

## Total Literacy Campaigns under National Literacy Mission part-II

### Module Details

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### 1. Learning Objectives

In part 1 of 'Total Literacy Campaigns under National Literacy Mission', the learner gets a fairly good idea of how Total Literacy Campaigns are used as a national strategy for

improving literacy amongst the people of India. This module is presented with the following objectives:

1. To enlist the positive fallouts of TLCs
2. To identify the silver linings in Saakshar Bharat
3. To analyse the problems, constraints and challenges of Saakshar Bharat
4. To determine the way forward

## **2. Introduction**

Total literacy indicates that a large number of people in a particular project area have attained literacy according to certain prescribed norms. It doesn't mean that 100% of the population has become fully functionally literate according to prescribed norms. This has not been possible anywhere in the world till date. Even UNESCO views 100% literacy as neither feasible nor achievable. This is on account of the fact that a percentage of the population who can't learn due to certain disabilities (dyslexia) will have to be excluded. Ernakulam district of Kerala was a forerunner in successful literacy campaigns. Learners who were enrolled in TLC Ernakulam in 5-60 years age group achieved 96% (and not 100%) effective literacy. In other districts which followed suit, the effective rate of literacy achieved has ranged between 80 to 90 %.

Achievement of total literacy status at the end of one year which was the overall duration of a campaign was followed by a total literacy declaration ceremony. The ceremony was intended to act as an assembly of numerous functionaries who have thought, planned and acted together with one energy, one voice and one conscience to bring the TLC to a successful close. It provided an outlet for their excitement and joy, happiness and satisfaction. It also provided a forum for according public recognition of the honest, sincere, selfless voluntary work done by them.

## **3. Positive fall-outs of TLCs**

The positive fall-outs of TLCs have been well documented in numerous evaluations conducted by University Deptts. Of Linguistics, Deptts. of Adult and Continuing Education, Institutes of social science and research and individual professionals. Some of the important outcomes of the said evaluation under appropriate heads are enumerated below :

### **1. Enhancing social integration and inclusion**

Representatives of the people, all sections of the Civil society such as creative thinkers, writers, artistes, scientists, technologists, social and educational activists came together, thought, planned and acted together for a common cause i.e. promotion of literacy and pledged their solidarity and support to TLC despite differences in social origin and ideology.

Learners belonging to different social groups, speaking different languages and professing different faiths, beliefs & ideologies came to learn under the common roof of a learning centre. This promoted social, cultural, linguistic & emotional integration. The content of learning which is in tune with the core values of national concern was meant for promoting

- Growth of an inclusive society;
- Tolerance of different faiths, beliefs & ideologies;
- A rational, secular and scientific temper;

## **2. Boosting confidence of the learners that they can learn**

TLC carried hope, faith and conviction that learners despite age and disability, despite social, economic and cultural heterogeneity, despite class, caste, gender and religious divide in a hierarchical and stratified social structure can learn with excitement & joy, resilience and self-confidence. They can see for themselves the pace & progress of learning and sustain the motivation to learn and momentum of learning. They can retain and apply the benefits of learning in their day-to-day real life situations.

## **3. Waging war against social evils**

TLC has unleashed a war against fads, dogmas, mindsets, ill perceived notions, obscurantist ideas and practices. It waged a war against social evils like-

- Untouchability, early child marriage, devdasi system;
- Sex determination or amniocentesis ;
- Sex based discrimination against girls by way of foeticide, female infanticide, honour killing etc. ;
- Trafficking of girls & women ;
- Child labour and adult servitude/ serfdom;
- Male addiction to alcohol resulting in economic ruination of families.

## **4. Empowering Women**

Participation in a TLC both as learners and volunteer teachers has made women more agile, aware, alert, self-confident and self-reliant. The women have come out of the narrow confines of their traditional households to have a better exposure to the outside world and to be on their own. When it comes to choosing between alternatives, they have been empowered enough to choose an alternative which will be in their best interest. Women learners in PMT (Shivagangai) district were given training in Karate for self-defence while women learners in Pudukottai learnt cycling to improve their mobility. Girls & women learners in Pudukottai were imparted training in skill formation and upgradation for better employability. The dynamic Collector & DM Pudukottai – Smt. Sheela Rani Chankath was instrumental in forming societies of women workers under DWCRA Scheme, registering them under Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, giving priority in allotment of quarries to these societies under Tamil Nadu Minor Mineral Concession Rules, 1959 and imparting training to the quarry workers in smooth, safe and efficient management of quarries. Eventually 152 DWCRA groups with 4,500 members were allotted the quarries. The contractors from Salem who were hitherto controlling these quarries as lessees were replaced; an era of exploitation by these contractors came to an end and women workers eventually became the supervisors,

managers and owners of the quarries. A silent revolution had taken place on account of the TLC.

