

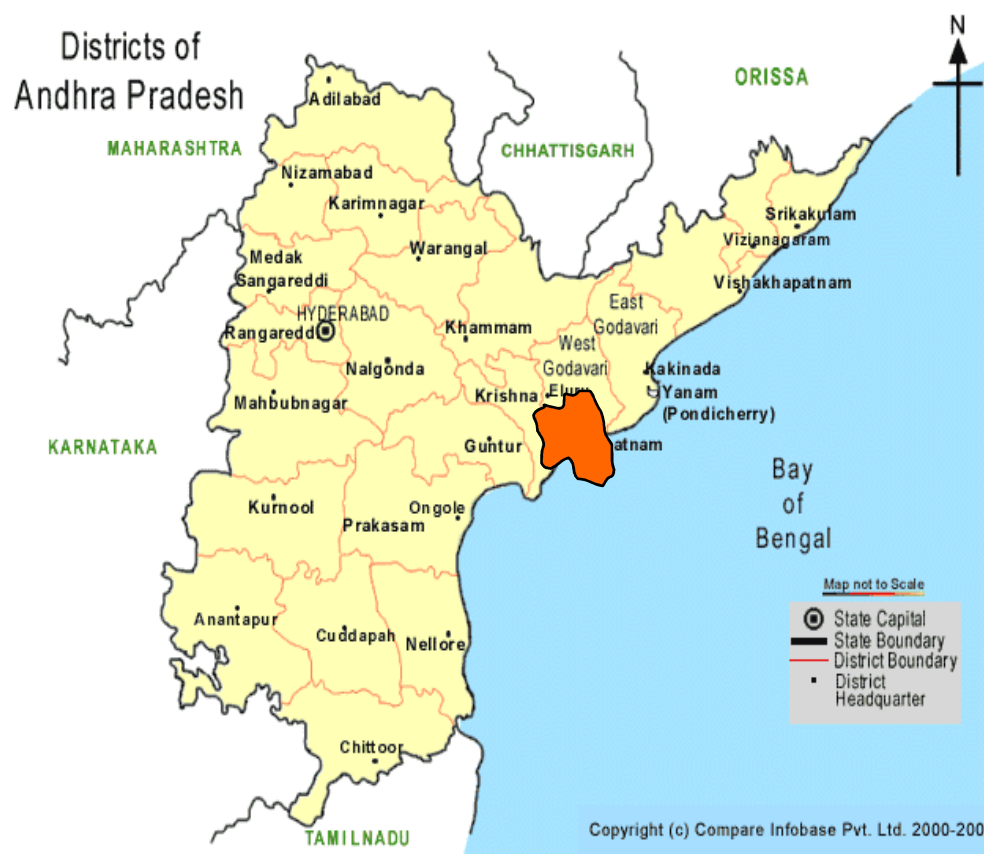
Akshara Mahila

Literacy Programme for Women Self-Help Groups



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The *Akshara Mahila* was initially started in West Godavari District and later the model is adopted in the entire state of Andhra Pradesh

