

Country Report prepared by S.Shankar, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi, and Ms. Anjali Aggarwal, Director, State Resource Centre, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India, for the Regional Conference on Community Learning Centres to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 19.6.2013 to 21.6.2013

Literacy is an inalienable human right and a condition precedent for all forms of structured learning and getting initiated into the process of lifelong education. Apart from being a tool for learning, literacy influences several other dimensions of one's life and life choices. It empowers people, particularly those belonging to deprived and marginalized sections of the society. Literacy is not merely about basic skills of reading and writing; it is about providing individuals with the capabilities for understanding their lives and social environment as well as equipping them with problem-solving skills. Literacy, therefore, is a foundation of human resources development and is critical to alleviating poverty and to enhancing the general quality of life of the people. Women across the world are considered as largest among deprived and marginalized groups. The education of women is particularly valuable as a strategic investment in human resources as the social returns are high. The education of women and girls has a tremendous impact not only on their own development but also on that of their families and communities. It acts as a catalyst in virtually every dimension of development and poverty alleviation, with outcomes such as reduced fertility, adequate spacing, reduced maternal and infant mortality, improved child survival, better family health, increased educational attainment, higher productivity and general improvement in the nation's economic situation in many a number of ways, including protection of ecology, environment and sustainability with a balanced growth and also taking care of all living beings in the Mother Earth.

2. Woman is also a social animal. In the normal day-to-day life s/he has to live, interact and give and take as a part of the social society. Living in isolation and seclusion is not going to take one far. No country or for that matter society can succeed unless it has in its scheme of things the interests of the community cutting across religion, caste, sect and race. Community Development is a sign of Government taking care of its citizens and in turn citizens actively participating in the process to reap the larger benefit for the mass as a whole. India is the largest democracy in the world with a welfare-oriented State and follows the path of mixed economy. India is also a developing country with a huge population, only second to China and likely to overtake China in the near future. Therefore, any social-sector programme, whether it is CLC or CE or LLE or taking care of artisans to make them skilled as against unskilled/semi-skilled or sustainable living, making a balance between life-long-learning, development and growth on the one hand and protecting the environment from its onslaught on the other, will not see cent per cent success unless there is people's full participation.

2. Yes, We do have Community Learning Centres. Being a part of Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of School Education and Literacy,

Government of India, in the immediate context we can easily mention about a Centrally-sponsored (predominantly funded by the Centre) Plan scheme, i.e. scheme approved by the Indian Planning Commission, namely, Saakshar Bharat (Literate India). It is the world's largest Adult Literacy Scheme and a mission-oriented one. The Scheme is spread across 25 States (independent of the Centre under the quasi-federal set-up excepting in some sensitive and vital areas like Defence, Communication, Foreign Affairs, etc.) and 1 Union Territory (having Central Government jurisdiction) in districts where 50% or more women-folk are not literate. Saakshar Bharat's four principal and broad objectives are to : (i) impart functional literacy and numeracy to non-literate and non-numerate adults (ii) enable the neo-literate adults to continue their learning beyond basic literacy and acquire equivalency with formal educational system (iii) impart non and neo-literates relevant and need-specific skill development programmes to improve their earning, livelihood and living conditions and (iv) promote a learning society by further providing opportunities to neo-literate adults for continuing education and life-long education. Saakshar Bharat's main goals are to achieve 80% literacy rate, reduce gender gap in literacy to 10%, impart literacy to 70 million non-literates with special focus on adolescents by imparting basic education with practical training aimed at marketable skills and reduce regional, social and gender disparities in all facets of life so that every part of the common-weal feels and enjoys the life-sustaining developmental benefits, especially emanating from literacy and education. More importantly, the principal target of Saakshar Bharat is women with the target of educating 60 million women out of 70 million. Interestingly unlike the previous schemes the Saakshar Bharat scheme keeps in its fold all citizens in the age of 15+ without any upper age limit rider. Besides India being a welfare state with diverse religions, castes, sub-castes etc., has also taken full care to ensure adequate representation of marginal and deprived sections of the society, whether they be Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes or Muslim minorities. Saakshar Bharat scheme was launched on 8th September, 2009 by our Prime Minister. Significantly 8th September happens to be International Literacy Day. One positive outcome, more especially of the adult literacy programmes, was that female literacy has sky-rocketed more than male literacy. To quote, while male literacy increased by 5.63 per cent points from 75.26 per cent in 2001 to 80.89 per cent in 2011, the female literacy during the same period increased by 10.97 per cent from 53.67 to 64.64 per cent points. Not less significantly, the gender gap in literacy also dwindled from 21.6 per cent to 16.25 per cent points. It is true that in a democratically largest welfare State like ours there are certain Non-Governmental organization/citizen-centric private players contributing in one way or other to the amelioration of literacy scenario, the Government (more especially the Centre Government vis-à-vis State Government) is the largest player and a driving force behind an increasingly literate India. One type of such NGO is the State Resource Centre which plays an awe-inspiring role in the development of Primers/Bridge Primers/other materials for Adult Literacy Classes besides imparting training to various stakeholders, including JSS stakeholders. As per the information available we have in the region of 1.48 lakh Adult Education Centres spread across the villages (grams) in 25 States and 1 Union Territory. Each Gram Panchayat has one AEC. Gram Panchayats are village-level bodies under the Indian Constitutional scheme of things who have been tasked with running the AECs with guidance and directions (wherever required) coming from Blocks, Districts and State as a whole. AECs are hubs of activities in more literary ways than one. The effort is to have all-purpose and all-inclusive AECs. Besides certain model

