

stages, catering for interim periods in which women may undertake individual study at home or elsewhere, rejoining the group at a later stage. This could be especially suitable for rural women who must take part in seasonal agricultural activities.

Whatever option is chosen, the time women have available for study should be discussed and their suggested timetable included in the project's planning stage. It should be generally assumed that literacy activities with women will need more time than with a different target group. One of the findings of a study carried out by G. Carron in South Maragoli in Kenya,<sup>8</sup> where 91 per cent of the participants in literacy courses were women, indicated that their average time to obtain the literacy certificate was 2.4 years whereas normally the average time is calculated to be approximately one year.

**L**ANGUAGE CHOICE □ While many authors have demonstrated the benefits of initial literacy training in the participants' mother tongue, they have also pointed out that the choice should take into account various criteria: the language in which participants are motivated to learn and can most easily use in a literate environment; the existence of a written form – and preferably written material – for the language to be used. A linguistic policy also takes into consideration the educational programme in that particular language and, finally, costs and the human resources available.

In a bilingual or multilingual situation, several developing countries have opted for the initial literacy, in the mother tongue, followed by a second, officially accepted, language,<sup>9</sup> for example, largely English in sub-Saharan Africa, French in much of West Africa. The Project for Literacy and Vocational Training for the Native Embera Women in Panama involved both mother tongue and Spanish, supported by

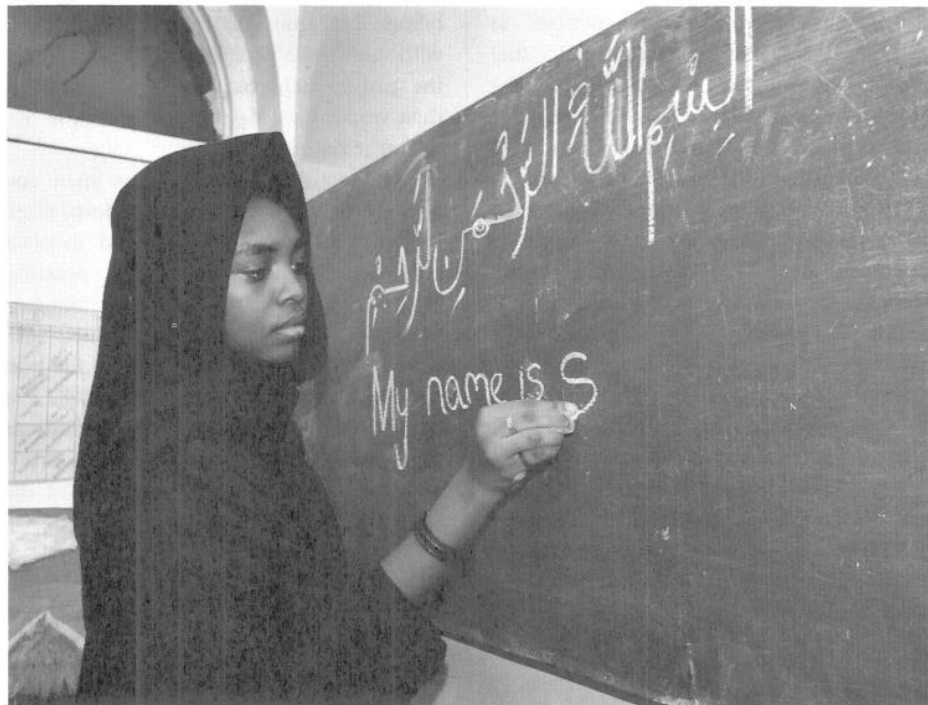
bilingual teaching material. By linking this with non-traditional productive activities, the project achieved much better results than would have been possible if only one language had been chosen.

The linguistic options for women and girls who have emigrated to industrialized countries is more clear-cut and involves bilingual courses whenever possible. Several NGOs have organized bilingual literacy courses for women which also provide general information about the host country and the local labour market. For housebound women these organizations offer literacy courses at home, with priority given to teaching the language of the country of immigration.

