Action Plan
India

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INDIA’S NATIONAL LITERACY ACTION PLAN FOR

2012-15-17

CONTEXT:

National Policy framework of Adult Education in India: National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 locates Adult Education in the mainstream of educational system. Highlighting the importance of Adult Education, Para 4.10 of NPE provides, “Our ancient scriptures define education as that which liberates i.e., provides the instruments for liberation from ignorance and oppression. In the modern world, it would naturally include the ability to read and write, since that is the main instrument of learning. Hence the crucial importance of adult education, including adult literacy.” NPE expects literacy (adult education) to facilitate accomplishment of the “national goals such as alleviation of poverty, national integration, environmental conservation, observance of the small family norm, promotion of women’s equality, universalization of primary education, basic health-care, etc. It will also facilitate energisation of the cultural creativity of the people and their active participation in development processes.” [Para 4.12, NPE 1986]

The NPE further states that “comprehensive programmes of post-literacy and continuing education will be provided for neo-literates and youth, who have received primary education, with a view to enabling them to retain and upgrade their literacy skills, and to harness it for the improvement of their living and working condition.” These programmes, according to NPE would inter alia include:

a. Establishment of continuing education centres of diverse kind to enable adults to continue their education of their choice;
b. Workers’ education through the employers, trade unions and government;
c. Wider promotion of books, libraries and reading rooms;
d. Use of radio, TV and films – as mass as well as group learning media;
e. Creation of learners’ groups and organizations; and
f. Programmes of distance learning

Last but not the least, NPE recognizes “that a critical development issue today is the continuous up-gradation of skills so as to produce manpower resources of the kind and the number required by the society. Special emphasis will, therefore, be laid on organization of
employment/self-employment oriented, and need and interest based vocational and skill training programmes.” [Para 4.13, NPE 1986]

Thus viewed, the revamped adult education system should provide opportunities to meet learning needs of any type including functional literacy, basic education, higher education, vocational education, physical and emotional development, arts, culture, sports and recreation. Such opportunities of learning will be for all adults, disadvantaged and advantaged, in the age group of 15 years and above who missed the opportunity of formal education as well as all adults who wish to learn outside the formal system of education. Adult Education will be seamlessly integrated with formal education system for horizontal and vertical migration by establishing equivalency frameworks to facilitate credit transfer among formal, non-formal and informal education.

Hence, within the comprehensive framework laid down in the National Policy on Education for accomplishment of objectives of Literacy, a series of programmes have been introduced, the most prominent being the National Literacy Mission launched in 1988 and SAAKSAHAR BHARAT in 2009.

2. NATIONAL LITERACY MISSION

National Literacy Mission (NLM) launched in 1988 continued till Xth Five Year Plan i.e March, 2007. Since at the time of independence, 86% of India’s population was illiterate and as lifelong learning presupposes basic literacy, the obvious priority and focus of the NLM Programmes was on literacy in line with the National Policy on Education. The thrust was to cover non-literate adults of 15-35 age groups in a time bound manner. By the end of Tenth Five Year Plan, NLM had covered 597 districts of the country under Total Literacy Campaign (TLC), 485 districts in Post Literacy Phase (PLP) and 328 districts under the Continuing Education Programme (CEP). In the process, 127.45 million persons became literate, of which, 60% learners were females, while 23% learners belonged to Scheduled Castes and 12% to Scheduled Tribes.

However, during Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012), between April, 2007 to September, 2009 the activities under the Mission were almost non-existent as the Mission was subjected to impact evaluation. It was noticed that despite significant accomplishment of Mission, illiteracy continued to be an area of national concern. Though precise number of non-literate at that stage was not available but, 2001 Census had revealed that there were still 259.52
million illiterate adults (in the age group of 15 +) in the country. Although, further accretion into the pool of adult illiterate persons was expected to recede significantly on account of enhanced investments in elementary education and a reverse demographic trend but, addition to this pool could not be ruled out altogether on account of relatively high school dropout ratio. Wide gender, social and regional disparities in literacy also continued to persist. Besides, Gender gap in literacy was another matter of concern. Further, with graduation of more and more districts into the Continuing Education Phase, the need and relevance of continuing and lifelong education had increased.

It was, therefore, considered necessary to continue the NLM during the XI Plan (2007-12) period with suitable modification to meet the contemporary challenges. The in-depth appraisal had revealed certain inadequacies in the design, architecture and mode of implementation of the programme, most conspicuous being, non-viability of a single pan Indian solution, limitations of voluntary approach, limited involvement of the State Governments in the programme, lack of convergence, weak management and supervisory structures, lack of community participation, poor monitoring and inadequate funding etc.

Meanwhile, the Government of India in 2009 announced that literacy would be its key programme instrument for emancipation and empowerment of women. Because, efforts of the government to give impetus to school education, health, nutrition, skill development and women empowerment in general had been impeded by the continuance of female illiteracy. Government expected increase in the female literacy should become a force multiplier for all other social development programme. Therefore, in the context of Government’s overall policy aimed at empowerment of women and in recognition of the fact that literacy, especially female literacy was a pre-requisite to inclusive socio-economic development, it was imperative that National Literacy Mission as a programme instrument focuses more on female literacy.

In order to recast the Mission, a protracted process of countrywide consultation with stakeholders was gone through. A series of consultative meetings were held across the country with representatives of the government of States, NGOs, literacy practitioners, managers, administrators, State Resource Centres, universities, social activists and other stakeholders. The broad strategy was also discussed with Education Secretaries of all States. The Council of National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) and Central Advisory Board on Education (CABE) considered and approved the strategy. The general opinion of the stakeholders, expressed during the consultations, was that the new mission ought to take note of considerable demand for female literacy generated on account of large scale changes at the grassroots level and
the new opportunities that have been created over the past several years, most notably, the increasing vibrancy of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), post 73rd Constitution Amendment, the shift to the model of Self – Help Groups (SHGs) that operate through collectivities for self-employment programmes, the massive new organisational capital being forged again through work collectives such as National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), Joint Forest Management Groups etc.

