



## **Sustaining literacy through libraries**

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### **Meeting:**

**114 — *Beyond the United Nations Decade of Literacy: what libraries can do* — Literacy and Reading Section with National Libraries**

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### **Abstract:**

*Literacy is an important aspect of human development and is crucial to success of individuals in both their career aspirations and their quality of life.*

*Many organizations in Nepal implement their projects on literacy promotion in rural areas. As the result, the rate of literacy is on rise. With the increase in literacy, the question also arises on how the people are being able to use literacy skills after they are enrolled in literacy class. Most often there are cases that same participants enrolled in the class repeatedly with complain that they forget what has been taught.*

*READ supported community library and resource centres (CLRCs) are playing major role in sustaining literacy. Literacy promotion is one of the most important activities supported by READ CLRCs. It is promoted in a number of ways: inclusion of books for the newly literate, and the inclusion of materials for self training and retention of literacy skills. Becoming literate is just a start. To help retention, as well as to help the people thrive, newly literate members of the community are involved in different kinds of activities, through the CLRCs, to promote income generation, livelihood development, women's empowerment, awareness raising, etc. For example, women in the village of Jhuwani created a savings and credit cooperative where they teach/learn basic mathematics and savings techniques. As the result of this more literate people are getting involved in activities which can help their literacy skills.*

*Few examples are referred in this paper with special attention to the project called MEDICT implemented in collaboration of NORAD/NAAL and READ Nepal.*

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### **SUSTAINING LITERACY THROUGH LIBRARIES**

In 1991, READ Nepal launched a grassroots level organization to address the problem of illiteracy in Nepal with the creation of its first Community Library and Resource Center (CLRC). Since then, READ Nepal has created 47 CLRCs in 37 of the 75 districts in the country. In the READ model, each CLRC is community owned and managed by the local community which has the legal authority to conduct programs according to the needs of the specific community. Each CLRC is self sustainable as they have locally relevant businesses attached to it such as ambulances, furniture factory, store front rentals, cable television, etc., which generate income to sustain the library. CLRCs have different sections – library section, meeting hall, children section, audio visual section and computer section.

CLRCs give services to all sections of the community, with a special focus on women and children. To establish itself as a real development center, each CLRC partners with different local and national organizations to conduct programs on literacy, economic development, health and other issues.

READ's experience in community libraries in rural Nepal has seen the success of this model which encourages and strengthens solidarity based on "social relationships" with the community. According to Prof. Mohan Das Manandhar, *Policy Advisor*, National Inclusion Commission, Office of Prime Ministers and Council of Ministers, Government of Nepal, these social relationships empower communities in their own economic development with a minimum of procedural mechanisms and through relatively small units as the library.

Literacy promotion is one of the most important activities supported by READ CLRCs. It is promoted in a number of ways: inclusion of books for the newly literate, the conducting of literacy classes in collaboration with different government and non government organizations, and the inclusion of materials for self training and retention of literacy skills. Becoming literate is just a start. To help retention, as well as to help the people thrive, newly literate members of the community are involved in different kinds of activities, through the CLRCs, to promote income generation, livelihood development, women's empowerment, awareness raising, etc. For example, women in the village of Jhuwani created a savings and credit cooperative where they teach/learn basic mathematics and savings techniques. The CLRC also provides training on income generation ideas to help the women create small businesses for their own livelihoods.

Examples:

Chaturbhujeshowr Community Library, Sarlahi – Apart from other development activities this CLRC has been coordinating literacy classes focused on women and adolescents. The CLRC has tied the literacy class with the formal education system and has set up grades according to the government standards. 500 women and adolescents have successfully completed the program so far and are considered literate. Twenty five of these women were able to pass the School Leaving Certificate (diploma).

Agyauli Community Library, Agyauli – The Agyauli CLRC conducts a number of programs for women in the community. It has coordinated with the District Education Office to conduct 68 literacy classes to raise the literacy levels of the 1360 participants. Volunteers from the center conduct classes in very remote villages which are not easily accessible and also provide outreach to school programs and women’s groups in the outlying areas. The CLRC has Early Childhood Education programs which give children a place to study while their mothers are involved in agricultural works.

*A detailed case on contribution of libraries to literacy : A case of NORAD funded MEDICT project in Chitawan Nepal*

Jhuwani community library, located in the southern plain of Nepal was established in 2001 with the active initiation of local youth club. The community library lies in the buffer zone area of Chitawan National park where about one hundred thousand tourists visit the national park every year.