AECs under the PPP (Public Private Partnership) model with more and latest and modern paraphernalia are coming up. Besides we have camp-based (as distinct from AECs) and residential-based models of adult education, the difference between the former and latter is that in the latter model the adults of the community irrespective of any denomination reside with the Resource Person for around 45 days in a particular residence educationally well-equipped itself and closely interact, understand and learn from each other and one another on all aspects of life-enrichment and life fulfilment thereby making them model citizens of the society, and come out energetically and confidently. On the whole Saakshar Bharat has brought about a metamorphosis and transformation in the society, especially at the grassroots level of the Indian society. However, to involve a larger number of people in the Saakshar Bharat mission a blitzkrieg Inter-Personal Media Campaign has been launched by the Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development, which will go a long way in spreading the message of Saakshar Bharat thereby contributing on the whole a life-sustaining and fulfilling society wherever every lot feels that s/he is caring and being cared for thereby bringing about a model of socialistic pattern of society coupled with real benefits of democracy.

3. Besides Saakshar Bharat we have Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSSs) spread all over the country numbering over 270. The JSSs are run by NGOs and cater to vocational education and skill developments of sections of the society who fall in educationally-deprived, neo-literate and rudimentarily literate categories. The vocational education is imparted in rural belts in the main focusing on women, like Saakshar Bharat. The vocational education includes a large body of skill developments like tailoring, mobile repairing, motor-cycle repairing, beauty parlour, making of dolls, bags, cookery classes, Screen Printing, Stabilizer making and repairing, Domestic electrical equipment repairing, Inverter making and repairing, Electronic Items repairing, Motor rewinding, Plumbing, AC/Fridge repairing, Motorcycle/Scooter repairing, Watch repairing, Diesel engine repairing, Photography/Video courses, Carpentry, Welding, Food and Fruit preservation courses and a host of skill-based-development-employment-oriented courses. The modules of many of the courses have been systematically and scientifically developed keeping also in view the marketability and productivity of the courses by organizations like Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Textiles and the Directorate of Adult Education of MHRD. One of the major outcomes of the JSSs is that the commonwoman or man is able to stand on her or his feet by way of self-employment or employment contributing to the larger productivity of the society besides boosting the confidence-level of the village and near-by where the JSS is situated. The JSSs also take care of poor citizens who are drop-outs and who could not have formal education due to certain cultural and economic circumstances beyond their control. Nevertheless, JSSs ensure enrolment and benefits to a cross-section of the society cutting across any religion or caste dispensation. Basically JSS is a community development welfare-oriented scheme. A great stress is also laid on Life Enrichment Education, including on literacy and value-education, in the JSS classes.

4. India does have a National Qualifications Framework and its earnest endeavour is to bring about a scientifically modelled framework which could be a test-case for continuous progression in all deports of education – whether formal or non-formal – in order to ensure greater clarity, coherence, uniformity, mass recognition, emulation-worthy and scientific and easily measurable, comparable, assessable method system and

