the developing countries prevents them funding literacy activities, whether for men or for women. In this connection, it might be hoped that donors would take a greater interest in literacy training, and that countries and international organizations show more conviction in requesting funds for this purpose. Indeed, for some time now, especially since the Jomtien conference, a number of more enlightened donors are expressing greater interest in the funding of literacy projects, particularly those specifically addressed to women. By contrast, other funding sources continue to give preference to the formal sector and, in their support for Education for All, are attaching priority to primary education. Yet the Jomtien conference recommended strategies which combined the eradication of illiteracy and the universalization of primary education as the starting-point for national actions on behalf of Education for All. This would be a two-pronged strategy embracing education for both children and adults, including girls and their mothers, by linking formal and non-formal education.

Another reason why literacy for women is seldom one of the priorities of national development plans lies in lack of familiarity with women's literacy training methods. Teaching practices are improvised with varying degrees of success, women are passed over when it comes to training literacy personnel and there are insufficient literacy teaching materials specifically designed for a female public.

It is for the individual countries to define their own approach to combating illiteracy, especially of women, in the light of their development goals and the resources they have available. Even so, some measures can make it easier to embark on activities aimed at providing literacy training for women.

The very first step required is for national authorities to show their political determination to promote education for girls and women by passing laws and issuing administrative directives, and by backing up these dispositions through the allocation of human and financial

resources for the purpose. Another vital step would be to make primary education compulsory and free, and to encourage the enrolment of girls in school. From that point onwards, there is a more realistic prospect of successfully developing literacy training for women. Once the donors' trust has been won, they will be more readily convinced of the genuineness of a country's commitment and of the reasons for providing financial support.

As a general rule, women in positions of power are responsive to the need to improve the status of women in their countries, especially among the poorest sections of the population. Hence, it is important for a larger number of women to play a more active part in decision-making fora. They should be able to express themselves in favour of equality, especially when relevant policies and strategies on women's literacy are being laid down, and when the necessary credits have to be found in the national budget. In the planning process, the presence of high-level women specialists guarantees that the problems of women, and their needs and views, will really be taken into account, and that action to remedy illiteracy among women will be envisaged at all levels: in national development plans, the programmes and budgets of international and bilateral co-operation agencies, donor round-tables, sectoral studies on education and national Education for All strategies.

Larger numbers of girls should accordingly be afforded access to studies that will fit them for future high-level managerial and decision-making responsibilities. For the moment, they are generally directed towards courses which exclude them from the streams leading to positions as administrators, planners or economists – streams that are largely followed by boys. All possible means have to be used to encourage girls to engage in university studies in so-called 'male' fields, to support them when they take up positions of responsibility which correspond to their qualifications and skills, and to help them make their careers in those fields.

The scarcity of statistics on the real situation as regards illiteracy makes the task of planners even more difficult. There is a lack of key data broken down by gender, region, ethnic, linguistic and socio-cultural

groups, as well as by age-groups and occupations. Under these conditions, the planning of any literacy programme for women is a real feat. The collection of data, differentiated by gender at least, is an essential prerequisite for ensuring the success of literacy operations. In this connection, it is necessary to train personnel, including women, in surveying, interviewing and data-analysis techniques.

The decentralization of literacy operations and their integration into regional or local development programmes will encourage local initiatives and make for more independent action, closer identification of the needs and features of the different social groups, and easier collection of more reliable data. At present, there are very few countries where decentralization is a widespread practice. The planning process seldom involves local leaders or people with first-hand experience; it remains rather a responsibility discharged chiefly through country-wide institutions. Although the active participation of women at all levels is a major asset for the design and implementation of programmes for extending literacy among their sex, they themselves are usually left out of the process.

This situation is particularly prejudicial to women since politicians, most of whom are men, are often not familiar with women's issues or not convinced of their importance. They explain away this shortcoming by citing the often-justified need to give preference to those aspects of national development that are regarded as having priority, such as unemployment, public indebtedness and the problems of food production. In most cases, education policies betray a patent lack of interest in, and ignorance of, women's potentialities, or a conscious or unconscious refusal to mobilize them in a bid to promote equality. Women's issues do not feature anywhere in these policies or are only touched on in the sort of vague terms used to proclaim high-sounding intentions which never see the light of day.

Even so, in various countries mechanisms are clearly being developed to bring women's issues into focus and to integrate the female dimension into development plans. Divisions, sections and groups specifically responsible for the education of girls and women are being

set up in ministries. There is an increasingly large number of offices, organizations and independent or semi-independent commissions with the requisite authority and appropriate resources to ensure that women's education is given closer attention by decision-makers.

Well-designed planning implies the adoption of new concepts for development, productivity and welfare which make allowance for the needs voiced by women, stimulating their desire for change, releasing the economic and social potential represented by their experience and asserting their independence and autonomy.

Awareness campaigns

Fostering awareness of the importance of literacy represents a fundamental stage in setting up women's literacy activities. Its purpose is to ensure that the thrust and goals or the specific aspects of literacy training are made known and are understood, and to create a climate and set of circumstances conducive to the work entailed.

First and foremost, the messages should be addressed to those actually involved, in other words to illiterate women. The campaigns should also be directed at the general public, at all those in direct contact with women in their home environment and at decision-makers at all levels.

Through actions aimed at briefing and persuading, and through the audio-visual media or personal contacts, women should be made aware of the part literacy can play in changing their lives and improving their living conditions. These actions should shed light on the status of women, while being careful to avoid projecting an image confined to their roles as wives and mothers. They should lay stress on the inequalities and discrimination to which women are subjected, and take account of the political, social and cultural context.

While the information should be primarily addressed to illiterate women, it should also be relevant to their immediate environment and especially to the menfolk – husbands, brothers, fathers and village chiefs – who often have a decisive influence on women's participation in literacy activities. This is why the messages addressed to the illiterate

female population should reflect a sound knowledge of the society involved, and of the relationship existing between the sexes and social groups; above all, they should avoid language which perpetuates sexist stereotypes. Since radio is the main source of information for illiterate people, its role will be fundamental.

Fostering awareness among the general public entails making people understand that literacy is everybody's business, not the sole responsibility of leaders or specialists. Stress will be laid on gender disparities in illiteracy, the role that women play or can play in development, literacy as a means of enhancing that role and the need to improve women's living conditions. All these messages will have to be convincing. They should underscore the advantages which women – and society in general – can derive from literacy by clearly explaining that the additional effort and time it will cost them will eventually turn out to be a good investment. Since the public involved will be largely composed of mothers, it is important to establish the link between the enrolment of children in school and the education of mothers, and to emphasize the importance of education for girls.

Campaigns to promote public awareness require the assistance of mass media and literacy specialists who are also conversant with women's issues. There are few such specialists. It is accordingly urgent to provide training for them, by giving priority to recruiting candidates among women who will be actively encouraged to engage in communication studies and helped to take up positions of responsibility in the information media. Such training should preferably be provided in a cultural context with which the future specialists are familiar.

The presence of women in the media is not sufficient in itself to reconcile media contents with the reality of women's lives, especially the lives of illiterate women. As long as decisions are taken exclusively by men, women will have less chance of imposing their way of understanding things, and of seeing and taking action. Hence, it is urgent to step up the number of qualified women working in the media and to make it easier for them to gain access to decision-making levels. For the moment, the world of communication, particularly in countries where

illiteracy is widespread, is still a male preserve. The number of men occupying positions of responsibility is out of all proportion to the number of women. However, experience has shown that as long as women form only a tiny minority among media decision-makers and as long as women cannot identify themselves with their image as projected by the media, the battle for women's literacy will not be won.

It is particularly difficult to promote awareness among decision-makers. As long as the authorities and their representative bodies remain the exclusive preserve of men, changing attitudes and removing prejudices over the question of women remains a delicate task, strewn with pitfalls. It has to be conducted with tact but at the same time with all necessary energy and rigour. Awareness can be promoted through meetings and exchanges between specialists, planners, researchers, legal experts, academics, politicians, administrators and teachers. Meetings where the representatives of women's organizations are afforded an opportunity of addressing decision-makers can also produce good results.