### **S**election and Training of Literacy Personnel □

If it is agreed that any basic education process intended for girls and women will preferably be implemented by women, particular issues should be considered when selecting literacy personnel. The first of these concerns the cultural aspects of the target group, where the choice of personnel must take into account the particular codes governing relationships among the participants (for instance, those determined by age, ethnic group, caste and religion). The second concerns the definition of the type of engagement, that is to say, voluntary, with incentives or with salary. This is an important element in defining the working situation of these trainers, who will be employed on either an occasional or continuous basis.

Experience has shown that a thorough basic education of female personnel plays a decisive part in the success of literacy activities; it is therefore worth investing in a solid, broadly-based training programme, including continuous retraining. Content cannot be reduced to literacy- and numeracy-teaching techniques; basic knowledge in health, community develop-



ment, group dynamics, civic education, agriculture, applied technology and the production of teaching materials is vital.

A good example is provided by the Experimental Pilot Project in Literacy and Civic Education for Women in Rural Zones, implemented in India in co-operation with UNESCO. Training activities included different courses throughout the year; literacy- and numeracy-teaching techniques were interspersed with several one-week courses organized in such subjects as food conservation, soap-making, production of detergents and silk printing.<sup>10</sup>

**ACHIEVING SUCCESS: A SUMMARY OF ESSENTIAL NEEDS** □ This educational process is costly, especially when it directly involves the improvement of women's situation in society. The production of written material, the training of women literacy personnel, salaries, transport, motivation and mobilization activi-

ties, and the duration of the literacy process are important elements necessitating adequate financial support. In order to avoid interrupting the educational process, as has happened in many projects that functioned only intermittently, a comprehensive budget should be prepared before the initiation of any programme. Successful programmes and projects must encompass the following:

1. **Political priority and community support**, in order to:
  - Mobilize women
  - Help them complete literacy courses
  - Sensitize groups hostile to women's participation
  - Mobilize the general population
  - Make more resources available
  - Enhance coordination with other activities
  - Help the community to become aware of women's roles and rights
2. **An integrated approach**, in order to:
  - Move easily to meet women's needs

- Help improve women's condition and position in society
  - Increase motivation to learn
  - Provide useful information in many areas of life
3. **Literacy and post-literacy as a single educational process**, in order to:
- Foster the creation of a literate environment
  - Support lifelong education
  - Prevent relapse into illiteracy
  - Increase women's chances of continuing formal education
4. **Linkage of literacy to development projects and programmes to meet women's needs**, in order to:
- Integrate the literacy process into community development
  - Link programmes or projects to local conditions
5. **Providing for women's active participation at every stage of a programme or project; fostering the organization of grass-roots groups for/by women**, in order to:
- Increase the chance of success and continuity of literacy and development programmes and projects
  - Help in the quest for solutions of shared concerns
6. **Other factors:**
- Taking into account structural factors

- such as mobilization, co-ordination and decentralization in order to:
- increase community support
  - contribute to development
  - increase efficiency of implementation
- Use of teaching methods and contents adapted to women's needs in order to:
    - increase interest in participation
    - facilitate the teaching/learning process
  - Considering women's available time for participating in literacy activities so as to:
    - increase their participation
    - decrease drop-out rates
  - Choosing the literacy language to facilitate women's integration into the literate community
  - Selection and training of women literacy teachers in order to:
    - increase educational efficiency
    - provide a high-quality and effective teaching/learning process
  - Taking into account the costs of literacy programmes and projects, and obtaining adequate resources before starting such activities.

1. A Lind, A Johnston, *Adult Literacy in the Third World – A Review of Objectives and Strategies*, Stockholm, Institute of International Education, University of Stockholm/Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), 1986. (Education Division Documents 32).

2. See P. Freire, *Cartas a Guinea Bissau: apuntes de una experiencia pedagogica* (also in English and French), Madrid, Ed. Siglo 21, 1977; R.H. Dave; A Ouane; D.A. Perera *Learning Strategies for Post-Literacy and Continuing Education: a Cross-National Perspective*, Unesco Institute for Education, Hamburg, 1988; B. Dumont, Post-literacy: a Prerequisite for Literacy, in *Literacy Lessons*, Unesco/IBE 1990.