The above background necessitated further revision of the strategy of National Literacy Mission leading to the inception of Saakshar Bharat in 2009.

3. SAAKSHAR BHARAT

Saakshar Bharat, the revised version of National Literacy Mission, was formally launched by Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh on 8th September, 2009, the International Literacy Day, but it came into implementation with effect from 1st October, 2009. The programme aims to further promote and strengthen Adult Education, specially of women, by extending educational options to those adults who having lost the opportunity of access to formal education and crossed the standard age for receiving such education, now feel a need for learning of any type, including, literacy, basic education (equivalency to formal education), vocational education (skill development), physical and emotional development, practical arts, applied science, sports, and recreation.

3.1 Programme Framework of Saakshar Bharat

The programme framework as provided in Saakshar Bharat document is as under:

3.2 Objectives: The Mission has four broad objectives, namely, Impart functional literacy and numeracy to non-literate and non-numerate adults, Enable the neo-literate adults to continue their learning beyond basic literacy and acquire equivalency to formal educational system, Impart non and neo-literate relevant skill development programmes to improve their earning and living conditions, Promote a learning society by providing opportunities to neo-literate adults for continuing education.

3.3 Targets and Special Focus Areas: The Government has set a National Goal of achieving by 2012, 80 percent literacy rate and reducing gender gap in literacy to 10 percent In addition, minimising regional, social and gender disparities with Special Focus on Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Minorities, disadvantaged groups, adolescents and low literacy States
and tribal areas is the other national target. This target has to be achieved through formal schooling of 6-14 year old children and literacy programme of adults.

In order to achieve 80% literacy, the principal target of the Mission is to impart functional literacy to 70 million adults in the age group of 15 years and beyond, to reduce gender disparity, 60 million of 70 million will be women. To reduce social disparities, within the overall target, 14 million will be Scheduled Castes (10 million women + 4 million men), 8 million Scheduled Tribes (6 million women + 2 million men) and 12 million minorities (10 million women + 2 million men).

An auxiliary target of the Mission is to cover 1.5 million adults under basic education programme and equal number under vocational (skill development) programme.

To minimise regional disparities, all districts that had adult female literacy rate of 50% or less as per 2001 Census are being covered under the programme. In addition, Left Wing Extremism Affected districts irrespective of their literacy rate are also eligible under the programme. As 84% of illiterate population lives in the rural areas, the programme is being implemented only in the rural areas of the eligible districts. Whereas, in the urban areas, the demand for residual literacy will be met by innovatively using new actors like Jan Shikshan Sansthans, State Resource Centres, NGOs, social groups and any other institution through Public Private Partnership (PPP) or any other mode.

3.4 **Strategy**: Saakshar Bharat will cover all adults in the age group of 15 and beyond though its primary focus will be on women. Basic Literacy, Post literacy and Continuing Education programmes, form a continuum, rather than sequential segments. For the volunteer based mass campaign approach, provision has been made for alternative approaches to adult education. Adult Education Centres (AECs), are to be set up to coordinate and manage all programmes, within their territorial jurisdiction. State Government and Panchyati Raj institutions along with communities would be valued stakeholders. Vigorous monitoring and evaluation systems are to be installed.

3.5 **Teaching–Learning Programmes**: To respond to the demand for literacy and address the diverse needs of the non and neo-literate adults, an assortment of teaching learning programmes, including Functional Literacy Programme, Basic Education Programme, Vocational Education and Continuing Education Programme are being offered as an integrated continuum.
A. Functional Literacy Programme

Programme Objectives: Literacy Programme (LP) aims at achieving the first objective of the scheme, that is, two Impart functional literacy to non-literate adults. Functional literacy, in context of the programme, implies achieving self-reliance in Reading, Writing, Arithmetic (Numeracy) and becoming aware of the causes of one’s deprivation and moving towards amelioration of their condition through organization and participation in the process of development; Acquiring skills to improve the economic status and general well being; Creating an aware and responsible citizenry (Imbibing values of national integration, communal harmony, conservation of the environment, women’s equality, and reproductive behavior etc.).

Literacy Programme Framework: The programme entails identification of non-literate through a survey, area wise mapping of their learning needs and imparting them instructor based teaching of about 300 hours spread over 3 months or beyond, depending on motivation of the learner and local conditions. Successful completion of the 300 hours of instructional learning would enable the learner to read and comprehend unknown text (news paper headings, road signs etc); apply skills of writing in day to day activities like writing applications and letters and filling up of application forms, etc., and compute simple problems involving multiplication and division. A certificate will be issued to every successful learner based on a professional evaluation of learning outcome. This will open up opportunities for further education through Open Learning Systems. Classes are convened at such time and venue as would be suitable to the learners.

Volunteer-based Mass Campaign Approach: Under this approach, volunteer teaching takes place on a mass scale. A volunteer acts as a mobiliser, trainer and teacher and is responsible for imparting literacy, on an average, to 8-10 learners. The implementing agency at the operational level, will be responsible for identification of the potential learners as well as volunteers, their batching and matching, making arrangements for their training, distribution of literacy kits to learners and volunteers, keeping track of the progress made by each learner-volunteer group, ensuring that the momentum of learning is not lost, while simultaneously ensuring that learning takes place at the pace suitable to the learner. Incentives to the Volunteers and Learners Voluntary Literacy Educators are not paid any remuneration. Since high motivational level of Voluntary Literacy Educators is critical, they need to be motivated through different means including public recognition, at different levels, of their contribution besides other incentives and rewards. Although budgetary provision has not been made for paying honorarium to Literacy Educators but, State Government, Gram Panchayat or NLMA through
any other funding source, including donations or public private partnership, may consider paying the same to them.