It is important for people in positions of responsibility to be aware of the situation of women in their country generally, of their state of subordination to men, of gender inequalities and of the need to empower women. A sound understanding of the different aspects of the problem by the people who will decide on the future of women is essential if the results are not to remain marginal or purely symbolic.

Awareness can be fostered in a wide variety of ways, such as through the conventional media (press, publications, radio, television, films and video), through meetings, public lectures and debates, through circulars and notes issued to institutions, through posters, through participation by organizations – especially women's organizations – through the actions of political parties and through cultural activities such as drama productions, story-telling, puppet shows, songs, mime performances and travelling exhibitions. In some Muslim countries, the imams preach the cause of women's literacy in mosques, which produce and distribute brochures on the benefits of literacy for women from the religious standpoint.

It is easier to spark off motivations by traditional means of commu-

nication and by direct contacts with the women concerned. In the case of one-off actions organized in communities and villages, visits to individual women in their homes are the most effective means of alerting and motivating them. The psychological impediments of embarrassment or shyness, and the feelings of inferiority or even shame that can stem from the realization that they are poor and illiterate, can be readily overcome if contact is made through women. Slogans and posters placed at strategic points in villages, such as markets, shops, wells, water points and bus stops, have often proved successful. Video or sound recordings on tape or cassette that have been prepared with the assistance of women's groups, and electronic media using small and readily transportable appliances can convey messages and models that are more attractive than those of the mass media.

Before motivating and mobilizing women and their environment, it is necessary to ensure that decision-makers accept literacy training specifically intended for women and that they are prepared to allocate the necessary resources to it. Raising false hopes among women without the backing of those who take the decisions and are capable of financing the operation would be fatal for the subsequent stages. If it is not certain that the authorities will give their agreement, one way out of the problem may be through decentralization. Since the success of literacy training depends to a considerable degree on local participation, fostering awareness and mobilization are more successful at this level.

In their campaigns to encourage literacy training, media specialists have to realize that the battle for education is never won once and for all. Indeed, there are those who consider that education is not necessarily a good thing, and that it may give rise to contempt for manual work and to unemployment among qualified people for whom there are no jobs. The case for women's literacy has to be made again and again. How many husbands prefer their wives to stay at home, unaware of how education could extricate them from their isolation and dependence? How many men in positions of power will agree to share that power when, as women become more educated, they start wanting to participate in the affairs of the community?

Field surveys

Regardless of whether literacy training is being provided through a campaign, a programme or a project, and no matter what its scale, it is necessary to gather a great deal of information about the locality in which the activities are to be conducted. Provision should be made for a feasibility study and for surveys of the target population before operations are launched. The study will provide the data needed to match the operations as closely as possible to the actual profiles and needs of the future learners. It will make it possible to suggest the most suitable teaching methods and strategies geared to the specific features of the particular human environment. It will help in selecting the most appropriate teaching materials and in organizing the activities to suit future men and women learners, especially as regards location, language, duration, timetables, programmes, teaching staff, recruitment of literacy instructors and methods used for training them. The information obtained will be used to rank the problems by priority and to define specific goals.

The variety of socio-cultural contexts sets the limits of such studies. They bear on a relatively circumscribed geographical area and a precise socio-cultural setting. As the studies concentrate increasingly on specifics and micro-factors, the problems involved will be more clearly pinpointed, the data analysis will be more reliable and the proposed solutions will be more relevant.

Studies conducted among women should be all the more specific, directed towards identifying features of the social, economic and cultural setting in which women lead their lives and to discerning problems, needs and aspirations. Surveys, preferably conducted directly among the women concerned, should highlight the image of women in the actual all-embracing context of their everyday lives, should make it possible to see their activities in all their complexity and should pave the way for improving their status. In particular, the data should cover the day-to-day tasks of women and how these are shared, the way they manage their time and how this can be modulated more efficiently, their sources of income and the sums involved, their access to resources and social services, and the place occupied by women in the life of the community.

The study should be honest about the conditions in which women live and give an impartial picture of their general status. It should highlight the contrast between the inequalities and injustices which they suffer and the rights which they could enjoy. It will not only have to identify the problems and difficulties which illiterate women encounter in their everyday lives but also identify their needs, wishes, ambitions, plans and aspirations. The study will have to make known and ensure a greater understanding of the customs, traditions, habits, beliefs, prohibitions, taboos, rites and practices which govern the daily lives of women, and their families and neighbours, and to define their cultural identity. Lastly, it will have to identify their motives for wishing to embark on literacy training or, on the contrary, identify why they are not interested in such activities, spelling out the factors preventing their participation and the way in which they visualize those factors in relation to their needs.

The study should be carried out with all due care. Team members should be trained in survey techniques and originate from the environment concerned or be very familiar with it in order to increase the chances that they will assemble the most reliable information. They must know the language of the target population. In the case of surveys conducted among women, as well as the usual male or female sociologist or anthropologist, statistician and educationist, one team member should

be familiar with women's issues in order to 'set the tone' right from the outset and shed light on gender issues.

Preferably, the team should be composed entirely of women or, at the very least, include women. Experience has, in fact, shown that the attitudes of women questioned by other women are not the same as those when they are being questioned by men. They reply more readily to questions put by women about their everyday lives. They are more responsive when they come to speak of their difficulties, problems and wishes. When there is a feeling of complicity, understanding and solidarity between women, their answers are more consistent with real-life situations and are closer to the truth. For example, in most of the surveys conducted by women among their illiterate sisters, the subjects state they would prefer women literacy instructors to men, whereas they reply in the negative or hedge their answers when the same question is asked by a man. The differences in the answers given are also significant in the case of literacy programme contents. Before a survey is undertaken, it is advisable to inform the target population about its purpose and the survey methods being used. Meetings should be organized in villages for this purpose. It is vital for surveys to be conducted in an atmosphere of trust, for the women to agree to talk to the investigators, and for them to understand and acknowledge the valid reasons for any intrusion in their private lives. Surveys should take an interest in all women, young and elderly alike. The survey-takers should respect their sense of privacy, and both their own habits and those of the people nearest to them. If, for example, contacts with women have to be arranged through village chiefs, religious leaders or husbands, those responsible for collecting data should acquiesce rather than create a difficult or ambiguous position for the women in question.

Interviews, preferably conducted 'door-to-door', can be replaced or supplemented by a series of meetings with groups of women. It is important that these meetings be relaxed and leisurely, and that the investigators allow the women, young and elderly alike, the time needed to express their views freely.

The questions put should be pertinent – they should enable women

to identify with them and should not offend their feelings as women and especially as illiterate women, who are generally poor, discriminated against and relegated to the sidelines. Well-framed questions will afford women the desire, opportunity and language to talk about their condition, in the hope of improving it. They will come to feel involved as fully-fledged partners in the literacy project and this in turn will ensure a greater prospect of success.

Programmes and their contents

Women do not always look upon literacy training as a necessity, especially when their main concern is how to survive from one day to the next. Hence, it is important that the content of such training should attract and motivate. Women living in poverty will, in the first instance, look to literacy training as a means of acquiring the basic knowledge that will help them increase their output and earnings, provide for the welfare of their families and obtain credit more easily. Depending on the case, the acquisition of fresh knowledge will, or will not, be conditional on learning to read, write and do calculations. Although it is acknowledged that the functional elements of literacy training are of prime importance to women, it is no longer possible to disregard the possibilities that literacy can afford them of escaping from their traditional cloistered roles as wives and mothers, and of contributing as equal partners to social and economic development efforts.

Literacy programmes have to reflect the reality of women's lives and provide them with means of exercising control over those lives and changing them. They should be drawn up in the light of the priorities, needs and interests expressed by women. If those interests are of an economic nature, literacy training should be centred on activities generating well-being and income. If children are the main concern, the programmes should give priority to subjects relating to health, nutrition, children's education and family planning. If women express the need to

improve their numeracy, arithmetic should occupy a more prominent place, at least at the initial stage. On the other hand, if they are responsive to change and if they are conscious of the need to overcome the inequalities, discrimination and injustice which they suffer, provision should be made in the programmes for subjects going beyond mere reading and writing, and even the acquisition of useful basic knowledge, and for introducing subjects bound up with the social and political role of women, and their civic rights.