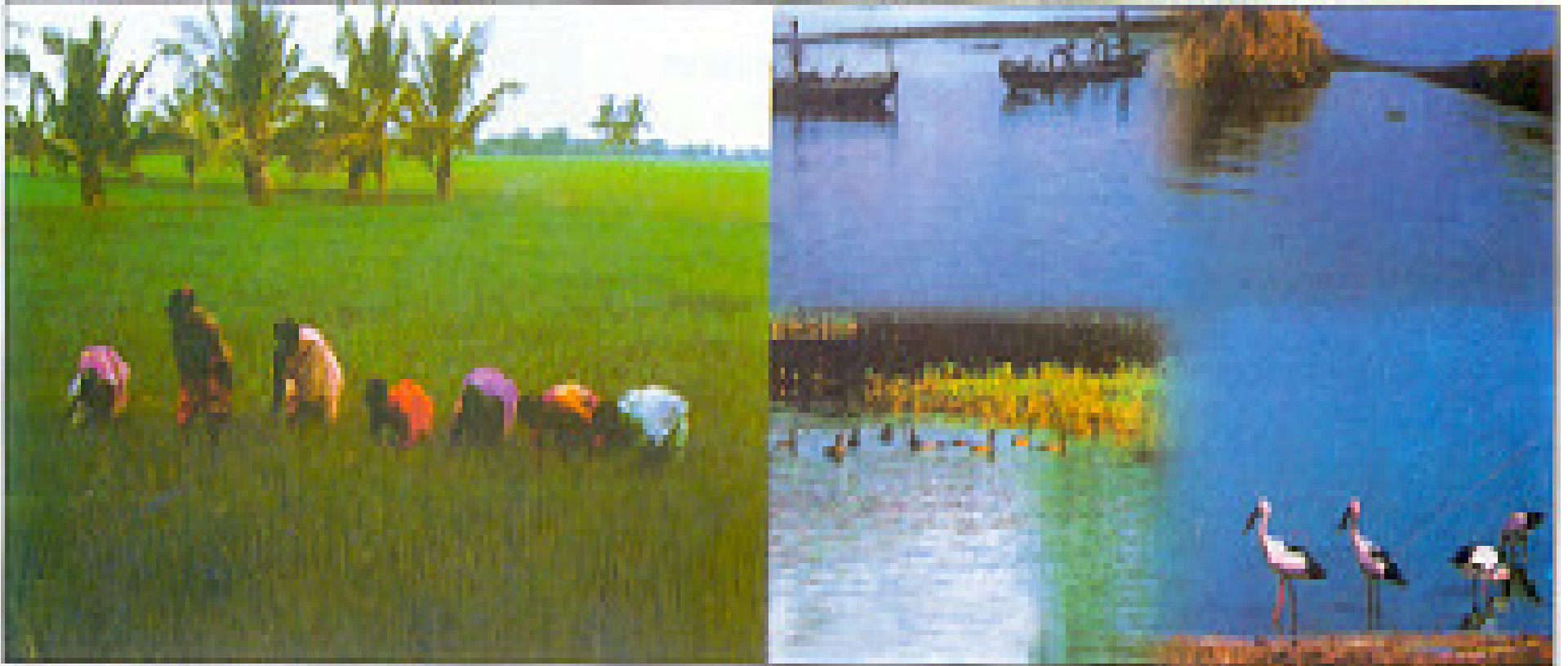


West Godavari
(Andhra Pradesh)



West Godavari

THE GRANARY OF ANDHRA PRADESH



Akshara Mahila

(The programme was launched on April 5th 2000)



Concept of *Akshara Mahila*

It is designed around women self-help groups and established a link between literacy and poverty-alleviation programmes.



Concept of Akshara Mahila

- 1. In SHGs, members have to record money transactions and interact with banks and officers.**
- 2. Illiteracy of members has become a major hurdle in effective functioning of groups.**
- 3. So they were keen to improve literacy skills. SHG is taken as the unit for literacy instruction.**



Features of Akshara Mahila

- 1. Group-based approach**
- 2. Relied on self-help spirit**
- 3. New primers and teaching methods**
- 4. Short duration course**
- 5. Activities to sustain learner motivation**
- 6. Lowest per-learner cost**
- 7. Development of teaching and learning aids**
- 8. Community participation**
- 9. Convergence with DRDA**

Features of *Akshara Mahila*

Group approach: It followed group approach which is different from traditional campaign approach. **Women Self-Help Group (WSHG)** is taken as the unit for literacy instruction.



Features Of *Akshara Mahila*

Relied on Self-Help Spirit: Members of WSHG pool their efforts to benefit from an economic activity, and in the same way, the literate members share literacy skills with the non-literates in the group.



Features Of *Akshara Mahila*

New Primers have been developed to suit the learning needs and interests of the groups. The content of the primers focused on various issues relevant to the day to day life of WSHGs.

Primers followed **alphabet method** separating reading and writing. This method is preferred as it is simple and volunteers with limited qualifications and training can easily teach in this method.

This helped in **reducing the course duration** to 180 hours in 3months. Experience showed that a short duration intensive literacy teaching is more effective. Group teaching method with locally prepared teaching aids and games resulted in fast learning.

Special Features of *Akshara Mahila*

Cost effective : The cost per learner is much lower than any other literacy programme. Rs.20/- is spent on teaching and learning material. No expenditure is needed for environment building and infrastructure.



అక్షర చిక్కు

చదువు నాచకం

ప్రతిమ గోదావరి అక్షర సమితి

విలువ

విజ్ఞప్తి

ఇది స్వయం సహాయ గ్రూపుల మహిళలకు బాటపయని ప్రత్యేక కార్యక్రమం. ప్రభుత్వ శాఖలతో పాటు నిర్వహించబడే కార్యక్రమం. అందులో స్వయం సహాయ గ్రూపులు తమ సభ్యుల్ని పేరిటెంచుకొని, పాఠశాలలో వెంటనే చేరుకోవాలి. ఈ కార్యక్రమాన్ని తమ కార్యక్రమంగా నిర్వహించుకుంటుంటే తమ గ్రూపు సభ్యులను మోటివేషుతుంది. ఇతర అక్షరాస్యులను చేరుకోవడంలో ముందుంటుంది అనిపిస్తుంది.