### **5. Providing a platform for development in other areas**

The teaching learning process promoted and reinforced awareness which manifested itself in terms of a number of development parameters such as :

- Access to and retention in free and compulsory education of all children in 6-14 age group.
- Immunisation of pregnant mothers and children ;
- Health, hygiene, nutrition, environmental sanitation , maternity protection, child care, oral rehydration therapy (ORT) etc. ;
- Protection and conservation of environment; TLC exhorted all learners to live in harmony with Nature and not to do anything which will cause degradation of environment.

TLC promoted both planned parenthood as well as a balanced family. Planned parenthood means planning and limiting the size of a family. This is because a large and un-planned family in an unemployment/ under-employment situation means less earning members, less income, more mouths to feed, children being pushed involuntarily to work and also poverty and crippling of human resource.

A balanced family in the TLC perspective & context would mean boys and girls are treated alike, men & women are treated alike , there is no obsession with male off-springs, there is no discrimination between boys and girls, men and women in matters of access to food, dress, education, health and medical care etc.

### **6. Integrating literacy with skill training :**

Such integration under TLC brought many dividends. It enhanced and sustained motivation of the learner. It provided an economic incentive to literacy learning. It enhanced employability of literacy learners. Together with programme literacy and financial literacy it encouraged literacy learners to be economically self-reliant and learn to manage their affairs on their own.

### **7. Connecting administrators with grass root level planning and action**

The Collectors and DM were the key functionary in a district with sweeping powers to prevent breach of law and order, public order, peace and tranquillity. The steel frame that they represented and maintained from colonial days was broken to a large extent as a result of TLC. Most of them in a bid to establish better outreach with the people moved in sun and shower, in muddy tracks in inclement weather. A new process of social communication began. On account of intimate involvement with planning, mobilising and coordinating various aspects of the campaign for total literacy in their district at the grass root level They became more positive, pro-active, empathetic and sensitive to the people than before.

Similarly many other senior functionaries of district administration like CEO, Zilla Parishad started identifying themselves totally with the TLC in their respective areas and eventually with the people for whom the TLC is intended. They started composing songs, slogans, skits/ nukkadnataks, role plays etc. and started staging performances along with the members of Aakash Kalajatha teams.

## **8. TLC promoted cultural regeneration of the district**

TLC brings together creative thinkers, writers, artistes, environmentalists, social and educational activists to write skits and role-plays, compose lyrics and themes for performances on the stage with literacy as the dominant theme. The histrionic talent and creativity of people have been brought to the surface and provided a stimulus to such cultural regeneration.

## **9. Emergence of grass root level institutions**

A number of grass root level institutions such as village education committees (VEC) emerged through which adult learners can transform themselves from mere beneficiaries to participants in a societal movement and manage their own affairs with strength, courage and confidence. Such VECs were envisaged as important grass root level institutions in the NPE, 1986 and the Programme of Action (POA) formulated thereunder. VECs were to shoulder direct responsibility for management of primary and elementary education, non-formal education and adult education. Under the TLC, VECs have emerged as important participatory structures at the village level for management of village level institutions.

### **10. A few other redeeming features**

A 70 year old widow from the family of a landless agricultural labourer in Mehaboob Nagar district in AP in early 90s attending a learning centre in that district doesn't treat herself alone in the world; instead she discovers a silent companion and a window of communication to the world outside through her slate and primers. Through powerful rendering of a lesson in a Telugu primer in Dobigutta village of Nellore district where a woman is driven to desperation on account of her husband's addiction to alcohol, an anti-arrack agitation is born and spreads to all villages in 23 districts of then undivided AP like wild fire. Such is the impact of this women's movement against male addiction to alcohol that the Govt. of the day is forced to go in for total prohibition within the State w.e.f 02.10.92.

Landless agricultural labourers of Raichur district, one of the most backward in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region of Karnataka State are deeply moved while watching a powerful play staged by a BGVS aaksharkalajatha team of artistes linking landlessness, drought, indebtedness and illiteracy to bondage. They start perceiving and internalising the importance of this link in their daily lives and take a solemn pledge to become fully functionally literate, not to run money lenders to get indebted and bonded.

*Devdasis* of Maharashtra & Karnataka start perceiving and internalising the harrowing consequences of *devdasi* and yogini system through a literacy centre and take a pledge that they would not allow their daughters to become *devdasis* in future. The learning at the literacy centre gives them this unusual courage and strength to fight a perverse system persisting for generations.