In such cases, the programme should include clear and precise information on ways of using the law to protect women from ill treatment or sexual abuse, for example, on steps required to obtain the custody of children, on how to protect or insist on property rights in the event of divorce or a husband's death. The programmes should explain the legal system and its procedures and terminology. It is also important for women to be conscious of the shortcomings of laws, which can be used against them in some instances.

In a bid to provide for these needs, UNESCO has started up a programme, and implemented a series of pilot literacy and post-literacy projects for women in which a 'civic education' component has been introduced. The aim is to inform women on their rights as individuals, citizens and members of the family, alert them to the importance of their contribution to the life of the country, arouse and develop their interest in community and public life, and enhance their sense of initiative and their ability to take decisions.

In these projects, civic education goes beyond straightforward conventional training in citizenship and includes, as an integral part of the course, subjects connected with the everyday lives of women, their present and future interests, the public interest, and political, social and economic life. Civic education may be equally concerned with the workings of the legal system and the government, with moral and cultural values, and with family planning, sexuality and violence. The choice of programme contents depends on the women's wishes and needs.

In the pilot projects in Asia and Africa, broad-based civic education programmes include information on the legal system, the constitution,

government, parliament, patriotism, democracy, citizenship, cultural heritage and international affairs, along with information on the country's geography and history, the environment, health, hygiene, family planning, mother and child care, nutrition, labour and employment, and technology. In the Andean subregion, the civic education for women provided in connection with the literacy activities coming under the Major Project in the Field of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (PROMEDLAC), which is primarily targeted at women in rural areas, lays stress on the safeguarding of their identity and mother tongues, the right to be different and mutual respect for the wide variety of forms of cultural expression.

The empowerment of women should form the main focus of literacy and post-literacy teaching materials. The idea is not to arouse negative attitudes towards men, but to encourage women to give more critical thought to their own status, to help them ask – and ask themselves – questions, develop self-confidence and self-esteem, take decisions, have more say in their own lives, acquire greater independence and exercise control over ways of improving their living conditions and position in society.

The starting-point for preparing literacy teaching materials entails selecting the target groups for which they are intended, be they women in rural or urban areas, migrants, ethnic minorities or other specific sub-groups. The identification of the target group will dictate the relevance of the content.

Once the specific features of the target group have been identified, they have to be analysed; in other words, the living environment and its requirements have to be studied. This can be done through surveys, questionnaires, interviews and group discussions (see previous chapter). The information gathered will make it possible to closely match the content to the real-life situations of the target group and to its interests.

After needs have been identified, priorities should be selected. This should be followed by the choice of subjects and selection of objectives, both of which will be instrumental in defining the content.

If the content concentrates on the concept of empowering women, various basic factors will have to be taken into account. These include

avoiding sexual stereotypes and *macho* references; promoting task-sharing between men and women both outside and within the home; projecting a proper image of women that does not err on the negative side; and highlighting the status of women, asserting their rights and stressing the importance of women's participation.

UNESCO has identified criteria which can usefully be taken into account when preparing literacy and post-literacy reading materials for women. Their content should have a close bearing on real-life situations, and on women's interests and problems. They should be useful and agreeable to read, and should stimulate women to ask pertinent questions about their own status and place in society, help them solve immediate problems, make use of features with which they are familiar, prompt them to act, spark off discussion and exchanges of views, and keep their interest alive. It is important to ensure that the image of women projected is neither negative nor passive. The facts and messages conveyed should be authentic and reliable; no reference should be made to taboo subjects.

Monotony, a formal style and too close a resemblance to school textbooks should be avoided. Steps should be taken to ensure the clear identification of the messages, which should be varied and should be filled out with stories, dialogues, exclamations and quotations. They should reflect the cultural identity of the users, while gender stereotypes and sexism, indeed any reference to traditions having a negative effect on women, should be ruled out. Phrases should be short and uncomplicated, and dialogues natural.

Illustrations are essential (see Appendices 2 and 4). They should have a direct bearing on the written text, and should be simple and readily understandable. They should reflect the many and varied aspects of the learners' ways of life, while conveying a positive image of women, preferably in roles where they are taking decisions or exercising authority. It is preferable to leave wide spaces between the lines, to fill only a quarter of the page with the written text, to use large characters and to stress important subjects with arrows, boxes or grids. The format of the printed material should be consistent with its objectives and content.

Regardless of whether they contain stories with illustrations, dialogues, strip cartoons, poems, tales, ballads, games, or a combination of all of these, the materials should reflect the readers' real-life situation.

Once an outline draft has been prepared, it should be tried out in a context displaying features similar to those found in the target group. The findings obtained from this trial will make it possible to evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of the materials, and to make any improvements necessary. Appropriate instructions can be drafted in the light of the purpose for which the materials will subsequently be used. In the case of literacy groups, guides for instructors (see Appendix 3) will make the materials easier to use.

The so-called 'traditional' or grassroots media can also be used as vehicles for literacy training, especially at the post-literacy stage. This type of material, which is usually based on popular beliefs, the thinking and life of the people, their customs, and their perception of acceptable social behaviour and ethics, is highly appreciated by women's groups, especially in rural areas. The messages are usually conveyed very effectively, whether the vehicle consists of puppet shows, music, dancing or traditional theatre.

In some countries television and video are widely used for communication and leisure activities. With its considerable educational potential, video can be used as a form of teaching material. Since the costs entailed are generally high, it is preferable for the video programmes to be produced locally. This, in fact, will make it easier to establish contact with women and give a more reliable picture of their real-life situations. However, video can have differing effects on learners, depending on the programmes prepared for the purpose and on the way in which video aids are used. Experience has shown that the contributions made by the future beneficiaries to programme preparation, the first-hand evidence they provide, and discussions with groups or individuals, make it possible to tackle the real problems of women and ensure that remedies are identified more effectively. When video is situated in a participatory context, it goes beyond serving as a mere information vehicle to become an instrument of dialogue. It can give

women viewers a clearer grasp of their real-life situation and ideas about making use of their skills. It can be used to help women identify to a greater degree with their own experience, their lives and their culture.

Regardless of whether video aids, radio, tape-recordings or traditional media are being used, an environment study should be carried out before the programmes are prepared. In order to ascertain the relevance of the media used as well as user reactions to the media and the media impact on users, tests and evaluations should be carried out later.

Organizing operations

Before embarking on any literacy operation, whether it involves women or men, organizers need answers to the following questions:

- Who will be organizing the literacy operation?
- Who will be financing the operation, and how?
- Who are the target beneficiaries? Will a priority group be chosen and, if so, which?
- In what language will the literacy training be given?
- What is the percentage of the population for which it is intended to provide literacy training, having regard to all the factors involved?
- How many literacy centres have to be set up for the selected group?
- What will be the literacy training staff strength? Where will the literacy instructors come from? How will they be paid?
- How and where will the literacy teaching personnel be trained?
- What literacy training materials will be available? If such materials do not exist or are not applicable to the target groups, where and how can they be published and printed?

Before deciding whether or not a literacy project will be intended specifically for women, it is necessary to be thoroughly familiar with all aspects of the exercise for, although the 'female' approach has undoubted advantages, it also has its drawbacks.

A project specifically addressed to women will prove more flexible in catering for their real needs. It will make dialogue easier and will

afford them greater possibilities of participating and deciding what they want. It will enable them to engage in non-traditional activities, play a role going beyond child-bearing alone and gain recognition for their new and enhanced status. A project for women could also give rise to sound yet flexible new structures or institutions which would, in the long term, form a basis for future initiatives designed to defend their interests.

On the other hand, a project that is entirely organized for women may continue to be marginal to the overall development effort, may not be taken very seriously and may not benefit from a lasting commitment from decision-makers. It may also find itself overloaded with so-called 'female' activities, to the detriment of those that contribute to change.