ఇట్లు

పూనం మూలకొండయ్య, I.A.S.,

జిల్లా కలెక్టరు మరియు పబ్లిక్ రిలేషన్స్
సర్కిల్ అధికారి అక్షర సమితి, ఏలూరు

డా. సిద్ధిమోహన్, Ph.D.
జిల్లా జైల్లుకు, జమీన్ సర్దు
మరియు కార్యదర్శి
సర్కిల్ అధికారి అక్షర సమితి, ఏలూరు

అక్షర సమితి



అక్షర సమితి
చదువు నాచకం

2000 ఏప్రిల్ నుండి జూన్ వరకు
స్వయం సహాయ గ్రూపులకు
తనెలల అక్షరాస్యతా కార్యక్రమం

40 రోజులలో చదివించడం
60 రోజులలో చదివించడం
10 రోజులలో అంతే చదివించడం

ప్రతిమ గోదావరి అక్షర సమితి
విలువ

Special Features of *Akshara Mahila*

Sustain learners' motivation: A series of activities are conducted in the centres to sustain the motivation of the learners. In planning these activities literacy is linked with the traditional and cultural life. For example, Deepavali – the festival of lights and Ugadi – Telugu New Year are celebrated in the centres as literacy festival of lights and literacy new year.

These activities include

- 1. Akshara Parentem: Inviting learners to the centres**
- 2. Akshara Kankanam: Tying literacy band**
- 3. Akshara Joythulu: Lighting literacy lamps**
- 4. Akshara Mahendi: Painting literacy emblem on palms**

SUSTAINENCE ACTIVITIES
AKSHARA JYOTHULU
(Literacy Lamps)



SUSTAINENCE ACTIVITIES

AKSHARA MUGGULU

Literacy Rangoli



SUSTAINENCE ACTIVITIES

AKSHARA PARENTALU

(Inviting in traditional way to literacy centre)



SUSTAINENCE ACTIVITIES

AKSHARA MAHENDI

(painting literacy symbols with Henna)



SUSTAINENCE ACTIVITIES
AKSHARA KANKANAM
(tying literacy bond)



Special Features of *Akshara Mahila*

Development of Teaching and Learning Aids

Innovative teaching aids and development of games with letters and charts and other motivational material is given highest priority for recognition and appreciation.



INNOVATIVE TEACHING AIDS



- **Extensive use of teaching aids**
- **Teaching aids prepared with local available material with no cost**
- **Volunteer & learners designed teaching aids**

INNOVATIVE TEACHING AIDS

VIDEO CLIPPING OF TEACHING AIDS



EXHIBITION OF TEACHING MOTIVATIONAL MATERIAL

(From 28.1.2001 to 31.1.2001)

Biggest exhibition on Teaching aids & Publicity/Motivational material in the history of adult literacy



EXHIBITION OF TEACHING MOTIVATIONAL MATERIAL

**More than 3000 exhibits
on adult literacy**



**54 exhibition
stalls**



Features of *Akshara Mahila*

Civil Society has actively Participated by adopting *Akshara Mahila* centres and supplemented the efforts of the groups by providing lighting facilities, supplying supplementary learning material, etc.



Features of *Akshara Mahila*

Collaboration with DRDA: The programme is implemented as joint project of ZSS and DRDA. The latter identified the groups having non-literate members and the ZSS conducted trainings to groups leaders and conducted classes.



Evolution of *Akshara Mahila*

- **The *Akhsara Mahila* evolved while testing the primers for short duration course in Kothapalli village.**
- **The programme first implemented for 3697 groups having 37,283 non-literate members in West Godavari District.**
- **Government of Andhra Pradesh started *Akshara Sankranti* adopting the same model covering all self help groups**

VIDEO CLIPPING FROM STAR NEWS



New Primer's Pilot Test

The primer was pilot-tested in Kothapalli, a hamlet of Gopannapalem village. The learners could read the primer in 42 days and acquire writing and numerical skills in another 45 days. This was reported in The Hindu, Star News etc. The primer was further improved and 40 days were fixed for reading, 40 days for writing and 10 days for numerical skills.

HOUSEWIVES' GROUP SETS RECORD IN LEARNING TO READ

By D. Sreenivasulu

ELURU, JAN. 26. A group of 15 housewives set a record by learning to read simple paragraphs in their mother tongue in 42 working hours.

The women hail from Kothapalli, a hamlet of Gopannapalem, 14 km from Eluru, in West Godavari district. It is interesting to note that they could only read but have not practised writing yet. Isolation of reading skill from writing made it possible for them to become "literate" within such a short span of time.