A literate and educated person in Midnapore district in 90s who was a teacher but was ostracised by the village community after he contracted leprosy is brought back to the old community fold when people discover that he set up an adult teaching learning centre in the outskirts of the village and successfully conducted the programme with total sincerity and devotion for the benefit of a large number of adult learners who despite the ostracization were spontaneously attracted to join the centre after watching

the unusual devotion and dedication with which the literacy learning programme was being conducted by the instructor.

Learners belonging to Muslim minorities who are domiciled in a State (Karnataka) and who have assimilated the history and culture of that State have shown unusual interest to learn the State standard language (Kannad) (even though their mother tongue is Urdu/Arabic) so that they can eventually identify themselves with the State mainstream. Learners in a learning centre in Durgapur in Burdwan district who were also landless labourers acquired sufficient strength, courage and confidence to foil the attempt of a local contractor to oust them and engage in their place labourers from outside in the outsourced enterprise.

#### **4. Silver linings in Saakshar Bharat**

Saakshar Bharat, a new centrally sponsored scheme introduced during XI<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan was formally launched on 08.09.2009 i.e. International literacy day.

The thrust in Saakshar Bharat is on rural areas, SC, ST, linguistic, cultural and religious minorities. It seeks to reduce the literacy gaps between Urban and rural areas and between male and female population. It placed emphasis on areas such as Financial literacy, Legal literacy, Electoral literacy. It seeks to integrate lifelong learning and skill training to accomplish the goal of digital and skilled India.

#### **5. Problems, constraints and Challenges of Saakshar Bharat**

Saakshar Bharat will be completing eight years on 08.09.17 (International Literacy Day). Let us look at the various problems and constraints which have inhibited the pace and momentum of Saakshar Bharat.

##### **1. Delayed release of funds and consequences thereof**

Under NLM-TLC funds were being placed directly at the disposal of Zilla Saaksharta Samitis. Funds under Saakshar Bharat are being placed at the disposal of SLMAs. From SLMA, the funds are channelized to the districts. This takes time and delay in transfer of funds to the actual implementation unit adversely affects the programme. This change in the accounting procedure gives rise to inordinate delay in sanction and release of funds. Any such delay is bound to bring in demoralisation and demotivation of a large no of functionaries at the ground level.

##### **2. Need for professional help discounted**

The pace, tempo and gusto of TLCs used to be closely appraised by pre-appraisal missions – a collective body comprising representatives of NLMA- BGVS in the formative years of the TLC (1990-92). Such assessment brought out an accurate and realistic picture of the status of TLCs on the ground. The pre-appraisal missions have since been dispensed with. In their absence professional evaluation of the ground level situation remains a big question mark. Services of qualified and experienced professionals are no

longer being taken on professional basis. In their absence, DG NLMA as the CEO, Saakshar Bharat remains without much professional support at the grass root level.

### **3. Dilution in content & duration of the programme**

The multi-graded and integrated IPCL primers (3) have been replaced by a main and a bridge primer. This dilutes the principle of progression in learning from stage to stage. The duration of teaching learning in Saakshar Bharat has been fixed at 300 hours. This is considered inadequate for acquisition of the desired levels of proficiency in reading, writing and arithmetic. Numerically and according to the Annual report of the Department of School Education and literacy (2014-15)

- 1,01,22,000 (a little above one crore) literacy centres are functioning in different States in the country;
- 54.21 million learners have been enrolled in these centres at the basic literacy stage ;
- 1.52 lakh AECs have been set-up in 1.52 lakh GPs ;

These, however, need to become vibrant centres of lifelong learning and skill training.

### **6. Evaluation of learning outcome in Saakshar Bharat**

The principal target of Saakshar Bharat is to impart functional literacy to 70 million unlettered adults in the age group of 15 and beyond. Auxiliary target of the programme is to cover 1.5 million adults under basic education and equal number under vocational (Skill development) programme. In the NLM-TLC, the assessment of learners was conducted by the volunteer literacy instructor and the certificate was also being issued by him/her. There was no recognition and value of the certificate in society. Learners' assessment for evaluating core competencies of basic literacy including reading, writing and arithmetic is one of the important quality indicators of Saakshar Bharat programme. There is a national examination body i.e. National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) to whom the responsibility for conducting assessment test of learners has been entrusted. This responsibility is being discharged by NIOS in close collaboration with DAE, GOI and SRCs. The first assessment was conducted on a pilot basis on 20.08.2010 with the support of SRCs in 17 States/UTs. Since then 12 tests have been conducted by NIOS. Over 4 crore (40 million) adults have been assessed since 20.08.2010 for their competency in literacy through a process developed and administered by NIOS. 73 per cent of those assessed have been certified as literate, many of whom are young women and men ready to enter the work force.