**Flexi Approach:** Though Mass Campaign Approach continues to be the dominant strategy, the scheme discounts a homogenous approach uniformly throughout the country. To ensure that basic literacy is provided through a variety of context specific and group specific approaches. Implementing agencies may adopt any approach/model or a mix of approaches/models, including the illustrative formats outlined below:

**Centre-based Approach:**

a. **Resident Instructor:** In the eventuality of qualified Volunteers not being a resident within a particular village, instructors may be engaged from outside the village or community to live with the community and provide instructional teaching to the learners and assist them in completing basic literacy course. On an average, one Resident Instructor will be required to teach at least 30 learners in a period of one year. The Resident Instructor will be provided an honorarium as per NLMA norms. In this approach the centre will function for about 7-8 hours every day, and individual/groups of learners will attend classes for a couple of hours or more depending on the free time available to them. The instructors will be especially chosen for their sensitivity to issues of gender and caste equality, and their commitment to Constitutional values of democracy and secularism.

b. **Residential Camps:** The residential camps are organized, specially for adolescents and young adults in the age group of 15-25 years, who might have already completed primary education (Standard IV/V) but later relapsed to illiteracy for want of follow up; and those who dropped out of the school system, and are now too old to rejoin school and those altogether excluded from systematic education. Identified young adults and adolescents are being motivated to participate in residential camps, which are organized at a suitable location in the Blocks.

c. **Part-residential Camp – Part-volunteer-based Approach:** Provision has been made in the scheme to cover group-specific learners, such as non-literate members of self-help groups, women’s groups, or members of gram panchayats, or persons who may have joined together in a common cause. There are many such groups in the country today and many of them also function as a forum for credit and savings. It would provide for basic
literacy in camps conducted for a suitable period, keeping in view the convenience of the beneficiaries, interspersed with guided learning in volunteer mode. These camps would enable learners to acquire literacy skills of pre-determined levels, simultaneously, providing opportunity for discussion and debate on issues relevant to their living and working conditions.

B. Basic Education Programme Framework:

This programme is designed to achieve the second objective of the scheme, namely, “Enable the neo-literate to continue their learning beyond basic literacy and acquire equivalency to formal educational system”. Arrangements have been made to enable young adults to continue their learning till they are able to achieve equivalence levels with Grade III, IV, V, VI, VII and VIII and beyond in the formal school system or through the Open Learning System. The Open Basic Education (OBE) programme initiated by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and other State Open Schools have been taken as the starting point.

C. Vocational Education (Skill Development) Programme

For furtherance of the third objective of the scheme, that is, “Equip non and neo-literates with vocational skills to improve their living and earning conditions”, suitable skill development training are being imparted to those having rudimentary levels of education or no education. Jan Shikshan Sansthas (JSS), set up under the Scheme for Assistance to Voluntary Agencies for Adult Education and Skill Development of Department of School Education and Literacy, are being institutionally networked with the Adult Education Centres so that they could impart skill development training, as well as literacy linked vocational training. JSS, in coordination with the District Implementing Agency, enlists neo-literates for appropriate skill development training. Parallel efforts may be made by the SLMA and District Implementation Agencies for developing synergies with other agencies in the public as well as private sector for enhanced opportunities of skill development training at the gram panchayat level.

D. Continuing Education Programme

Continuing Education Programme (CEP) is aimed at achieving the fourth objective of the Scheme that is “Establishing a learning society by providing opportunities to neo literates and
other targeted beneficiaries for lifelong learning”. The programme recognizes increased demand for learning generated by Basic and Post Literacy Programmes and the potential need of adult learners to further enhance their skills on their own terms and at their convenience. Continuing Education Programme, as the very name suggests, will not have a fixed time frame as in the case of the other three programmes, but will be organized on a continuous basis. The approach is to create a sustainable learning environment so that learners are encouraged to continue with their literary aspirations and take advantage of the programme facilities to satiate their learning appetite.

The Programme provides facility of a library and reading room, which would be gradually provided with other contemporary ICT devices. Short-term thematic courses like Health awareness / care, Food and nutrition, Water conservation /drinking water / sanitation etc, having relevance to the lives of the learners are being offered under this programme.

3.6 Adult Education Centre

Well equipped multiple functional Adult Education Centres (AEC) are being set up at Gram Panchayat level to provide institutional, managerial and resource support to literacy and life long education at grass root level. One AEC is being set up in a Gram Panchayat having the population of 5000. An additional AEC may be set up if the population of Gram Panchayat is more than 5000. The adult education centre is manned by two paid Coordinators (Preraks) engaged on contractual basis.

An Adult Education Centre acts as a centre for registration of learners for all teaching learning activities in their jurisdiction. It is a nerve center for literacy campaign including identification of the learners and volunteers, batching and matching of the learners with suitable volunteers as well as their training, providing literacy kits to learners and volunteers, keeping track of the progress made by each learner-volunteer group etc. It is a Nodal centre for multifarious activities viz., Center for mass mobilization activities; Center for thematic courses on behalf of other departments such as Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary, Fisheries etc., Library and reading room; Venue for group discussion; Vocational and skill development and extension facility for other departments; Center for promoting sports and adventure and recreational and cultural activities; a composite information window and Data center for Adult Education besides any other activity related to the mission.