order. Besides the purpose is to set standards which can be a model for others for their continuation and further development. National System of Qualifications in the Indian context comprises School Education, Vocational Education and Higher Education. The school education comprises twelve years of schooling subdivided into pre-primary, primary, elementary, secondary and senior secondary levels. The school education is largely governed by the National Curricular Framework (NCF) and is by and large uniform across the country. The National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF) seeks to provide a standardized framework in terms of minimum entry qualification, programme durations, teaching-learning processes and learning outcome aimed at national, and ultimately the universal and acceptability, recognition and equivalence of not only the degrees but also the qualifications. The essential purpose of the NHEQF is to provide a broad framework within which individual universities and other degree-awarding higher educational institutions could design and develop the curricula, syllabi and modules that they consider relevant, appropriate and fitting without any interference of external agencies thus enjoying their academic autonomy to the fullest extent in a responsible manner and without adversely affecting the horizontal and vertical mobility of the students. The NHEQF shall be a structured instrument for the development, classification and recognition of knowledge, skills, competencies and learning outcome associated with a qualification. Consequently it would indicate the comparability of different qualifications and path of progression from one level to another and also from one institution to another. The NHEQF may provide a comprehensive indicator of all-learning achievements and pathways within and across different disciplines and shall represent a consensus of views of all stakeholders and accordingly it shall provide a basis for specifying, monitoring and regulating the quality and compatibility of higher education across disciplines and institutions and thereby facilitating the recognition of qualifications nationally and globally. Yet another salient and distinctive expectations from the NHEQF shall be to ensure that the qualifications could be viewed as independent of institutions offering those qualifications for it seeks to prescribe the minimum standards in terms of input, processes and outcome. Other distinctive features of the NHEQF could include such features as making the programmes of studies modular thereby permitting accreditation or certification of a component part of the larger qualification. Thus the NHEQF would serve as an unequivocal description of higher educational qualification at the national level with the aim that the higher educational system of the country is internationally understood. Besides NQF for formal and adult education, the National Qualifications Framework for vocational education has recently been notified by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. Ultimately the JSSs vocational subjects would also be a part of the NQF for vocational education and would be subject to formal skill assessment, certification and outcome. Formally christened as National Vocational Education Qualifications Framework (NVEQF) it sets common principles and guidelines for a nationally recognized qualification system covering schools, vocational institutes, training institutes and institutes of technical and higher education with qualifications ranging from secondary to doctorate level leading to international recognition of national standards. Linkage between education providers and employers would be a pre-requisite for improving the employability of the vocational pass-outs. The system of Vocational Education aimed at skill development and employability, which has so far been overlapping across the school and higher education and largely as terminal, is now

being sought to be streamlined through NVEQF. The main feature of the Framework which is remarkable in itself, is competency-based modular courses providing for multiple entry and exit as well as vertical mobility. The credit accumulation and transfer system as well as equivalency between general and vocational courses would make horizontal mobility a reality. A seamless progression of higher secondary students to polytechnics, technical institutions and universities is being aimed at by appropriate amendments at all levels of education. Under the Framework adequate care has been taken for preservation of the rich heritage and encouraging the youth to continue the traditions through Recognition of Prior Learning. This would enable the skills of the master-craftsmen to be recognized and certified enabling further honing of skills and/or engagement as MTs. Testing and certification of knowledge and skills that an individual has acquired in previous training and through work experience will enable her to achieve particular levels of competencies thus mainstreaming her expertise. The NVEQF is being developed in close co-ordination with the NSDC (National Skill Development Corporation) which is establishing the Sector Skill Councils for all the important industry-education linkages. The NVEQF also provides for recognition of prior learning for persons having skill from the informal sector. Testing the certification of knowledge and skill that an individual has acquired in previous training and through work experience will enable her to achieve particular level of competencies, thus mainstreaming her/his expertise. Bridge courses to fill the competency gaps would be provided by the NIOS (National Institute of Open School)/State Open Schools/Open Universities. NVEQF levels are gradually to be introduced in polytechnics, colleges and universities for seamless vertical pathways. Vocational education has also been accorded high priority in the National Policy on Education. There is also a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Vocationalization of Secondary Education which offers inter alia 150 vocational courses. Vocational education would be demand-driven with involvement of industry to identify skill requirements and gaps.

5. In order especially to mainstreaming the dropped out and left out population from the formal and competitive system of education in order to compete confidently based on life experience both the Central Government and State Governments have a variety of equivalency programmes. For e.g., we have an institutionalized structure for the purpose of going ahead, moving ahead and equivalency in the form of National Institute of Open School (NIOS). Similarly the State Governments have their own State Open Schools. These institutions enable students/individuals who were left out of the formal schooling system or who failed to compete in the formal educational system to pursue their course of studies. NIOS has equivalency programme for classes III, V, VIII, X and XII. Besides, there are equivalency/upgradation programmes being conducted by the NIOS for Vocational Education. The State Open Schools (NIOS is a part of Central Government, MHRD) also have equivalency programmes generally for Class X and XII. For Class XII Open School, pass in Class X or equivalent is a must. There is little doubt that success/outcome through the equivalency examinations under the equivalency programmes is qualitative in all aspects. The students passing the Class XII Examination are eligible for further courses like degree courses. Interestingly, equivalency programmes are also being contemplated for the adult education programmes. For this, recently, an Expert Committee consisting of eminent experts in the field of education was set up by the National Literacy Mission Authority, MHRD. The Committee headed by former Dean, National Council for