The idea was conceived at an informal meeting of people associated with the literacy movement in the district, consisting of the Deputy Director, Dr. C. Krishna Mohana Rao, the president of Janasaya Vedika, Mr. D.K.V.S. Verma, and others. Though West Godavari stands first among all districts, except urban areas in the State, there are several constraints in declaring it a totally literate district.

It was thought that many learners were reluctant to attend the literacy programme because of the long duration, ranging from several months to a year. Even after completion of the course, the neo-literates did not have a proper environment to practice their skills and some illiteracy relapsed. The age and

standards among semi-literates varied creating a problem for the instructors to adopt a uniform teaching method. No effort had ever been made to find out whether the same method adopted for teaching children would be useful in the case of grown-ups too.

In an attempt to make the learning an adult-friendly exercise, the group designed an innovative short-term course devoid of writing in the initial stage. The learners were not asked to practice writing. They were introduced to the Telugu alphabet and asked to recognise the symbols and read them. On the first day, the learners could recognise over half a dozen letters. The alphabet was also reduced to 29 important letters, which normally occur in Telugu language while the remaining inactive and redundant letters were ignored for the time being.

The idea was explained to several Mandal Literacy Officers and among them the MLO of Dendulur, Mr. G. Anamavenna Rao, volunteered to execute the plan in one of the villages in his area. Soon, a group of learners was constituted at Kothapalli and the pilot project started 42 days ago. Along with Mr. Anamavenna Rao, the Supervisor in the office of the Adult Education department, Mr. T. Suryaprakas

Rao, was deputed to be the instructor. The learners were taught alphabets through charts. For reading practice, they were given an informal primer specially designed for the purpose.

The group picked the crucial alphabet within a week and started recognising words in the second week. On the 42nd day of the course yesterday, their reading skill was tested by Dr. C. Krishna Mohana Rao and was found to be good. In the next phase, they would be given the copies of "Akshara Deeksha", a fortnightly brought out by the department, for reading practice. The organisers had no intention to introduce writing until they acquired efficiency in reading.

The success has thrilled learners more than anybody else because they could become "literate" in 42 days. On learning about this, several women's groups in the village volunteered to attend the 40-day school. The period was likely to be reduced further because the instructors had problems in designing the material and charts initially.

It remains to be seen whether experts of adult literacy programme accept the Kothapalli model and the women as "neo-literates".

(THE HINDU 29-1-2000)

GOOD RESPONSE

- **Around 3697 groups having 37,283 illiterates enrolled in this programme**
- **Groups owned the programme, met the costs of training, teaching aids, etc.**
- **Political leadership took active part in motivation and mobilization.**
- **Educated persons and village elders adopted the centres and supported volunteers and motivated learners.**
- **Philanthropists donated cost of paper and printing of books, banners, etc.**

CHIEF MINISTER APPRECIATED AKSHARA MAHILA LEARNERS WHEREVER HE VISITED THE DISTRICT



People's representatives actively involved in the programme



SPECIAL ELECTRONIC AND PRINT MEDIA APPRECIATED AND ENCOURAGED

Good response to 'Akshara Mahila' in WG

Unique methods employed in teaching helps rural women become literate in a short duration

FROM OUR BUREAU

Bhimavaram, May 31: 'Akshara Mahila' programme, another milestone in the literacy programmes launched by the Paschima Godavari Akshara Samithi two months ago, gained momentum and heading towards total literacy in the district. The clouds of suspicion on literacy and vague notions on learning have disappeared with this programme, meant exclusively for the rural womenfolk of the 'self help' groups.

The success of the programme lies in unique design in teaching the adult women. Learning process is divided into reading and writing

women would be made to practice writing letters based on reading perceptions, said D V V S Varma, adviser of the Paschima Godavari Akshara Samithi. The women would learn basic mathematics in the programme. The programme was designed to improve their reading and writing skills on sound foundations, he added.

Varma, a social activist and Jatiya Vedita president prepared a practical module "Chaduvu" to teach

adult women in a lucid style with all his experience in the programme. This book was re-designed, modified and improved

Mahila centres were started in 17 villages under Irugavaram mandal. Undoubtedly, one can say, after a visit to the centres at Kavalipuram, Kanteru, Kottapadu, Pekeru and Ogidi, it is a social change towards literacy. The literate members in the self-help groups teach their group members. If the entire group is illiterate, the group leader looks

Mahila is channelising their spirit on right path. The response is more than expected, she said, and added that she wants to extend it to the rest of the uncovered groups in a phased manner.

Arjuna and Rama Devi, both volunteers at Kavalipuram said: "We feel satisfied when we see the newly-literate women are reading with ease."