Operational Framework for Teaching Learning Programme: The Adult Education Centre is the operational arm of the mission at the grass root level and responsible for delivering the entire range of activities under the Mission including, Literacy, Basic Education, Vocational
Education and continuing education within their territorial jurisdiction. Since the Centres do not have buildings of their own, they have been functioning from the Panchyat Ghars, schools, anganwadi centers etc.

While basic education and continuing education programmes are largely Centre based, the voluntary teacher based literacy programme run through temporary literacy learning centers in a village. These centers are roughly equivalent of a school in the formal sector and are managed by a voluntary Literacy Educator/Resident Instructor on almost same analogy as a single teacher school in the formal sector.

3.7 **Total Quality Management**

3.7.1 **Core Curriculum Framework for Adult Literacy**

Different objectives for literacy programmes place diverse demands on curriculum of literacy programmes. A relevant curriculum is conducive to better learning outcomes. At the same time, there is a need for standardization of quality benchmarks. NLMA has developed a National Curriculum Framework for Adult Education. The Framework spells out the content and their comprehensiveness in delineating core academic areas and locally relevant issues, teaching-learning methods and processes for achieving the literacy norms and other objectives.

The core curriculum reflects the national values like national integration, secularism, democracy, scientific temper, communal harmony, women’s equality, small family norm etc. It also addresses the demands of the learners and takes into account the diversity of their socio-cultural background, life experience, linguistic skills and motivational levels. The objective is to strike a balance between the larger social objectives of the Mission and relevance to local contexts and to wider opportunities.

3.7.2 **High-Quality Teaching-Learning Material (TLM)**

To ensure uniformly high standards, all the materials for basic education, equivalency and continuing education have been quality-assured by an Expert Committee set up by the NLMA. The Committee comprises of experts in the field of adult education, gender, languages, and priority sectors. With respect to equivalency, the Committee will also include experts from formal education and Open Learning Systems.

The Committee has laid down the standards and guidelines for developing teaching-learning material in different languages, the form and quality of presentation of the contents in the learning materials appropriate to the level of adults. It covers the main elements of literacy, skill development, equivalency and lifelong learning, in the context of livelihood, social and
cultural realities of the learners and special issue-based and thematic aspects, such as gender parity, health and hygiene, environment, agriculture, animal husbandry, etc. Only such materials that are approved by the Committee are being used in the Programme.

3.7.3 Improving Quality of Literacy Educators

Teaching adults is an art that requires a specialized set of skills. Quality instructors are, therefore, a pre-requisite for the success of the programme. Since the programme does not engage professional teachers, but relies mainly on Volunteers with little or no previous teaching experience, they are being given intensive high quality training in andragogy in local language both at the time of induction as well as during the course of the literacy programme. A cascading approach to training is being adopted so that the trainers of today are trained to be potential trainers of tomorrow. As the key focus of the programme is on women and other disadvantaged groups, the literacy educators are specially sensitized on gender, social, and cultural issues.

Capacities of the Central Directorate of Adult Education and SRCs are being further developed to purposefully engage them in ensuring quality training in the State including preparation of curriculum, training manuals, training strategies, training of trainers, and other components related to training. Inputs are provided to them on working with women, mobilizing them and linking women’s social realities with the literacy and other programmes of the Mission.

A network of institutes such as District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), District Resource Units, JSSs and other professional bodies have been developed as key resource institutions in a district for training of trainers.

3.8 Assessment & Certification

Assessment of actual competence of the population in literacy skills is important for getting feedback of the success and outcomes of the programme. A systematic assessment procedure has, therefore, been put in place and administered periodically. The basic principles underlying the procedure for evaluation are non-incursive, promoting courage and self-confidence in response and action and self-actualisation. Tests under Basic Literacy are conducted twice in the year. On successful completion and assessment, the learner is issued a certificate.

Assessment of other components of basic education (equivalency programme) will be conducted as per the provisions of National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and State Open Schools (SOS) and certificates will also be provided to the successful candidates by NIOS/SOS.
3.9 New Learning Technologies (ICT)

Information and Communication Technology is fast emerging as an effective tool to improve the access as well as quality of adult education. Already successful experiments have been made to teach using radio and television. Locally produced interactive radio instruction and community radio can promote exchange between learners and programme providers. Much deeper penetration of radio and television has further enhanced their potential as a channel for promoting literacy. ICT, as a medium of instruction, can be all the more effective for developing professional skills of literacy educators. ICTs can be creatively used to close the digital divide – where computer proficiency is not just seen as a marketable skill but one that enables access to information and helps sustain literacy skills. ICT and other technologies, therefore, are being extensively used to achieve the National Literacy Goals.

3.10 Resource Support

In order to provide academic resource support to literacy and adult education programmes, State Resource Centres (SRCs) have been established throughout the country. Not only their number has been increased but also their capacities enhanced so that they could extend adequate academic and technical resource support to adult and continuing education programmes specially in the realm of development of teaching learning material and training of literacy practitioners and managers. Besides SRCs, Resource Support Groups with due representation of educationists, social activists, experienced and committed volunteers/functionaries, representative of local training institutions etc., will be constituted at national, state, district, block and Gram Panchayat level.

3.11 Efficiency Management

A. Convergence and Partnerships

(i) Public Public Partnerships:NLMA and SLMAs are working towards actively promoting convergence of the Mission’s programs and activities with other development strategies specially in education, rural development, health, child and women development, poverty alleviation, agriculture, Panchayati Raj and social welfare sectors. Efforts are being made to take the unified energies of the Departments of School Education and Literacy and higher education down to the village level. Teachers are being encouraged to motivate non-literate parents of their students to enroll as learners and motivate educated youth in the village to volunteer as teachers for the campaign. They could also act as teachers of the literacy classes.
School infrastructure created under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Formal Schooling System) of Government is also available for the literacy programmes during non-school hours.