Cultural pressures or religious traditions may inhibit the setting-up of a project specifically for women. In this case, the female component can be built into a project for both sexes. However, care has to be taken to ensure that women are not relegated to the sidelines and that such a course is not simply an alibi that will give authorities and donors a clear conscience. In a project for both sexes, women should be able to benefit from the resources and take part in the main activities on the same footing as men, although their specific requirements should be safeguarded wherever necessary. Compiling project data and indicators by sex will allow evaluation of the results and impact of the female component, both positive and negative.

Although the starting-point should be grounded in the principle that illiterate women are partners rather than clients, the organization of literacy training for women presupposes that the local community will provide assistance and that the women concerned will themselves play an active part. Their participation should be evident right from the initial study stage, when the women themselves will have to decide whether or not to attend literacy classes and, if so, on what terms. The creation of a special literacy committee composed of members of the community can help in solving organizational problems.

It has to be borne in mind that illiterate women are usually overburdened with work and do not have much confidence in their ability to learn, but they have their own way of seeing things. They want to be

treated as adults and equals. Their outlook is less competitive than that of men. The feeling that they are succeeding is a source of encouragement to them and they learn more effectively if they are involved in the preparation and implementation of the activities. In conditions of poverty and social exclusion, the best literacy strategy is to get women to focus on subjects and problems that have a direct bearing on their everyday lives. Small groups are more conducive to dialogue and make it easier to develop a critical frame of mind that will become constructive as soon as women learn how to analyse problems and come up with solutions.

If literacy training is visualized in participatory and dynamic terms, and if it goes beyond the mere act of teaching, it can make a real contribution to changing attitudes. A multi-pronged approach to a problem is better than a preset method, in that it enables all facets to be considered and encourages two-way flows. It is much more important for women to learn to express themselves and ask questions than to be faced with ready-made answers.

If at all possible, it is often preferable not to hold women's classes in schools. Some women cannot bear the idea of sitting at a desk like their children. Even so, in many cases, schools are the only places available for accommodating literacy activities. Moreover, if the literacy instructor is a male schoolteacher and uses school textbooks as teaching materials, women have to be very highly motivated and display considerable strength of character to agree to attend literacy classes. Wherever possible, the premises used for literacy activities should be provided or built by the population. The women themselves should assume responsibility for running them.

The choice of the language in which literacy is to be achieved is usually a political decision taken at the higher levels of government. When that choice, which is already a difficult one in itself, is being made, time is seldom spent on going into considerations relating to the respective features of men and women. Yet it is by no means uncommon to find that knowledge of one language or another, or the extent to which each is known, differs with the sexes. Owing to men's greater mobility, as a result of their having to go away to seek paid employment, they

often know the 'official' language better than do women, who communicate in the local language. Owing to their failure to understand the official language – which is that of modernity, social advancement, government, universities and big cities – they are liable to be confined to their home environment, with little prospect of being able to move away from it. This is particularly true of women in rural areas. In order to give women access to the outside world, if that is what they want, it will be advisable that, once literacy in their mother tongue has been achieved, they then be taught the official language.

It is up to the women themselves to decide on the timetable, length and frequency of the literacy classes. In some cases, these decisions will be taken in consultation with the menfolk – husbands, fathers, brothers and chiefs – so as to ensure that the men do not prevent the women from attending the classes because they are concerned about their being out late at night.

The very heavy working day of illiterate women, especially in rural areas, and their many family obligations, prevent them from being regularly absent from the home for the length of time entailed by literacy classes. The demands of caring for children constitute a major impediment. Most women who are illiterate – and hence poor – have many children. Their lives may be organized in a family and community context, but they, as mothers, are responsible for looking after their children; it is rare for men to share that responsibility. In order to provide women with the time needed to attend literacy classes, means of assisting them with their domestic tasks are needed; in particular, the problem of looking after their children has to be resolved. Since this is not always possible, especially in the case of very small infants, the presence of mothers with their babies at literacy classes has to be accepted and the courses arranged accordingly. This has, in fact, been the long-standing practice in most Third World countries.

Similarly, the place where literacy classes are held is extremely important. The training centre has to be as close as possible to the women's homes. This is not merely to save their time; nor is it because they are incapable of covering long distances – women do so every day

in order to fetch and carry water or firewood or go to the fields, to market or to town. The personal safety of the women must be borne in mind. Their safety must be ensured while going to and from classes. This is why women's literacy training should also provide a venue where women can organize themselves in an attempt to find a solution to the problem of the violence and ill-treatment to which they may be exposed (see Appendix 1).

In order to ensure the best possible chance of success, it is preferable to organize classes in places where there is already a women's group or organization, and where women learners can meet and organize themselves. The integration of literacy training into existing projects directly relevant to women, such as health, agriculture, technologies, co-operatives, credit and so on is also an important factor in ensuring success.

At the mobilization stage prior to the introduction of literacy activities, it is particularly important to remember that women, especially in rural areas, are usually overburdened by work; despite their willingness, they are simply not able to make a significant contribution to this first stage. Women who have very little free time should not be called on at this time. If literacy training is seen as an additional burden adding to their daily chores, women will – however unwillingly – stop attending classes. Difficult though it may be, activities should be organized in such a way that women regard literacy training not as a bind but as a blessing. In this connection, too, women themselves are best placed to suggest solutions to the problem.

It is preferable to organize literacy training in small groups within the framework of small-scale projects, where women will feel more at ease and more confident. Small-scale projects produce more satisfactory and lasting results. They provide the necessary flexibility, make allowance for the local setting, are more readily capable of instilling a sense of drive, and encourage local participation and initiatives. These participatory projects on a human scale, geared to the target population, usually enjoy more support from local agencies, non-governmental organizations, women's groups and voluntary associations. By comparison with large-scale projects, however, small projects display the drawback of

having only a fairly marginal impact and often of eliciting only limited political and financial support (see Appendix 5).

It should not be forgotten that many men and women alike drop out of literacy classes and it is by no means uncommon to find drop-out rates of some 30 to 50 per cent. This is why, when it comes to forming the literacy group, due consideration has to be given to this aspect of adult literacy training and provision made for a larger number of participants in the initial stages. As the classes proceed, absenteeism and drop-out should be looked at carefully in an effort to determine the causes and propose possible solutions.

Literacy personnel

Illiterate women say that they feel more confident with female literacy instructors who, in their opinion, are more patient and display a greater sense of responsibility. Experience has shown that, in the presence of female literacy personnel, illiterate women feel freer to express themselves, especially when they touch on 'women's issues' or 'taboo' subjects. However, female literacy personnel are in short supply and there are not many women among the applicants for training. Their many commitments prevent them from doing so or, in some instances, they have to contend with the reluctance or refusal of their families, husbands, fathers or brothers, who are not prepared to see them go away from home or be in the company of other men.

Owing to the remoteness of the literacy or training centres and the length of the journey involved in reaching them, women are prevented from taking part in training or from accepting the responsibility of literacy activities. The fears voiced by the family, and by the menfolk in particular, are compounded by fear on the part of the women themselves, who do not always feel safe. Health factors may also govern the participation of women in literacy activities. The effort which they are expected to make in order to cover the sometimes considerable distances may be more than their physical strength can take, especially when this is combined with the fatigue of child-bearing and child-rearing, and the after-effects of malnutrition in their childhood.

These difficulties can be partly overcome if the women have adequate means of transport which they find acceptable. If they are provided with mules or motorized bicycles or if they are given free public transport, women will be better able to take on responsibilities. Like any other activity in which women are required to move out of the family circle, literacy training is largely dependent on the possibilities available for lightening the burden of work they have to do and reducing the length of time it takes them to do it. For example, if facilities are provided for taking care of children, if books, free meals, education grants, nurseries and day-care centres are made available, if the presence of female teaching personnel is ensured and imagination is shown in drawing up timetables, it will be possible to encourage a larger number of women to be trained to teach literacy. In some cases, it is possible to motivate women merely by setting aside an area for them in the training centres and separate, closed toilet facilities.

Programmes for training literacy instructors have to take account of the specific problems of women and treat literacy training as a means of helping them to make a fresh start in civic and political life. Both men and women literacy instructors should be aware of the importance of these considerations and well-equipped to give effect to them. In other words, they have to be convinced that a more specific approach to women's literacy is needed. Many of them will have to change their outlook, in some instances radically.