Another volunteer Jhansi says "the women were reluctant to attend to the classes in the beginning, but now they are insisting me to spare more time to teach them."

"Had my parents sent me to

group on which the whole programme based is formed for the purpose of getting loans. Their motivation towards turning literates is less. Launching of this programme itself is untimely as the agricultural operations were in brisk phase. Frequent power cuts and scorching heat were also impeding the programme to some extent. However, the Paschima Godavari Akshara Samithi secretary C Krishna Mohan, with his frequent visits and thorough monitoring, struggling to motivate the volunteers and learners to make the programme a success.

MISSION TO ACHIEVE TOTAL LITERACY

for a volunteer to teach them. All the volunteers have been trained at cluster level for two days. Mandal development officers are assisting the mandal literacy officers in

Women realise need to become literate

By Our Staff Reporter

ELURU, MAY 18. Women belonging to weaker sections in villages are struggling to catch up with other sections by attending the 90-day night schools. A host of problems are working against the learners, but they seem not to lose the rare opportunity that knocked at their doors. There is no proper accommodation where they can sit and study. The classes are conducted in street corners and under street lights. The frequent power disruption is causing a nuisance. Kerosene lamps are lit as soon as power fails to keep the classes going on.

Fifty-two-year-old, Mrs. Mendem Sampurnam, daily wage earner at Ammapalem in Pedavegi mandal had never attended a

purnam, most of the women, especially in weaker section colonies, have realised the difficulty in not being able to read. They found the need for education more when it came to managing the finances of the DWCRA groups.

Mrs. Sampurnam had decided to attend the night school notwithstanding her age and heckling from youngsters. Now, she is able to identify all letters of the Telugu alphabet and read words after attending the course for 40 days. She is one of the 15 members of the Chaitanya DWCRA group in the village. Of the 15, only a few are literate, some attended school long ago and needed a brush up. Over half of them are illiterate. Mrs. Medanki Chanti, group leader herself is an illiter-

The mobilisation is heavy in Pedapadu mandal where seven groups were formed in a single village.

The success of the 15 women at Gopannapalem who learnt how to read in the shortest time of 40 days, had encouraged the Adult Education Department, led by its Deputy Director, Dr. C. Krishna Mohan, to try out the method of separating reading from writing in the entire district. In the first phase, the learners are taught to identify the Telugu letters displayed on the charts. Later, a primer designed specially for the purpose is introduced.

With the encouragement given by the West Godavari Collector, Mrs. Poonam Malakondaiah, the Gopannapalem model was replicated in the entire district by de-

course. Dr. Krishna Mohan, who accompanied a media team that visited the centres on Tuesday night, said the modified course was one of the most economical programmes of all. The department printed 40,000 primers at a cost of Rs.2.40 lakhs. An equal number of work books for practising writing was printed with the help of 2.5 tonnes of paper donated by the Delta Paper Mills. The Godavari Printers printed the books free of cost. No honorarium is paid to the volunteers because they are teaching their own group members. The amount spent on each learner works out to Rs.6.50. A sum of Rs.90 was spent on each learner under the routine literacy programme.

Mobilisation of women in such large number for the programme

RESULTS

Evaluation conducted by local people and NSS of Andhra University showed that 29,831 learners have successfully completed the course among 37,283 enrolled in the programme.

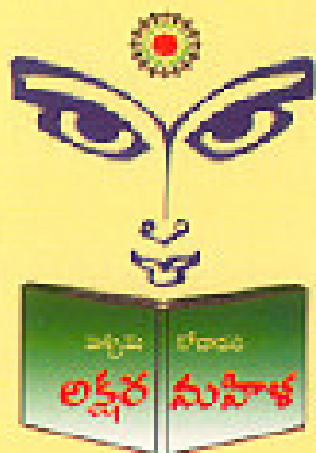


Jemalists and Officials Visiting Akshara Mahila Cent
Pedapadu



Shri H Surjani Rao, District Programme Officer, NSS, Andhra University,
conducting Evaluation in Akshara Mahila Centre at Pirugunda

ALL THIS DOCUMENTED IN THE BOOK AKSHARA MAHILA



Akshara Mahila

THE FIRST STEP towards empowerment of women



Paschima Godavari
Akshara Samithi
Eluru - Andhra Pradesh



Akshara Mahila To Akshara Sankranti

- 1. Akshara Mahila experience paved the way for 3 month literacy programme by name Akshara Sankranti in the entire state of Andhra Pradesh.**
- 2. Government of Andhra Pradesh launched Akshara Sankranti on October 2nd, 2000. As a part of the programme 2,50,000 non-literates were reached in West Godavari District.**
- 3. With the experience of Akshara Mahila group based approach is combined with campaign mode in Akshara Sankranti**

A campaign atmosphere is created with series of meetings with different sections

- 1) Teachers unions**
- 2) Political parties**
- 3) Non Gazzetted Officers Unions**
- 4) Voluntary organizations**
- 5) District Officers of all departments**



AKSHARA PADAYATRA

A Akshara Padayatra (literacy walk) was organized from 15-23rd October, 2000. It continued day and night covering more than 500 Kms all the 46 mandals and 8 municipalities. Villagers handed over literacy flag to the next village.