For the establishment of community library, READ Nepal partnered with the local community. The library is managed by local management committee and constructed own building where books, newspapers, computers, internet, audio visual programmes and women cooperative is running. Out of 45 community libraries established in the country, Jhuwani community library is one of the exemplary community library of Nepal.

**From library to learning center**

With financial assistance of NORAD (The Norwegian Development Agency) and in partnership with The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning (NAAL) a project entitled "Mobilisation for Education And Development through ICT" is under implementation since April 2010. Under the umbrella of Jhuwani community library (hub), three satellite centers have been established.

There are 2,200 households with a population of 12,000 in the catchment area of these four centers.

Library	Total household	Family Size		
		Male	Female	Total
Dibya Jyoti Community Library and Learning center	367	996	967	1963
Tarauli Library Community and Learning center	282	762	715	1477
Sauraha Community Library and Learning center	1121	3020	2965	5985
Jhuwani Community Library and Learning center	457	1269	1174	2443
<b>Total</b>	<b>2227</b>	<b>6047</b>	<b>5821</b>	<b>11868</b>

*Being a country where about one third of the people can not read and write (illiterate), community libraries established at rural settings are receiving limited number of users.*

Though government of Nepal implemented a policy of "Education for All" since 2009, due to financial constraints progress is very slow and literacy classes run by government are not effective. Thus, as a complementary to government's plan, MEDICT project is running six literacy classes for 126 women in these community libraries. These literacy classes are managed by a local partner, Jhuwani community library. The local partner has a plan to eradicate illiteracy from its catchment area in coming three years.

Now, participants attending literacy classes are able to read and write their names. They feel pride of being literate. In order to deliver practical knowledge and skills, Illiterates and neo literates are attending adult learning sessions. Three women health related discussion sessions held with the local health expert where women participants health related concerns were discussed. According to local health expert (facilitator), such sessions are effective in raising awareness to women.

Similarly, on the services of local government, (Village Development Committee), local governor delivered four sessions on birth, death and migration registration, legal provisions for property right, citizen ship certificate issues and basic services delivered by the local government.

Adult learning sessions on farming, problems faced by community people in producing vegetables and rice and maize production has been planned. Such adult learning sessions will continuously organized for neo literate semi literate people.

In terms of information and communication, only 9.2 percent households have land line telephone services. Cellular mobile phone is increasingly accessible in Nepal but still expensive. In total, its penetration rate is 27 percent.

Library	Telephone Users		Penetration rate	
	Mobile	Landline	land line	mobile
Dibya Jyoti Community Library	531	19	5.2	27.1
Tarauli LibraryCommunity	493	16	5.7	33.4
Sauraha Community Library	1503	126	11.2	25.1
Jhuwani Community Library	687	43	9.4	28.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3214</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>27.1</b>

Television accessibility is increasingly available but still one third of population is without these services.

In order to promote Information and communication, all four community libraries have accessibility of free internet services to the users. 100 persons are trained on computer use. Establishment of computer centre in community libraries is bringing revolution in these new community libraries. Community members are establishing regular contact with their family members living in Kathmandu and abroad (mainly working in Gulf countries).

Recently, television is installed in three satellite centres and knowledge based information programme will be organized soon.

Three satellite centers were established in October 2010. In short period, they are successful in becoming local learning centres where telephone, fax, internet, photocopy, literacy classes, reading books and news papers services are available.

**In this perspective, local rural community libraries in Nepal are transforming from not just being a library but truly becoming local learning centers as well.**

Observations of an International Expert who has been involved in evaluation of the READ Nepal program:

*Prof. Susan B. Neuman, University of Michigan, 2008.* READ began in 1991 in order to address local issues (gender inequity, illiteracy, poverty) through the development of community libraries and community literacy. This type of “literacy in practice” postulates that people are already learners and what they need are locally relevant materials to facilitate new learning. Such an approach values the sets of practices and culturally determined illiteracies that already exist in community and focuses on how these practices can be used to upgrade and generate resources that might ultimately reduce poverty. In this respect, community literacy is intimately tied to educational, social and economic development.

### **Presentation modality**

Will be presented through PowerPoint presentation in English.

### **Presenters**

- *William Evans, Senior Advisor, NAAL Norway.*
- *Mr. Basu Dhungana President of Nepal Community Library Association, Founder President of Jhuwani Community Library, one of the libraries supported by READ.*

## **References:**

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