(ii) **Public Private Partnerships:** Adult education in India has always been predominantly a government responsibility with some degree of involvement of NGOs. In contrast to very prominent collaboration in the case of formal school system, the contribution of private and corporate sector in adult education has been miniscule. Private and corporate sector can play a momentous role in promoting objectives of the Mission. NLMA is authorized to develop Public Private Partnerships and other models of partnership to generate funds and also to obtain donations.

B. **International Partnerships**

To gain from international experiences, NLMA will strive to establish an international network and work closely with UNESCO, UNICEF, and other international bodies engaged in adult education and arrive at bilateral and multilateral arrangements for mutually beneficial partnerships.

C. **Research**

Applied research is as important to Total Quality Management as any other intervention. The Mission accords high priority to promote research in basic and post literacy and continuing education as also gender issues and documentation and dissemination of research findings. Research studies on relevant themes will be assigned to competent agencies. Further, universities and social science research institutes of repute and standing will be addressed to encourage the researchers to work in the field of different aspects of adult education for the award of doctoral and post-doctoral degree. NLMA will also consider sponsorship of research, on topics selected by it, in reputed universities.

D. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Objective performance parameters have been prescribed for each agency involved in implementation of the scheme. A web based Management Information System (MIS) has also been put in place for real time monitoring, which is critical for optimising the outreach and impact of the programmes. NLMA, SLMA and District bodies review the progress at their respective levels.

E. **Fund Release Management:** NLMA has worked out a mechanism for just in time release of funds to all implementing agencies using the core banking facilities available with scheduled banks.
3.12 Planning

(i) Guiding Principles

Accountability, transparency, participative management, clear delineation of roles and accountability are essential features of planning process and management. In compliance with 73rd Constitutional Amendment, NLMA perceives a pivotal role for Panchayati Raj institutions (community institution) in implementation of the programme at the district and sub-district level. However, the discretion of actual role definition vests with SLMA. It will be incumbent upon SLMAs to ensure that planning processes adopted by it conform to the fundamentals of the strategy, more importantly, decentralization and bottom up approach. For efficient planning, NLMA makes available superior tools of project planning on line.

The programme has been envisaged as a people’s programme in the true sense, a programme of the people, for the people and by the people. The role of NLMA and SLMA is that of catalytic agencies, facilitators and resource providers. Adequate representation of women in these structures, specially in decision-making roles, have been ensured. Adequate resource support are being provided to planning and implementing agencies through special purpose vehicles like State Resource Centers and other bodies with requisite capacities.

(ii) Planning Process

Activities and responsibilities have been delineated up to the Panchyat Gram level. Panchayats or the agency designated by the SLMA are responsible for Micro-planning in respect of preparation of action plan at GP level. Micro Planning includes survey, data collection, mass mobilization, training schedules of different levels of functionaries, procurement and distribution of teaching learning materials, evaluation of learning outcome of the learners, budgetary requirements, etc. A GP level plan is formulated taking into account all programmes and activities of the Mission. Blocks have to aggregate all the gram panchayts in the block and add their own activity budget to it. The District Implementing Agency ensembles all the block plans and add their own activity budget and submit it to SLMA. SLMA aggregates all district plans and add their own state activity and budget to it to NLMA. The state plan is thus an ensemble of all district plans plus SLMA’s own activity budget. The National Literacy Mission Authority appraise each State Plan and issue administrative and financial sanction based on which funds (Central Government share) are released to SLMA.

Management Structure

The programme is being implemented in Mission mode. Institutional framework, right from the national up to the state, district, block and gram Panchyat, have been set up involving
the state government, district administration and Panchyati Raj institutions. Adequate representation of women in these structures, especially in decision-making roles have been ensured.

The National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA), an autonomous wing of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, is the Nodal Agency at the national level. It is responsible for the overall planning and management of the scheme, including release of funds to States/Voluntary Agencies, mobilization of resources, procurement, mass campaigns, maintenance of national database on illiteracy and adult education, publicity, facilitate technopedagogical support, research, monitoring and evaluation, etc.

At the State level, the State Literacy Mission Authority (SLMA), is responsible for preparation, implementation and monitoring of the programmes. The State Plan ensembles all district Plans.

At the district level district administration or ZillaParishads (ZP) have been made responsible for the implementation of the programme. Gram Panchyats, along with communities, are the implementing Agency at the operational level, that is, all villages within a GP.

**Financing and budget**

The share of funding between Central and State Government is in the ratio of 75:25 and in the case of North-Eastern States including Sikkim in the ratio of 90:10, respectively. The allocation of funds to the States is based on adult female illiterate population in the districts covered under the programme in various States.

Upper levels of cost norms have been prescribed for all components of the Mission including management, monitoring and evaluation, etc. A statement of budget approved, grants sanctioned, central share released etc. to all States/UT is annexed (Annexure-I).
4. INITIATIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS (upto March, 2012)

Although, Saakshar Bharat Programme was launched on 8th September, 2009 but, the programme became operative from 1st October, 2009. The programme initially faced several challenges. It got revived after long hiatus and was as good as a new one. There was no formal implementation structure in the States. It heavily depended on spirit of Voluntarism. The programme envisaged for the first time involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions at Gram Panchayat, Block and District levels as the implementing agencies. Lot of preparations like environment building, formation of Management Committees at different levels, opening of Bank Accounts of each implementing agency, authorisation of funds under the ICT based Fund Flow Mechanism, Training/Orientation of Resource Persons and functionaries and Representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions, Preparation and Distribution of Teaching Learning Materials were required to be done to streamline the functioning of the programme.