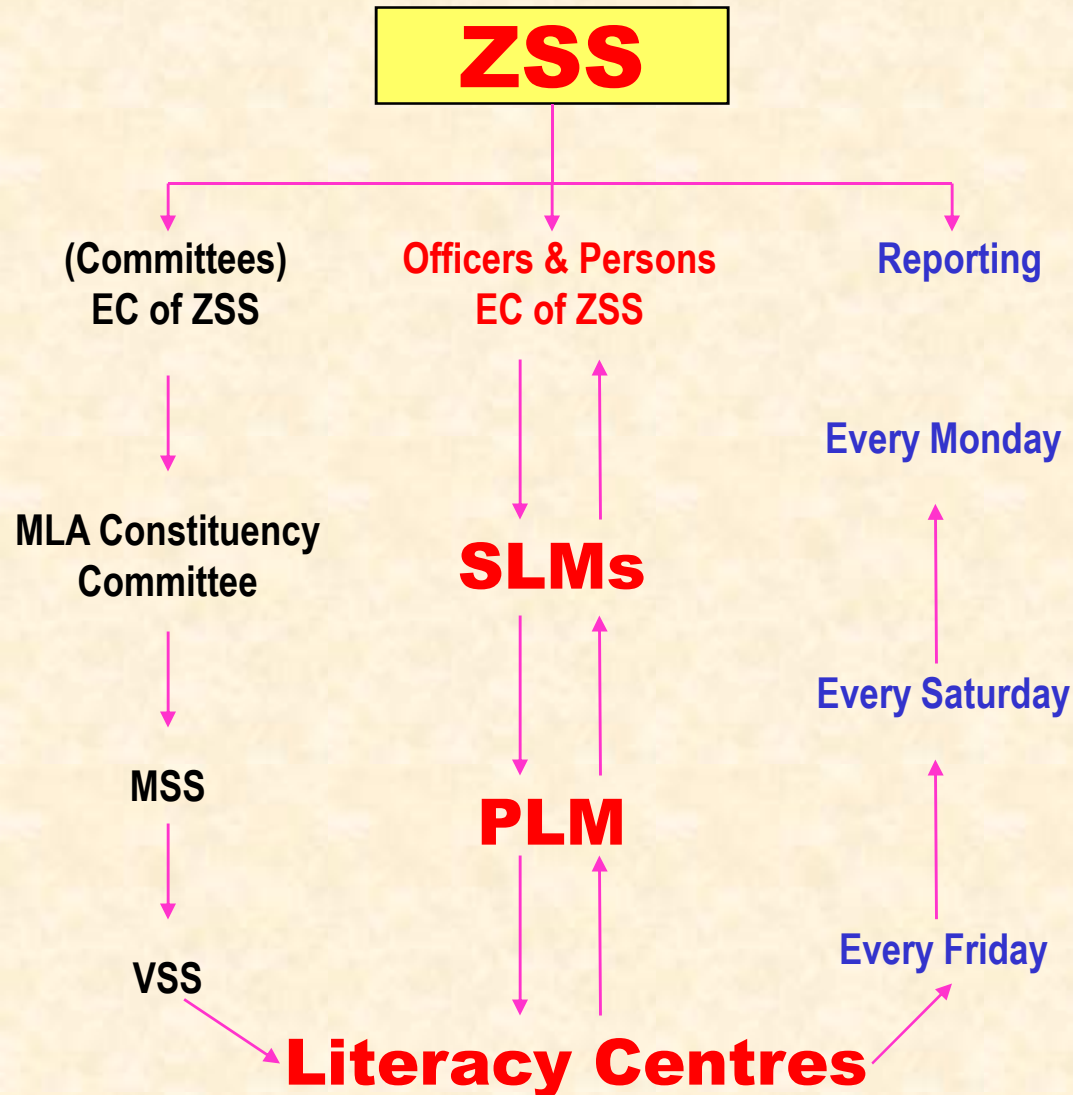




VIDEO CLIPPING OF PADAYATRA IN UNDRAJAVARAM MANDAL



MONITORING STRUCTURE



WEEKLY REVIEWS

- 1) Every Friday at village level committee will review and prepare a report centre wise (VAO will bring the report to the mandal level)**
- 2) Every Saturday, mandal level committee will review the functioning village wise and send a report to RDO (MRO will send computerized floppy to RDO)**
- 3) Every Monday executive committee of ZSS reviews the programme mandal wise and take steps for improvement in weak mandals.**
- 4) Joint Collector and other Senior District Officers are appointed as Special Officers for mandals where performance is comparatively low.**