As in the case of the literacy classes, the methodologies used to train literacy personnel should involve participation and be based on interaction between teachers and learners, while the pedagogy should be geared to enhancing people's personal experience in which fresh knowledge can take root. The training should foster team spirit; it should be conducted in a climate of mutual understanding and co-operation similar to that which the literacy instructors will have to create in the groups they themselves teach. The fact that teachers and learners live side by side contributes considerably to creating a positive climate and to achieving a learning process likely to reinforce the sense of solidarity common among women, a sense of solidarity which constitutes an essential feature of adult education.

It is preferable for the literacy instructors themselves to come from the same region or community as that in which the literacy classes are organized. Familiar with the environment, they will be more warmly welcomed and accepted by the women. It is becoming increasingly common, especially in rural areas, for women instructors to be trained in a variety of subject areas, thereby acquiring a multi-disciplinary background which ensures that they are better qualified to understand and contend with the wide range of problems women have to face in their daily lives. They are in a position to draw up and implement development programmes, organize literacy activities, promote community associations, make the most of all the human resources available and mobilize existing technical services to cater for the needs of both women and the community. They are at one and the same time advisers, organizers, teachers and fomenters of change.

Follow-up to literacy

Post-literacy training is a crucial stage in the literacy process, especially in the case of women. It is the starting-point for all-round training, the stage where the knowledge acquired is kept up, expanded and applied, where responsibilities come to be exercised and new skills – geared to catering for essential needs – are practised. It is likewise at this stage that women are able to develop a fresh sense of drive which will be instrumental in giving rise to collective experiments, new forms of social organization and solidarity, and a wide variety of ventures that will contribute to broadening their spheres of interest, boosting their potential as individuals and integrating them into the development of their environment on more equitable terms.

The basic principles underlying the training of newly literate women are the same as those for their illiterate counterparts, in that they aim at catering for the women's needs and at involving them in all stages of the programme, from identifying the problems, finding solutions and putting those solutions into practice, to evaluating the efforts undertaken.

Post-literacy training will help foster the access of women to productive activities that will in turn ensure them a greater measure of financial independence. It is difficult to engage in income-generating activities and the outcome is often disappointing. It is for this reason that, before provision is made for such activities in the programmes, a thorough analysis has to be made of the factors influencing the viability of

the economic activities in which women engage, and a far-reaching market survey should be conducted. It is essential for women who are poor to generate income. However, production and earnings should not be an end in themselves in the post-literacy process, but rather a means of adding to women's experience, releasing their creative potential, preparing them for a change in their situation, and their social and legal status, encouraging self-esteem, and strengthening their capabilities and decision-making powers.

Post-literacy activities will make it possible for women to grasp the socio-economic and political factors affecting them and to forge closer links with other women, including researchers, donors, activists and women involved in the development process.

Post-literacy activities may lead to the setting-up of clubs, work collectivities, and various forms of women's associations and organizations functioning along different lines from the traditional models governing rank and authority. They will provide women with a place where they can meet, talk together and rally round to defend their interests, make it possible to increase their earnings, and bring about transformations in the patterns of social exclusion and conditions of inequality in which they live.

Women's associations deserve to be supported. They play an important role in the process involved in redefining women's identities and their social status, in empowering them and in combating gender-linked inequalities. They contribute to preparing women to contend with and solve problems which, with time and experience, may go beyond the local context and extend as far as the decision-making level. Civic education – and all forms of activities aimed at instilling knowledge and attitudes that will bring women closer to such changes – will be very useful during the post-literacy stage.

Post-literacy teaching materials for newly literate women are designed to be functional and liberating, and are geared to their specific needs. As such, they represent a sound basis for encouraging an awareness of problems and situations, and an enhanced self-image. The vehicles that have to be enlisted for this purpose include the printed

media (such as textbooks, printed matter, reading materials, popularized versions of books, newspapers, wall newspapers and periodicals), libraries, exhibitions, museums, out-of-school programmes, vocational training courses, special programmes, correspondence courses, study and action groups, electronic and audio-visual media (radio, television and films), traditional and grassroots media, travelling exhibitions, sporting activities, games, physical training, songs and income-generating activities.

If post-literacy activities are geared to imparting added impetus to attitudes of receptiveness, creativity and equality, they can become a stimulus for women to keep on challenging their status and working to change their lot.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. From learning literacy to regenerating women's space

A story of women's empowerment in Nepal¹

Women's literacy

We decided to develop a literacy programme for women after many months of considering how best to meet the community's demands that we bring them 'development'. Both men and women envisioned development as a process begun with inputs and ideas from outside the village, usually from international donor agencies. They based this vision on an accurate assessment of the politics of top-down development in Nepal. They wanted to be given 'development'.

For most villagers, development meant educating their children in English; cultivating with chemical fertilizers, pesticides and improved irrigation systems; buying bicycles, motorcycles and radios; and drinking Coca-Cola at local tea-shops. High-caste men demanded that we tutor their children in English.

Many women, however, asked how they could provide their children with medicine, improve their sources of income, and learn how to read, write and do arithmetic. We evaded men's demands for teaching English, but seriously considered how we could build on women's concerns for the inadequacy of health care for both women and children, their lack of control over property, income and their lack of socially relevant education.

We began to conduct small meetings in the various neighbourhoods of the village and asked women directly if they wanted literacy classes and how we could develop a curriculum to meet their needs not only for literacy and numer-

1. Excerpts from: Pramod Parajuli and Elizabeth Enslin, 'From Learning Literacy to Regenerating Women's Space: A Story of Women's Empowerment in Nepal', *Convergence/Convergencia* (Toronto), Vol. XXIII, No. 1, 1990, pp. 44-50.

acy, but also for improving other aspects of their lives. We asked: What could you do better by knowing how to read and write? What kind of information do you need? What are the most crucial problems in your lives?

We continued these meetings for almost a month and found that women expressed hope and frustration, excitement and fear. They made both their eagerness and their overwhelming lack of confidence apparent in their style of oration. Women would boldly stand up, eagerly and often eloquently express their opinion about why, how and what they should study and then end their speech by negating their authority: ‘. . . but I don’t really know anything because I never went to school and am not smart’. The erosion of self-respect and confidence became a serious impediment to the process of empowerment. However, as we showed respect and interest for the statements of young and old alike, and involved them in developing curricula, they gained confidence in expressing themselves.

After many meetings, we developed a series of key words with which to generate discussions and teach literacy and numeracy: *kaam* (work), *taas* (card-playing), *dauraa* (firewood), *paani* (water), *khetalaa* (agricultural workers), *mela paat* (collective field labour), *mohiyaani* (tenancy), *safaa* (cleanliness), *brikshyaa ropan* (tree plantation), *gahanaa* (ornaments), *churot* (smoking), *sautaa* (co-wives), *sutkeri* (post-partum women).

The generative potential of these key words in enabling women to discuss their social reality and develop confidence in their abilities to both know and change the world became apparent as women discussed *taas* (card-playing) and *dauraa* (firewood). These words represented two of the greatest difficulties in women’s lives.

During the first month of literacy classes, women discussed men’s card-playing, drinking and violence against women while learning how to read and write the letters. They discussed how men waste money on gambling and drinking that should be used to buy food for the family. Drunken men also harass women along the pathways. Women expressed the greatest outrage over men returning home after drinking and gambling to beat their wives. They recognized the need for women to develop some solidarity with one another and intervene when husbands were beating their wives.

Another key word which fired women’s imagination was *dauraa*. As they learned how to make words from the syllables, they also explored the increasing scarcity of firewood, fodder and shade trees in Chitwan. Older women began to narrate the stories of 30 years before when the forest of Chitwan had

been cleared for resettlement. They remembered how powerful men had forcibly claimed portions of the common grazing lands and gradually diminished their access to fodder. Women had to travel increasingly far to collect firewood and fodder. In their daily journeys, they found few trees along the pathways to provide shady resting-places. The women in the literacy class composed a song about this and the need for all women to join together to plant trees. In the song they used words which they had already learned how to spell in class.