Educational Research and Training (NECRT), an apex resource organization to assist and advise the Central and State Governments on academic matters related to school education, curriculum and development of text-books, has since submitted its Report on Equivalency/Prior Learning. Basically, it is about developing competency framework for attaining equivalency for classes V, VIII and X. Doubtless, the Report and its implementation after appropriate examination at the MHRD level after due consultations would go a long way in ensuring Life Long Learning preceded by Continuing Education contributing immensely and profusely to an environment of literacy, a good society and a proud country and ultimately helping in universal order. There can be no gainsaying of the statement that students/citizens appearing/passing through the institutions dealing with open learning/prior learning/equivalency/adult literacy centres do have more real-life experience and their added educational qualifications would further add to their maturity, sobriety, thinking capability from a very positive and productive angle and not the least, stateswomanship/statesmanship. Continuing Education/Life Long Education (not just including professionals) among the common-women/men is full of potentials and promises signifying a literate, educated and developed society. It would also definitely contribute to preserving and maintaining the Mother Earth which is a cause of great concern these days with the Mother Planet facing a lot of threats which could deleteriously affect woman/man-kind. The entire sociological, cultural and developmental attitude would change for the best; overall it would be a balanced and sustainable development. Every one would be sustained with sustenance in all manner possible. Life Long Education is a continuous circle of learning, unlearning, relearning and up-to-time literacy. Tid-bits: Association of Indian Universities, essentially an association of Vice-Chancellors, is involved for equivalence of foreign degrees. There are more than 600 University-level institutions and in excess of 36000 degree-awarding colleges and institutions making the Indian higher system the largest in the world but at the same time a more complex one. Some of the institutions, including University of Delhi, offer courses on Adult, Continuing Education and Life Long Learning. It is just commonsense that one of the advantages of LLE (for non-professionals specially) is that the student/adult is able to compete with the upcoming generations in the fast-changing world by keeping her knowledge and skills updated by fulfilling the void in the generation gap. Additionally inter alia the roots and foundation of the education are preserved making the adult to be on the route of further and farther education ultimately to be a father of education. Open Universities/Dist Learning Education have also equally contributed to continuing/life-long education.

6. Yes, please. India is the seventh largest country area-wise but it is second only to China as regards population. The population growth being more than that of China, India would overtake China in the times to come. But never mind, majority of population is fairly young with immense potentials for success and growth. Manpower is required to explore and not “exploit” the benefits of the so-far-livable Mother Earth to utopian proportions. With a view to ensuring, in the light of the fact that our country-women/men (note also women, a gender society) are more and more getting educated and looking for opportunities outside the predominant agricultural sector which has sustained people living in India for years without numbers, with increasing migration from rural to urban, with inexorable urbanization, with increasing pressure on rural land due to the secondary and tertiary sectors looking for land, with foreign countries looking for their pastures in an

increasingly developing country like ours with ever-attractive and ever-in-the-news “middle-class consumers” (also middle-class students unable to go abroad due to constraints), with ever-increasing English-knowing population not willing to work in land (to say the least about tilling the soil) and never the least with increasing shortage of/demand for skilled population in contrast to unskilled population which have the negative effect of becoming a demographic bomb vice demographic dividend with no place in industrial and service sectors and in the foreseeable future even in the technology-driven agricultural and farm sector, Government of India has taken a seriously-concerned note of acute and painful shortage of skilled persons to efficiently man the industrial, manufacturing service (oh, not just Call Centres which is being clouded by cloud computing) sectors and had set up a National Council on Skill Development (NCSDD) on 1.7.2008. In recognition of the importance of the Council the Prime Minister of the country is himself its Chairperson. The Council is also serviced by the Prime Minister's Office. The Council has senior Cabinet Ministers, including Union Ministers of Human Resource Development, Heavy Industry and Public Enterprises, Rural Development, Housing and Poverty Alleviation, Labour and Employment and Finance Minister. Besides experts from various sectors of the economy, including industry experts, are also a part of it. The Chairperson of the National Manufacturing Competition Council (NMCC) is also a Member in the Council. Incidentally, NMCC is an important apex body set up by the Government to introduce competition in the manufacturing sector, bring about a level-playing field and induce a competitive growth in the secondary sector in which there is a demand and call for skilled labour. Skilling will also go a long way in bringing about quality of the final product enabling national and international and also highly export-worthy fame, name and recognition. Skilling is also preceded by a scientific and systematic process, outcome of which is certified internationally by an organisation like the International Standards Organization and product-specific specialist organizations.