RESULTS OF EVALUATION



Enrolment 252708

**Successfully
completed 191426**

**Percentage
of Success 75.75**

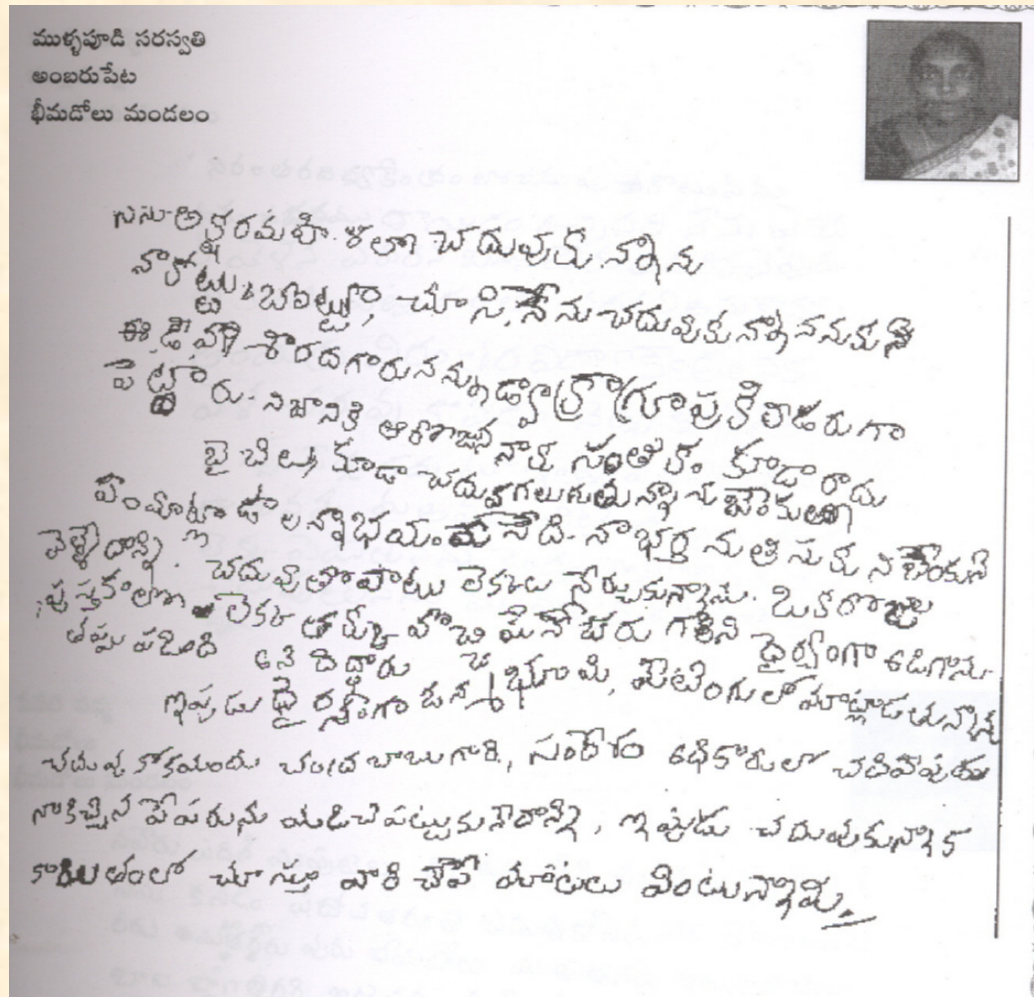
External Evaluation

Government of Andhra Pradesh nominated University of Hyderabad to conduct External Evaluation. They reported 71.6% of the target learners were made literate in Akshara Deeksha Programme.

The report says “The West Godavari model appears to be significant and offers an alternative approach to literacy at one-third in the total cost – less than half in duration with innovations in teaching – learning methodology.”