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Regenerating women's space

The depth and seriousness of discussions about card-playing and firewood in literacy classes demonstrated that women in Chitwan had developed an awareness of the ecological crisis and problems of inequalities related to gender. Some lower-caste and poorer women equated the exploitation of women with discrimination against the lower castes. But women had little confidence in the relevance of their own knowledge to modern development. They were afraid of being taunted as *Pakhe*, that is, uncivilized, a person from remote hills. As one older women from a *Saarki* (cobbler) caste told us: 'Who listens to me? I am an untouchable and moreover a women. This is the first time higher-caste people are listening to me without insulting me.' . . .

For many weeks, women throughout the village discussed how they had no space in which to meet. They did not feel entirely safe or welcome anywhere. We held literacy classes in the private spaces of people's homes to avoid the gangs of young men who frequented public spaces. However, women became increasingly angry over their exclusion from public spaces to which they had contributed both money and labour. Women donated money to the local schools but did not feel safe organizing meetings or classes there, especially at night. They gave money for the construction of the Hindu temple and village meeting-area but had to ask permission from the all-male temple committee to use the area. Low-caste women expressed outrage at the priests who chased them off the temple grounds and ridiculed their offerings when they came to worship.

Women's concerns for space crystallized in the International Women's Day celebration of 8 March 1988. The local Mahila Sangathan (Women's Organization), a branch of the Panchayat system, had organized the event primarily to honour the government's efforts in women's development. The 150 women who came listened quietly and politely as village officials spoke of the importance of integrating women into development. Their excitement grew,

however, as several women leaders departed from the official programme and spoke more directly of their concerns. Some leaders, inspired by the success of literacy classes and discussions, argued that women had developed the power and confidence to develop a more comprehensive programme for improving women's lives. They urged women to join together to demand a plot of common land from the *Panchayat* and build a 'Women's Centre'. This demand gave voice publicly to ideas that hundreds of women had been whispering about for weeks.

This demand for a women's meeting- and training-centre which women had dreamed about but never thought possible until publicly articulated, became the subject of many meetings held over the following months. Hundreds of women of all castes came together to discuss women's need for a common meeting-place and strategies for gaining the land on which to build it. Some women urged caution and voted for petitioning village officials through legal means. Poorer landless women militantly argued that they should take the land by force.

Women also discussed strategies for expanding the literacy programme. In fact, over the next two months, groups of women from throughout Gunjanagar and even from neighbouring villages came forward with lists of potential students and offered themselves as teachers. Three new literacy centres opened in this way.

Appendix 2. Water for life¹

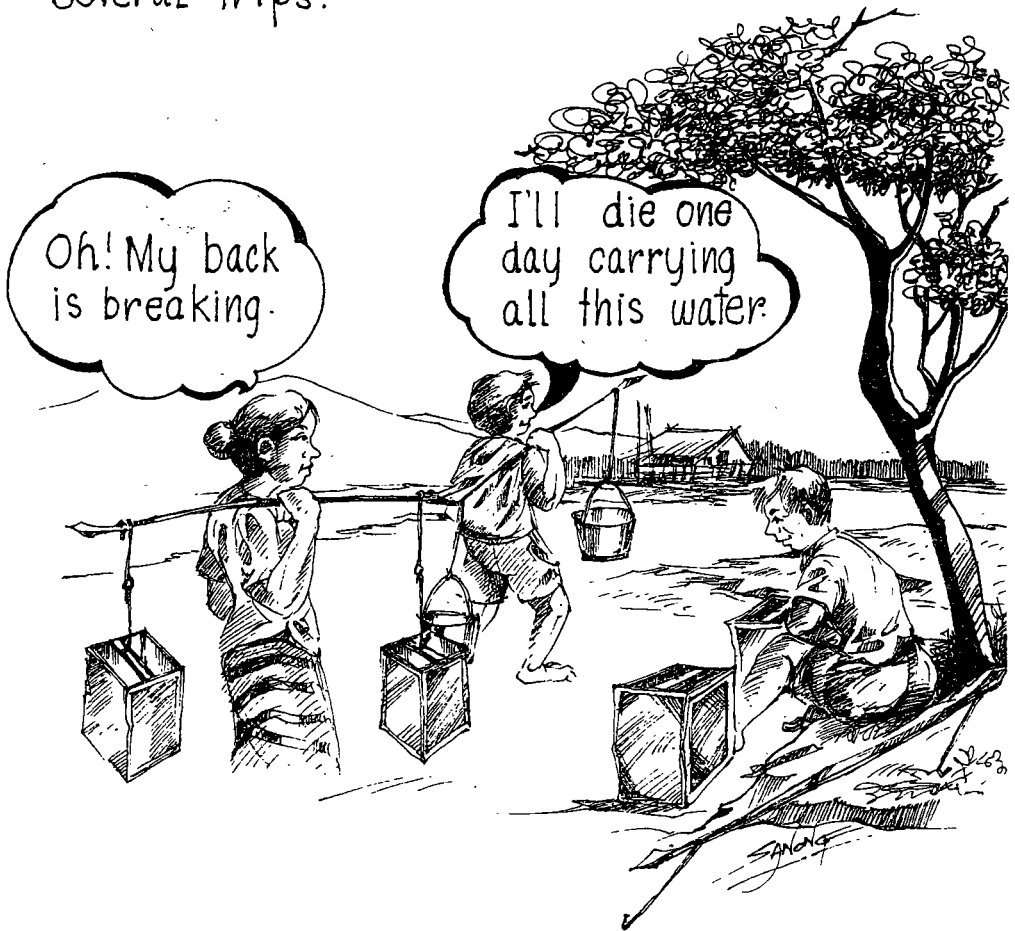
LAOS

WATER FOR LIFE

1. Reproduced from: Writing Workshop for the Development of Reading Materials for Women's Self-reliance (Changmai, 1991), *Writing to Promote Women's Self-reliance: A Report of a Regional Workshop*, Chapter 6, No. 5 ('Water for Life'), Bangkok, PROAP, n.d.

1

Aunt Dee Lives in Ban Don village, Nhommarath District, Khammouane province. In the dry season, there is not enough water. She has to walk two kilometres to the stream. She has to take several trips.



2

Don't use too much water! You are not
the one to carry it!
You don't know how hard it is!



3

One day at the stream, Aunt Dee runs into a man. He is also carrying water. Aunt Dee is impressed by the man. She finds out that the man, Uncle Sang carries water for his wife.



When Aunt Dee returns home.⁴

Thong some, you Lazy bastard!
Sitting around drinking while
your wife's working like a dog
one day, This old dog will die

Stop your nonsense,
you idiot. I'm busy.
Don't you see.
I'm relaxing



5
Later, Aunt Dee visits Ban Neua, a nearby village.
Many villagers have water jars around their houses.
They keep the water in the water jars.

The women's union get some money from the government. If we put in the labour, they can buy the materials.

How did they do it?
How can we do the same thing? How can we have water jars also



6

At a women's union meeting in the village, the women agree to co-operate and put in some money to make water jars. This union will bring some experts to teach the villagers to make water jars.



7

Let us help
each other make
water jars for our family.