The following initiatives were taken during the last two and a half years of the functioning of the Saakshar Bharat Programme:

4.1 Environment Building, Motivation and Mobilisation

For environment building and mobilisation, an effective communication strategy was required for creating sustainable demand for literacy, making visible the importance and relevance of literacy and making literacy campaign participatory and voluntary. A Strategic Communication Group was formed under the Chairpersonship of Dr. D. Purandeswari, Minister of State, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. The group approved a comprehensive communication strategy for mobilisation and environment building which entailed a multi media approach. Implementation of the approved communication strategy was undertaken by the Strategic Communication Implementation Group under the Chairpersonship of Joint Secretary(AE) and DG(NLMA). Publicity Materials in the form of audio and video spots have been produced and are being used for publicity of the programme. Publications “Mai Bhi Padhungi” & “Let us Teach and Learn”, Picture Postcards, Posters, Calendars, Brochures on Saakshar Bharat and other print material have been brought out. Advertisements have been inserted in National and Regional News Papers. Electronic Media has been used to telecast video spots, spots on learner assessment on television and broadcast on All India Radio. As a part of interpersonal media campaign “Meet the GP and BP Heads” Campaign was undertaken to accelerate the pace of implementation at the operational level. A nationwide mobilization campaign was undertaken by NLMA through Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samitee (BGVS), an NGO,
across the country to mobilize people in favour of Saakshar Bharat Programme. Interpersonal media activities were also undertaken through Song & Drama Division of M/o Information & Broadcasting covering 11 States. The activities included drama, dance-drama, puppetry, ballets, operas, folk and traditional recitals etc. The National Literacy Mission Authority participated in the Republic Day Parade held on 26th January, 2012 with ‘Saakshar Bharat Tableau’. The tableau was awarded first prize.

4.2 **Formation of Management Committees, Opening of Bank Accounts**

Formation of Management Committees, opening of Bank Accounts and Authorisation of Funds to different implementing agencies were undertaken at an accelerated pace. Reconstitution of State Literacy Mission Authorities in all the 26 States/UT has been completed. District level Management Committees have been constituted in 304 of the 372 districts covered under the programme. Management Committees have also been set up in nearly 75% (3410) of the 4362 Blocks and in 1.10 lakh out of 1.61 lakh Gram Panchayats. Bank Accounts at District (80%), Block (68%) and G.P (55%) have been opened.

4.3 **Survey and identification of potential learners**

Survey has been conducted in over 50% (83,398) of the sanctioned GPs and over 50 million potential learners have been identified based on the survey. The survey also identified the potential Volunteer Teachers (VTs) for the programme and helped to prepare proper batching matching of the learners with the available Volunteer Teachers.

4.4 **Teaching Learning Material Development**

Basic Literacy Primers for Basic Literacy have been developed by State Resource Centres in different languages for use in 26 States/UT. These primers were approved by the Quality Assurance Committee of the Directorate of Adult Education. Basic Primers in tribal dialects have also been developed in Manipur. These primers have been printed by each State Literacy Mission Authority(SLMA) for use in their State.

4.5 **Fund Flow Mechanism and Accounts Management**

Under the ICT based Fund Flow Mechanism, funds are individually authorised to 2 lakh implementing agencies from state to village level on the basis of already sanctioned financial plan. The National Literacy Mission Authority remits funds to a single State implementing agency. All the funds are retained in the Main account of SLMA and is accessed and withdrawn
by all implementing agencies in the state to the extent, authorization issued in their favour on the basis of pre-defined authorization system. The Banking System has been developed in conformity with the fund flow system by four notified Banks namely State Bank of India, Indian Bank, Punjab National Bank and Union Bank of India. Customised cheque books are issued at all levels and banks have a coding system built on cheque books that includes names of the respective implementing agencies, their addresses and account number. With a view to impart training in Funds and Accounts Management System to the officials of SLMAs, DPs, BPs and GPs, workshop-cum trainings have been organized in all the States covered under this programme. Approximately 35-40 officials have been trained in each training programme and participants have been taught to make live data entry in Personal Computers attached with internet facilities.

### 4.6 Web Based Planning and Monitoring Information System (WePMIS)

The National Informatics Center (NIC) has developed a Web Based Planning & Monitoring Information System, WePMIS, a customized web based system for Planning, Monitoring & Impact Analysis for Saakshar Bharat. It is a work flow based application, networking the major stake holders of the scheme and facilitates physical and financial planning, monitoring, reviewing the progress and evaluating the impact of the Mission from the grass root level. As a part of the System, a public portal has also been developed through which the information regarding the Scheme and its implementation in States at various levels is disseminated to citizens.

### 4.7 Capacity Building

NIC conducted a National Workshop on Web based Planning and Monitoring System (WePMIS) developed for the implementation of the Saakshar Bharat Mission. The workshop was conducted for the participants of 26 States/UT at Institute of Secretariat Training and Management (ISTM), New Delhi in two sessions of 2 days each. These were held in September and October, 2011 and over 75 personnel were trained to be Master Trainers for the WePMIS application. NIC officials from all the States also attended the workshop and are now available as support persons for use of the application in their respective States.