Impact – Individual Level

A women learner named Saraswathi, Amberpet village of West Godavari testifies:



Impact – Individual Level

“I am the leader of a women’s self-help group. Seeing my dress and appearance, people may get the impression that I am educated. In fact, I was an illiterate before Akshara Mahila changed me. I was too timid to go to a bank. I used to get things done with the help of my husband. Then I learnt arithmetic in the class. One day I found a wrong entry in my passbook. I had the self-confidence to seek clarification. I approached the manager. He corrected the mistake. Now I speak in a meeting. Formerly we were diffident to approach government officers. Now we take our problems to the notice of officers.”

Social Impact

- It promoted gender equity and empowered the women learners in decision-making Nearly 90 percent of the women participants have expressed the view that they have become more assertive and confident and their status in the family has improved after they acquired literacy skills.



Social Impact



-An important social impact of the programme was that it contributed in a significant way in increasing enrollment of children in schools. For instance, the data clearly indicate that enrolment of children went up significantly in neo-literate households.

Economic Impact

-The participation of a large number of women groups in the literacy programme led to the formation of new groups and there was an increase of savings and the corpus fund. For example, in West Godavari, the total corpus fund of these groups increased from around 5 million dollars before the programme to 28 million dollars by the end of the programme. About 50 per cent of learners reported that they now earn more because of their newly acquired knowledge and skills.

Lessons Learnt

The most important lessons drawn from the *Akshara Mahila* experience are that the literacy programmes and livelihood-enhancement programmes, when linked, proved to reinforce each other. They thus improve the quality of life of the participating women and help them in breaking cultural and traditional barriers.

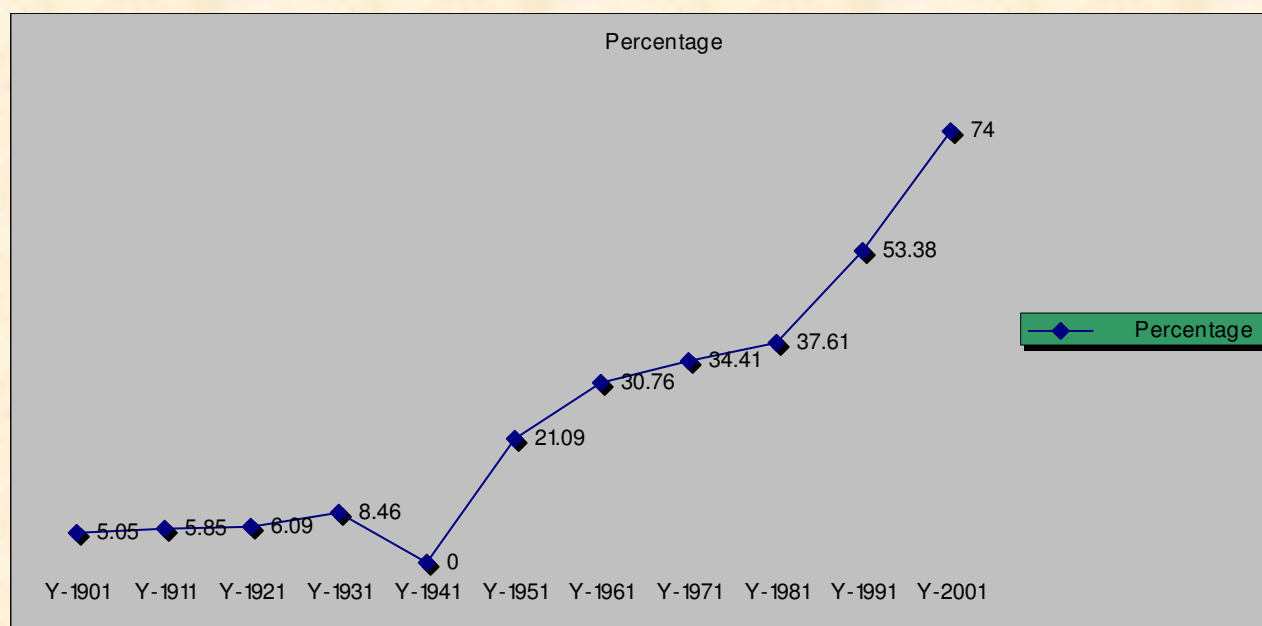


Challenges

-The major challenge is to ensure that all the 6.20 lakh self-help groups of Andhra Pradesh which presently have 78.3 lakh members become part of the literacy programme. Another issue is to ensure that the different needs of the learners are catered for through adequate basic literacy and continuing education programmes.

Growth of Literacy Rates in West Godavari

Year	Percentage
1901	5.05
1911	5.85
1921	6.09
1931	8.46
1941	--
1951	21.09
1961	30.76
1971	34.41
1981	37.61
1991	53.38
2001	74.00



**This model is presented in the White House
Conference on Global Literacy held on
18.09.2006 in New York**



Thank 'q'