8

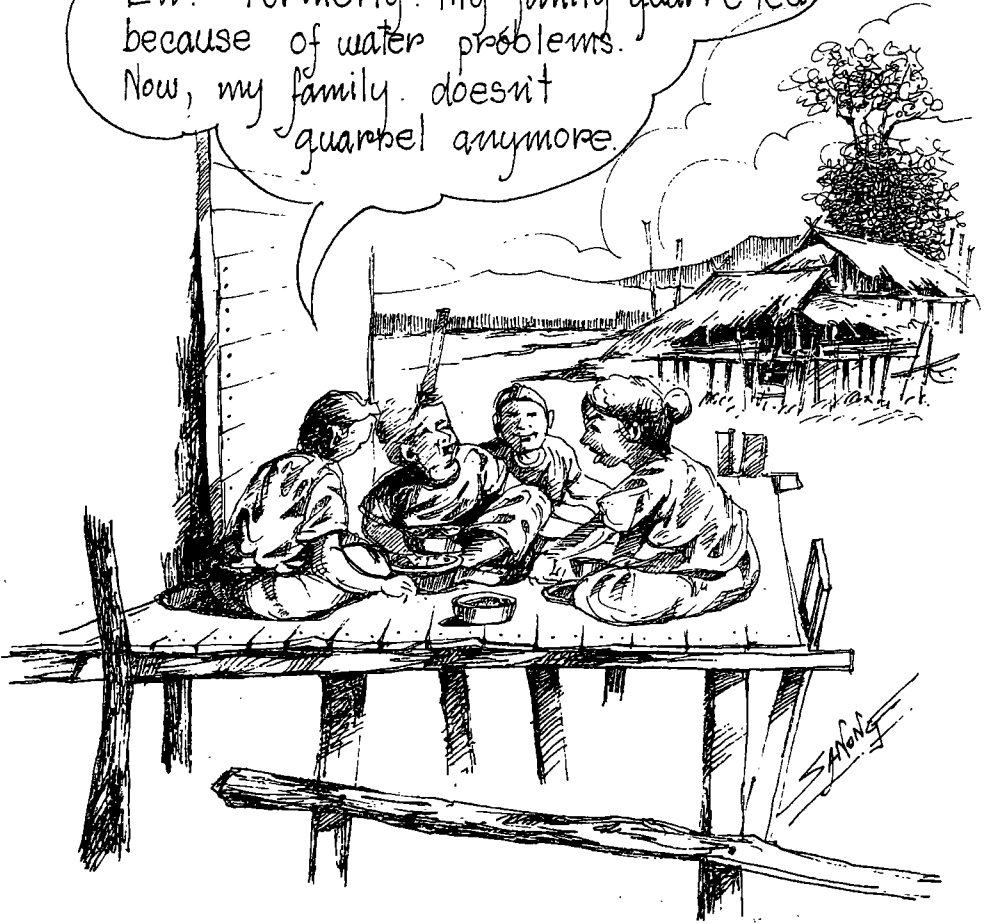
The water jar project is a big success the village women also thought of improving other water sources. They think of digging and building water wells.



9

Now life is better
for Dee and Thong Sone.

Eh! Formerly. My family quarreled
because of water problems.
Now, my family doesn't
quarrel anymore.



10

It's difficult to get water let's, be
careful with what we do with it!
We should use water only a necessary.



11

Making water jars and
water wells will reduce Lao
women's heavy labour and
Save Their Time.



The facilitator's Guidelines-

- I. This booklet is produced with the objectives
- 1). To reduce the work load of the LCO women in rural areas.
 - 2). To show the importance of women's organization.
 - 3). To raise women's and men's awareness of the need for men's sharing of household responsibilities.
 - 4). To raise women's awareness of their potentials in solving the problems of water shortage.
- II. How to use this booklet.
- 1). Give a copy of the book to the target group
 - 2). Ask the learners to read the book.
 - 3). Ask the learners to discuss the book amongst themselves. It's better when the group is divided into smaller groups for discussion. Use the issues for discussions provided.
 - 4). If the learners have any questions, please answer them.
 - 5). Encourage the learners to take action in order to solve the problem of water shortage in this community.
 - 6). Help the learners plan what needs to be done, which agency to contact, what resources to mobilize, and so on.

Issues for Discussion

- 1)- How and where do we fetch water in our village?
- 2)- what is the importance of water?
- 3)- If we don't have adequate water, what will happen?
- 4)- If we don't have adequate water, what can we do to solve the problem?

Appendix 3. Teacher's guide¹

Topic 2 : Role and ability of women in decision making

Objectives : The learners will be able to:

- a) Identify the role of women in the family and their ability to make decision;
- b) Recognise 2 new letters with their use and recapitulate past skills of reading and writing;
- c) Recognise numbers 36-40 and do addition of one-digit numbers.

Note to teachers:

Steps	Strategies	Time (Min.)	Teaching notes	Grouping	Resources
1. Discussion	I	10	<p>Teacher asks the learners to see the picture from the book. The picture shows Halima and Ali are working in the field. He will tell their story in this connection.</p> <p>"Ali's land is not suitable for paddy cultivation, because it is highland and there is no irrigation facilities. For that reason Ali was not getting good harvest for 2 years. Halima heard from one neighbour that such land is suitable for wheat cultivation. She requested her husband to try wheat cultivation. Ali also heard from the Agriculture Extension worker who advised him to grow wheat in their land. Initially Ali was not willing to change the traditional crop for involvement of extra labour. But after continuous insistence of Halima he agreed to do so. They decided to cover the need of extra labour by working themselves. Now they are getting good production".</p>		

1. Source: Reproduced from Regional Workshop for the Conduct of Skills-based Literacy Programmes for Women, Trivandrum (India), 1991, *Draft Report*, pp. VI 20-22, Bangkok, PROAP, 1991.

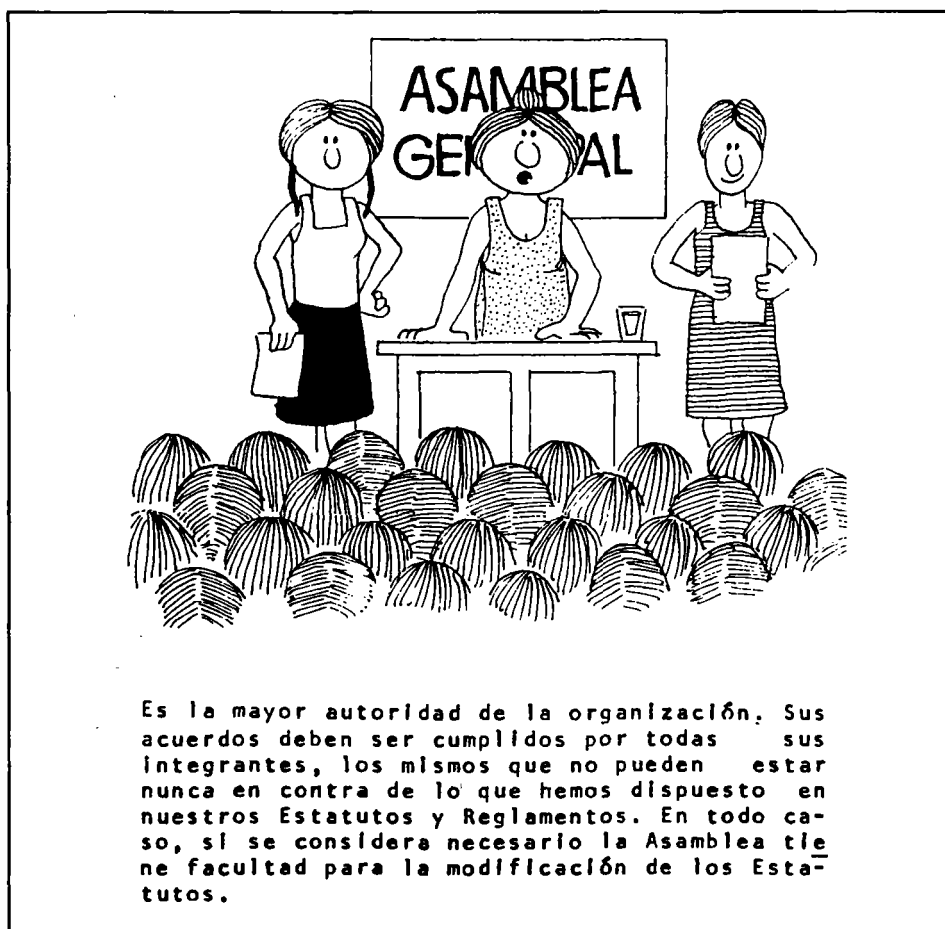
Appendix 3

Steps	Strategy	Time (Min.)	Teaching notes	Grouping	Resources
	P	5	The learners discuss what they learnt from the story.	Small group	
	O	5	Teacher asks the learners some questions to assess their comprehension, such as: - Who proposed wheat cultivation? - Who works more for production? - What makes them happier?	Wide class	
	I	10	Teacher asks the learners whether they know another story similar to Halima. If so, to identify those.		
	P		Learners will discuss their stories in group and find out the possibility of getting solution of these problems.	Small group	
	O		Learners report back their findings and state what they can do in the family. Teacher will summarise the reports.	Individual	
2. Reading	I	5	Teacher introduces key sentence and 2 letters from the known word 'Kaaj'	Whole class	Primer
	PO	5	Learners read the two new letters.	Individual	
	IP	5	Teacher introduces use of sign 'I' to the letters and learners will practice	Whole class/ Individual	
	O	5	Teacher tests the learners whether they can use/ recognise the letters and can use sign with it.	Individual	Primer
	I	10	Teacher asks the learner to compose few words with known letters		