#### **In retrospect and prospect:**

Over the years, TLCs has been found to be a well-tested and well-proven strategy for eradication of illiteracy and promotion of functional literacy. Between 05.05.88 when NLM was formally launched and 08.09.2009 when Saakshar Bharat was launched till date over 150 million + unlettered persons have been made functionally literate. The overall rate of literacy has also registered an appreciable improvement from 52 pc in 1991 to 72.99 % at the close of 2011 decennial census. There is no doubt appreciable increase in the number of literates. This increase has regrettably been neutralised by

increase in population to 130 crores on the one hand and entry of a large no. of out-of-school children and drop outs who have crossed childhood, entered adulthood and added to the ranks of unlettered persons. India continues to have the single largest no. of unlettered persons (in the vicinity of 300 million) in the whole world.

## 7. The way forward

The 12<sup>th</sup> five year plan has already come to an end on 31.03.17. From all available indications, these may not be any 13<sup>th</sup> five year plan. The life of Saakshar Bharat has been extended initially for a period of 6 months i.e. w.e.f 01.04.17. Further extension will be contingent on the outcome of an appraisal being separately undertaken. This sets in a lot of uncertainty in terms of availability of resources of the desired size to reach 80 pc of literacy which was the goal envisaged at the time of launching of Saakshar Bharat on 08.09.2009. Despite the elements of uncertainty, it needs to be stated and restated that through both NLM-TLC (1988-2008) and later Saakshar Bharat (08.09.2009 onwards), India has reached a significant stage in terms of acquisition of literacy and numeracy levels. The positive fall-outs need to be used as a spring board and surge ahead to sustain the momentum. In order to eradicate illiteracy and promote of functional literacy and continuing education or lifelong learning and skill training the following two-pronged strategy is suggested.

Firstly, vigorous implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is needed to contain the phenomenon of drop-outs, improve retention and boost achievement of the desired levels of proficiency in Mother tongue, Arithmetic, Science and environment studies. This will prevent accretion to the ranks of unlettered adults. And secondly, formulation of a perspective plan (2017-2022) for promotion of functional literacy, continuing education and lifelong learning is required. The findings of 2011 decennial census in regard the number of literates and unlettered persons is already 6 years old. Significant changes would have taken place during this long interregnum. An intensive door-to-door household survey is, therefore, required to be conducted to identify, by using NLM norms, the latest no. of unlettered persons. The identified non-literates are to be enrolled in the literacy centres (a crore) which have been opened under Saakshar Bharat. Depending on the number of non-literates as identified in course of the survey, the number of basic literacy centres may have to be substantially augmented. Saakshar Bharat envisaged AECs to be multi-functional entities with multiple functions. These are:

- Centre for registration of learners;
- Nerve centre for literacy campaign including identification of learners and volunteers;
- Batching and matching of the learners with suitable volunteers as well as their training;
- Providing literacy kits to learners and volunteers and keeping track of the progress made by each learner-volunteer group;
- Centre for thematic courses on behalf of other departments such as Agriculture, Animal husbandry and Veterinary, Fisheries, Horticulture, Sericulture, Handloom,



Handicrafts, Food and Civil Supplies, Health, Education, Rural Development, Urban Development, Women and Child Development, SC/ ST/ OBC Welfare, Panchayati Raj, Science and Technology;

- Library and reading room and venue for group discussion and continuing education;
- Vocational and skill development;
- Centre for promoting sports and adventure, recreational and cultural activities.

Although some AECs have been operational, in terms of number and activity they remain inadequate. Skill development in AECs has been a non-starter for many years. A massive programme for converting AECs into multi-faceted activity centres including skill training is the prime need of the hour. A vital link should be established between AECs/ skill development mission in each State and PM's KaushalVikasYojana. Adult neo-literates who graduate from the AECs with a modicum of some skill will need to refine and sharpen the same. This will be possible under PMKVY once the proposed link is established. The knitty gritty of acquisition of skills through AECs and other skill development and training institutions, needs to be worked out in the perspective plan.

Integrating lifelong learning, skill training, enhancing employability of adult neo-literates and job creation for engaging jobless adults into full, freely chosen and productive employment is the ultimate answer to the problem of adult illiteracy, adult unemployment and poverty. MHRD will have to work in close tandem with Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

## 8. Summary

This module helps the learners to understand the positive fall out of TLCs. It introduces the learners to Saakshar Bharat scheme of GOI and identifies the silver linings. It analyses the problems, constraints and challenges for the future. At the end, the module throws some light on the future course of action through a perspective plan in order to strengthen the gains of literacy and integrate it with lifelong learning, skill training and employability.