Trainings were organised by SLMAs with the help of State Resource Centres for training Resource Persons (RPs) and Master Trainers for Saakshar Bharat Programme. Around 7,414 Resource Persons, 1,32,453 Master Trainers were trained at the State level who in turn trained over 15 lakh Volunteer Teachers. NLMA organised special training of RPs at Uttarakhand
Academy of Administration, Nainital and National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad. In order to provide continuous support and handholding to SLMAs for solution of the technical issues relating to portal, National Informatics Centre Services Inc. (NICSI) (an agency of NIC) provided training at SLMAs and SRCs in different States. The handholding teams of NICSI were positioned at different SLMAs and SRCs.

4.8 Islands of Success

In addition to providing technical resource support for preparation of material, conducting of training for Resource Persons and providing other technical support for the implementation of Saakshar Bharat Programme in the State, the State Resource Centres have been assigned the responsibility of adopting some Blocks in different districts of the concerned State to intensively monitor the implementation of Saakshar Bharat Programme in those Blocks and to improve the functioning of the programme by facilitating resolution of different problems/difficulties in the implementation of the programme. 511 Blocks situated in 120 Districts of 25 States and 1 Union Territory have been adopted by 27 State Resource Centres under the programme of Islands of Success.

4.9 Model AECs under Public Private Partnership (PPP)

With a view to promote convergence of Saakshar Bharat Programme and its activities with Public Sector Undertakings through PPP mode, a series of meetings were held with the representatives of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) namely, Gas Authority India Limited, Hindustan Petrol Corporation Limited, Power Finance Corporation, Container Corporation of India Limited and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation etc. The representatives of these undertakings expressed their willingness to extend support to Saakshar Bharat Programme under their Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives. Container Corporation of India Limited is the first CPSE to provide financial assistance of Rs. 6.5 Million for up-gradation of 20 Adult Education Centres into model AECs in Karnataka during 2010-11. During 2011-12 CONCOR also provided Rs.25 Million for up-gradation of 100 AECs into Model AECs in States. In addition, Power Finance Corporation Ltd. and Rural Electrification Corporation provided financial assistance of Rs.66 Million &Rs. 105 Million for strengthening of 264 & 320 Adult Education Centres into Model AECs respectively.
4.10 Learners Assessment

The National Literacy Mission Authority has evolved a systematic mechanism for learners’ assessment and certification. The learners are provided opportunities for appearing in the assessment tests conducted twice in a year during March and August. The system of learners’ assessment includes assessing literacy skills as well as general awareness and empowerment through participation in various activities.

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) is closely associated in the process of Learners Assessment and Certification. The objectives of assessment of learners are as under:

- Assessing learners’ proficiency levels attained in functional literacy skills.
- Recognizing the level of achievements at basic literacy level through certification.
- To encourage learners to achieve vertical mobility in education.

So far, the assessment test of learners have been conducted four times. The first assessment was done on pilot basis which was implemented by State Resource Centres on 20th August, 2010. Remaining three assessments were implemented by State Literacy Mission Authorities on 6th March, 2011, 20th August, 2011 and on 18th March, 2012.

4.11 Physical Progress up to March, 2012

365 districts in 25 States and 1 Union Territory having Adult Female Literacy Rate of 50% or below have been identified to be covered under Saakshar Bharat. It has also decided to cover the Left Wing Extremism Affected districts irrespective of their literacy rate under this programme. In total 410 districts are eligible under Saakshar Bharat Programme.

During 2009-10 between December, 2009 to March, 2010.167 districts having about 80 thousand Gram Panchayats were sanctioned under Saakshar Bharat Programme. Of these 167 districts Basic Literacy and Continuing Education activities were functioning in 158 districts by March, 2012. Additional 115 districts were sanctioned under the programme during 2010-11. Of the total 282 districts sanctioned till March, 2011, Basic Literacy Programme and Continuing Education Centres were functioning in 244 (86.5%) of the 282 districts. During 2011-12 another 90 districts falling in the states UP (40), MP (27), Orissa (16), Haryana (5), Bihar (1) and Jharkhand (1) were sanctioned. Process of preparations which takes about a year or so was going on in these districts.
By March 2012, 15.92 lakh literacy centres were set up in different States covered by the programme except the State of Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tripura where literacy centres could not be started during this period. Of the 1.61 lakh Gram Panchayats falling in the 372 sanctioned districts, 91 thousand Adult Education Centres for Continuing Education were set up in as many Gram Panchayats. By August 2011, 92 lakh learners had appeared and about 64 lakh of them were certified as literate. In the last test held on 18th March 2012, about 122 lakh learners appeared for the test. Vocational Education/Skill Development to Adults is being provided through 250 Jan Sikshan Sansthas. Guidelines for starting equivalency programme for the neo-literates through National Institute of Open Schooling have been finalised.

5. CURRENT LITERACY SCENARIO

Literacy in India has made remarkable strides since independence. This has been further confirmed by the results of the Census 2011. The literacy rate has increased from 18.33% in 1951 to 74.04% in 2011. This is despite the fact that during the major part of the last six decades there has been exponential growth of the population at nearly 2% per annum. The male literacy rate has increased to 82.14%, which shows an increase of 6.88%. On the other hand, the female literacy of 65.46% has increased at a much faster rate of 11.79%(53.67% in Census, 2001).The male-female literacy gap has reduced from 21.59% in 2001 to 16.68% in 2011. All States and Union Territories without exception have shown increase in literacy rates during 2001-2011. The number of literate persons has increased to 778.45 million in 2011 thus, adding an additional 217.70 million literates in the country. One of the interesting features noticed is that out of total of 217.70 million literates added during the decade, females (110.07 million) out number males (107.63 million). Bihar has recorded the highest increase i.e. 16.82% in the literacy rate among the States and D&N Haveli has recorded the highest increase i.e. 20.02% among UTs of India. Literacy rate of Bihar in 7+ population in 2001 was 47.00% which has increased to 63.82% in 2011. The total number of illiterates has come down from 304.15 million (Census,2001) to 272.95 million i.e. a decline of 31.2 million persons with females account for 17 million and males account for 14 million. The Census 2011 has reported literacy rate above 60% for all States/UTs, whereas, 15 States/UTs have reported more than 80% literacy. In all the States/UTs the male literacy is above 70% whereas, female literacy is more than 50%. The most increasing trend noticed is the narrowing down of the gender gap in literacy. Besides, the urban-rural literacy differential has also decreased during the period. The statement showing literacy rate, both male and female literacy, State wise is annexed (Annexure-II).
6. PROCESS EVALUATION OF SAAKSHAR BHARAT