Appendix 3

Steps	Strategy	Time (Min.)	Teaching notes	Grouping	Resources
	PO		Learners compose new words and teacher writes in the board.		Board Chalk
	I		Teacher asks to recapitulate some known letters/words		Primer
	PO		Learners will read and recognise the letters/words		
3. Writing	IP	20	Learners practice writing of newly learnt two letters in the book/workbook. They also write other known words from their own.	Individual	Primer/ work- book
	O	5	Teacher assess the progress and facilitates.		
4. Numeracy	I	15	Teacher introduces numbers 36-40	Whole class	Primer
	P		Learners practice from the table.	Individual	
	O		Teacher asks learners to identify the numbers		
	IP	10	Learners write numbers 36-40 in the book/workbook	Individual	Primer/ work- book
	O		Teacher assess the progress		
	IP		Learners do addition in their books/workbooks		
	O		Teacher facilitates/assess progress		

Appendix 4. Examples of the use of illustrations in printed literacy materials for women¹



A General Assembly is an organization's governing body. The decisions it takes have to be obeyed by all its members, who are bound by the provisions laid down in the Rules and Regulations. However, the General Assembly has the power to amend the Statutes if this is felt to be necessary.

1. Illustrations reproduced from: P. Núñez (ed.), *Alfabetización y educación cívica: experiencias con mujeres campesinas en Perú*, Santiago (Chile), UNESCO/OREALC, 1990; and UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC), *Manual de elaboración y producción de materiales de postalfabetización y educación cívica para mujeres de América latina y los Caribes*, Santiago (Chile), OREALC, n.d.



**LA MUJER CASADA
O CONVIVIENTE
EN EL NUEVO
CODIGO CIVIL**



Provisions made in the new civil code for married women or women who are cohabitating (official and 'common law' wives).

asi tenemos que :



a la mujer que trabaja se le da descanso por maternidad durante 90 días ; 45 antes del parto y 45 días después.

D.L. 22482, ART. 26. 14

Expectant mothers have the right to 90 days' maternity leave, 45 days before they give birth and 45 days afterwards.

**QUE HACER...
MI CONCUBINO
ME HA
ABANDONADO.**



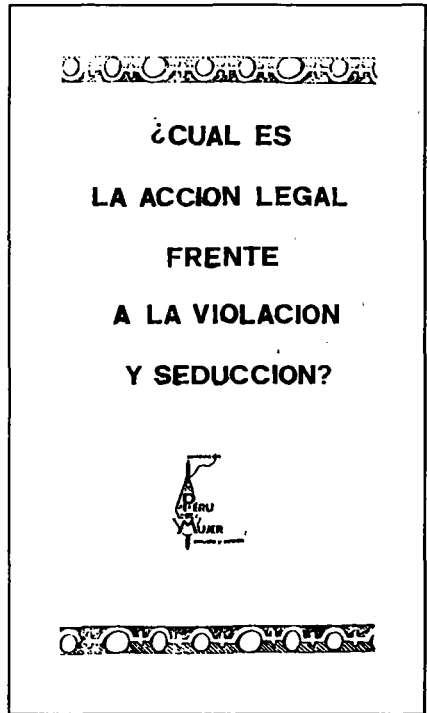
8.1
LEYES Nº 2

*Whatever shall I do . . . ?
My partner has left me!*

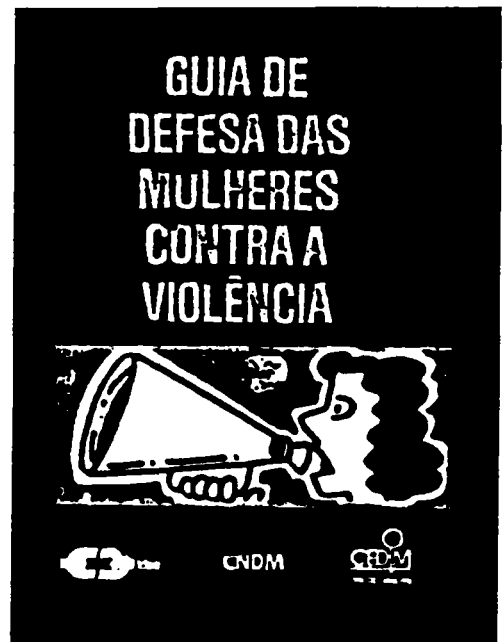
Appendix 4



Women are not allowed by law to work in places and on jobs that are dangerous for their health.



What help can the law give to women who are ill-treated or sexually molested?



Ways of protecting women from ill-treatment: a guide.

Appendix 5. How to ensure the full participation of women in a literacy project

Ten ways of making a difference¹

There is no simple formula, nor a single generally applicable model, for achieving women's full participation in projects. However, in almost any country or situation there are certain steps one can take to facilitate women's involvement in and access to the benefits of a project when the opportunities arise.

At the project-design stage

1. Involve the women's desk, women's ministry, as well as the women's focal point (if it exists) of whatever technical agency you are working with to solicit information and advice on how women can participate in the planned project or on how they can be taken into account from the project planning/design stage.
2. If you need more specific information about women's role in a particular project situation, ensure that you allocate funds in the project budget that will allow for hiring expertise to collect gender-specific information during the initial project-implementation phase. Information can be gathered through feasibility studies and other types of information-collection strategies. Collecting accurate, gender-specific background information during the planning stage allows for effective monitoring and evaluation of the project's impact on women.

1. Source: International Labour Office (ILO), *The Window of Opportunity: Strategies for Enhancing Women's Participation in Technical Co-operation Projects*, Geneva, ILO, 1991 (WID Occasional Paper, 3).

3. Promote the hiring of women project staff, both international and national, including them as technical experts, advisers on gender issues or working with women's groups. Make a case for why this is important. Provide for opportunities for male and female project staff to receive briefings and training in analysing women's roles and special needs.
4. Ensure that the project documents clearly state how women and men will participate in each project activity.

At the project-implementation stage

5. Ensure that women are indicated as a target group and that strategies state how women will benefit directly or indirectly from the project activities. Utilize networks and channels of information to which women have access when publicizing or letting the population know about opportunities to participate in the project. It is particularly important to ensure that information is available in places frequented by women as well as men. For instance, it might be advisable to post notices in health centres or women's clubs, and to schedule announcements on radio programmes or newspapers.
6. In keeping with the commitment to expanding the numbers of women within the target group and when selecting participants for a project, specify why women's participation is relevant. For instance, instead of stating that 'participants are wanted' for a road project, one could notify the district road manager (or whoever is seeking workers) that 'we would be happy to have both men and women workers. We hope that, when it is appropriate for women to participate, they will be apprised of this opportunity'.

And, specifically, in the provision of training opportunities

7. Arrange for day-care facilities, when needed, and separate boarding facilities for women in your training plans. This will expand the pool of women who can take advantage of training opportunities and/or participate in different aspects of the project.
8. In a rural setting, schedule project activities and/or training so that they do not conflict with time in which women's agricultural responsibilities are particularly heavy.

9. Incorporate training that responds to women's needs and situation. For instance, problems of assertiveness, self-esteem, cultural issues, timing, and other obstacles to their full participation may be minimized by incorporating appropriate training modules. Consider, as well, setting up special training sessions for women that accommodate their skill level, experience and needs and that prepare them for eventual entrance into general programmes that are open to both men and women.

In the evaluation and/or monitoring components

10. In all project-work related to monitoring and evaluation, ensure that data on the target group are disaggregated by gender. The monitoring and evaluation system should also measure the project's impact on women.