3. *Ibid.*

4. K. Young, Introduction: reflection on meeting women's needs, in *Women and Economic Development: Local, Regional and National Planning Strategies*. Oxford/Paris, Berg/Unesco, 1988.

5. Cited in UNDP, *Women in Development: Project Achievement Reports from the United Nations Development Programme*, New York, June 1989, p.46.

6. B. Dumont (1990), 'Post-literacy: A prerequisite for literacy', in *Literacy Lessons*, Geneva, UNESCO/IBE.

7. Malick Sene, 'Un projet d'allégement du travail des femmes au Mali' (Summary in English: 'Alleviating Women's Workload in Mali') *Les Carnets de l'enfance/Assignment Children*, Vol. 36. UNICEF Geneva, October-December 1976, pp. 69-70. Reproduced from K. Chlebowska, *Literacy for Rural Women in the Third World*, Unesco, Paris 1990.

8. G. Carron, K. Mwiria, G. Righa. *The Functioning and Effects of the Kenya Literacy Programme: A view from the local level*, Paris, International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP) Research Report 76, 1989.

9. See J.W. Ryan, Linguistic Factors in Adult Literacy, in *Literacy Review*, Teheran, 1980. Also A. Hamadache, D.Martin, *Theory and Practice of Literacy Work: Policies, Strategies and Examples*. Unesco/Canadian Organization for Development through Education (CODE), Paris/Ottawa, 1986.

10. Unesco Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (PROAP). *Simultaneous Education for Women and Girls: Report of a Project*, Bangkok 1989.

## 6 SPREADING THE NET

**T**he introduction to this book noted the limitation of those literacy programmes that focus on strategic development interests when compared with the overwhelming majority of programmes directed towards meeting women's everyday needs.

THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE when it is necessary to work within the constraints of poverty and survival. The challenge is to combine literacy efforts concerned with meeting practical gender needs with longer-term strategic interests.

**LITERACY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS** □  
Some examples of programmes and projects which have taken that challenge into account, at least partially, are described below.

**1. Ecuador: the CEDIME Project** The outstanding aspects of this programme are: consolidation and strengthening of indigenous organizations; preparation of a civic education curriculum incorporating the indigenous culture; discussion of the family role in relation to the local situation; and the establishment of centres for discussion of women's rights on a participatory and non-discriminatory basis.

The different stages of the project included: the development of teaching materials, including a primer on the rights of indigenous women; organization of the participants into women's groups; and innovative methods to strengthen the teaching/learning process.

Materials were developed by CEDIME with the active participation of

women and leaders of the Ecuarrunari, an indigenous movement. Topics such as health, the family, political participation and organization were selected according to the needs and interests of the participants. The participatory approach included literacy skills, discussion of women's rights and field visits to museums and other communities. The stress given to women's organization and the reinforcement of ethnic and gender identity increased participants' self-confidence and self-esteem.<sup>1</sup>

**2. United States: exercising civil rights** 'I voted today for the first time – and I just can't keep it to myself' (Margaret, 62 years old). Communities Organized to Improve Life (COIL) is a group of neighbourhood associations, churches and organizations dedicated to improving living conditions in west and south-west Baltimore. One of the organization's most important activities is a literacy programme for 'functional illiterates'. Linking this programme with community development actions resulted in enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence among 'senior citizens'.<sup>2</sup>

**3. The Asia and Pacific Region: women's rights** 'legal literacy' programmes carried out in recent years by the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka are addressed to both literate and illiterate women. The objective is the acquisition of legal knowledge and skills aimed at 'dispelling ignorance (illiteracy) about basic legal rights'.<sup>3</sup>

Within this context the pilot projects try to demystify the law, looking at possible interpretations and applications that may help women exercise their rights, and encouraging legal aid structures and other efforts to mobilize