7. The NCSDD headed by the Prime Minister is at the apex of a three-tier structure and is assisted by the National Skill Development Coordination Board chaired by the Deputy Chairman of the Indian Planning Body i.e. Planning Commission. Naturally, the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, is also a Member of the Prime Minister's National Council on Skill Development. The National Skill Development Coordination Board catalyzes, accelerates, accentuates and coordinates skill developments, both in the private and public sectors. The third tier of the Council is the National Skill Development Corporation, a non-profit Corporation under the Ministry of Finance. As a natural consequence, the chairperson of the Corporation is also a member of the Council chaired by the Prime Minister. Interestingly, the Corporation is a first-of-its-kind Public Private Partnership (PPP) in India that facilitates skill development. Registered Education and Training Providers (RETPs) decide on courses in consultation with Skill Development Centres at the District Levels of NSDC. NSDC would also do funding and incentivizing wherever and as far as possible. NSDC has also been entrusted with the task of establishing Labour Market Information System through the Sector Skill Councils to assist in planning and delivery of training.

8. The mandate of the National Council on Skill Development is as under:-

- Develop a strategy for skill development at the national level, along with variations at the state level.

- Map the gaps in the area of skill development and develop strategies to address the skill deficit.
- Identify new areas for employability and promote skill development in such sectors.
- Advise on remodelling of existing skill development programmes run by various ministries.
- Promote greater use of Information Communications Technology in the area of skill development.
- Develop and implement an action plan for skill development to maximize job generation within the country and create human resources for global needs.
- Provide guidance through the Prime Minister's National Council on Skill Development for activities to be undertaken by the Centre and the States and by the National Skill Development Corporation.

The Principal objective behind setting up the Council is to skill/upskill 500 million people in India by 2022, especially in the sectors like automobiles, financial services, estates, chemicals, Education, Health-care, IT, media and entertainment, organised retail, sports, infrastructure, tourism and related areas and logistics. Interestingly and inspiringly, target of skilling 8 crore people in the XII Plan has been approved by the Prime Minister's National Council on Skill Development. Unorganized sector is also a focal area where skilling/upskilling/multi-skilling would take place on a war-footing. Indian workforce is largely (93%) in unorganized sectors. Interestingly and inspiringly, the Planning Commission of India has a set a target of skilling 8 crore people As a matter of Interest, it may be noted that the National Vocational Educational Framework of MHRD will ultimately converge with the National Skill Development Council. In fact, increasing emphasis on skill development preceded by vocationalisation is going to be a demographic dividend whose benefit could spread far and wide. This will also ultimately be of great inspiration to the Industrial Training Institutes which mainly cater to the economically weaker sections of the society, and other training and skill development institutions. Notably, 65% of Indian population would be in the working age group by 2021 and around 80% of these would have <12 years of education.

9. One positive offshoot of the Council is that earlier skill development efforts were spread across 20 Central Ministries, 35 State Government and Union Territories and the ever-growing and not less gigantic private sector. The advantage now is that the attention and action is more coordinated, synergetic and focused with all the sectors participants as each-for-each-one partners. Skill Development does not take place just on paper and simply by setting up institutions (though institutionalization of the skill development by itself is note-worthy) but by rigorous and vigorous and systematic and methodical training in various spheres keeping in view the attitude and aptitude of the trainees who are ultimately going to be the real benefactors of the quality and viable products and services leading to a vibrant and globally recognized export country whose products and services are recognized and accepted without a pinch of salt and which would ultimately benefit the world community in one way or the other. Quite interestingly, as a part of Corporate Social Responsibility some of the public sector giants have willingly come forward to set

aside and apportion around 15% of their CSR budget for skill development which augurs for the Indian economy in the near future and for the world community in the foreseeable future. Ministry of Finance has also exempted Service Tax for certain categories of vocational courses training as a part of the Negative List under the Service Tax dispensation.

10. It would be seen from the foregoing Report that holistically a combination of education on a continuing and life-long basis for the larger masses with encouragement and boost via prior learning and equivalency and job-oriented and skill-oriented (more practical) courses is going to be a work-horse for a developing and dynamic economy enabling a close linkage between education and sustainable development as after-all education (value education included) will also definitely bring about awareness on ecology, environment and a balanced development leading to long sustenance. There is no also question that development is ought to be balanced or else development could be destructive.

11. We thank the Government of India, UNESCO, Government of Thailand and all international partners/participants for giving this golden opportunity to submit Country Report of India.