Recently a study on “Process Evaluation of Saakshar Bharat” was carried out by Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai, and the major recommendations of the report are:

“The Saakshar Bharat Programme has a clear social objective to achieve and a well defined population to work with. All evidence gathered in the study whether through interview schedules or through the Focused Group Discussions indicates that the programme needs to be strengthened and continued into the Twelfth Five-Year Plan (2012-17). The processes initiated till the present are well thought out and robust. Taking off from the lessons learnt, there is every indication that the Saakshar Bharat Programme can move on to take up the challenge of increasing rural female literacy, reducing the gender gap in literacy and becoming the basis for a programme which meets the diverse needs of non and neo-literate adult and young persons in rural areas.”

7. STRATEGY FOR 2012-2017

Saakshar Bharat Programme is proposed to be continued during 2012-17 in its original programme framework indicated above with more focus on following:

7.1 Institutionalization

A systematic approach needs a system. Adult education will need a nationwide and multilevel network of institutions that can identify and meet the learning needs of individuals, groups, organizations and communities. The purposes of adult education, and by implication of lifelong education, and its clientele and the conditions for its modes of delivery and management, are its own and cannot be served or replaced by the general formal education system. Management of adult education entails inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial cooperation. It is therefore essential to change the ephemeral character of the literacy mission to a regular and permanent system of education of adults and create and maintain mechanisms for involvement of public authorities at all administrative levels, civil society organisations (CSOs), social partners, private sector, community and adult learners’ and educators’ organisations in the development, implementation and evaluation of adult learning and education policies and programmes. The State must play the key role in establishing the needed network of institutions.
7.2 Decentralization

In consonance with the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, Local Self-Government bodies and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) shall be the harbingers of adult education at sub-State level. But community and civil society will be equal stakeholders in the management of the programme. Success of the programme largely depends on the extent to which these institutions own the programme.

7.3 Professionalization

Professionalization of teachers, trainers and other staff members involved in lifelong learning should be addressed in a systematic manner. Improving training, capacity-building, employment conditions and the professionalization of Adult Education Teachers (AETs) is therefore, an indispensable prerequisite. Partnerships with higher education institutions, specialist agencies and civil society organizations with relevant expertise and private sector could be an effective to achieve this end.

7.4 Incentivisation

Unlike in most other programmes, there are no incentives to the learners who in most cases forego their wages for attending the literacy and adult education centres and its programmes. This is the same case with the Volunteers who give their time for 2 hours or more for months, in the service of adult literacy and education. In most other cases in rural areas in other social development and welfare activities, there is some system of incentives, so much so, that Voluntarism for literacy draws excuses if not derision from both learners and Volunteers.

7.5 Access Promoting and facilitating more equitable access to, and participation in, adult and lifelong education by enhancing a culture of learning and education by eliminating barriers to participation;

7.6 Equity Literacy programmes should be all inclusive and there should no exclusion arising from age, gender, language, religion, disability, rurality, migrant status, occupation, poverty, displacement or imprisonment.

Supporting the development of writing and literacy in the various dialects by developing relevant programmes, methods and materials that recognize and value the indigenous cultures, knowledge and methodologies, while adequately developing the teaching of the second language of wider communication;
Special focus on rural areas, urban slums, low literacy areas, tribal areas, SC model villages, minority concentrated districts, areas affected with left wing extremism, difficult areas and NE states.

Providing adult education in prison at all appropriate levels;

Developing effective educational responses for seasonal migrants and nomads.

7.7 Improved Quality

Quality in adult learning, that could add intrinsic value and enjoys stake-holders’ confidence, hinges on learner-centred needs assessment, content relevant to the learner’s needs, efficient delivery, acquisition of competences and knowledge that enables the learner to meet better the challenges of the environment he or she faces in, professionalization of educators, empowerment of individuals and communities.

Developing quality curricula, learning materials and teaching methodologies in adult and lifelong education programmes are of foremost importance. This is feasible only through active engagement of Universities, Industry, line departments and other expert agencies.

Scientific criteria to assess the learning outcomes of adults at various levels in adult literacy, skill development, prior learning and equivalency should be developed based on which third party assessment and certification should be undertaken.

Precise Quality indicators for different aspects of adult education should be developed and put in place.

Unlike formal education stream, the research base of lifelong learning is comparatively weaker and needs to be strengthened by earmarking separate funds for offering grants to young researchers, fellowships to doctoral students and retired academics to pursue researches on priority areas identified by the National Mission on Lifelong Learning. Special focus should be on Interdisciplinary and action researches which should be system, adult education lacks research support. There is a felt need for systematic interdisciplinary research in adult learning and education, complemented by knowledge management systems for the collection, analysis and dissemination of data and good practices. There should be an institutional arrangement for research and resource support at national level with linkages with Universities and other institutions of research. For this purpose, a consortium of reputed universities and research institutions need be identified and engaged in research.

*****
## Status of Grants Released under Saakshar Bharat to 25 States & 1 UT for 372 Districts

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