



The winners of the UNESCO
International Literacy Prizes

2009



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



United Nations
Literacy Decade
2003 - 2012

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International Literacy Prizes

2009

Tin Tua (Burkina Faso)

Literacy and Non-Formal Education Programme

Winner of the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize

Nirantar (India)

“Khabar Lahariya” Project

Winner of the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize

SERVE Afghanistan

Pashai Language Development Project

Winner of the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy

The Municipal Literacy Coordinating Council, Municipality of Agoo (Philippines)

Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning Programme

Winner of the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy

Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Bhutan

Non-Formal and Continuing Education Programme

Honourable Mention of the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy

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*Koïchiro Matsuura,
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Message from Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of International Literacy Day 2009

THIS YEAR, International Literacy Day puts the spotlight on the empowering role of literacy and its importance for participation, citizenship and development. 'Literacy and Empowerment' is also the theme for the 2009-2010 biennium of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012).

While the empowering role of literacy and its significance for development have been recognized worldwide, there are still 776 million illiterate adults in the world and 75 million children out of school whose rights and needs remain unfulfilled. Literacy, in fact, is by far the most neglected goal on the Education for All (EFA) agenda.

Who are the 776 million illiterate adults? In most countries, these are the most disadvantaged and marginalized populations, with a high percentage of women and girls, indigenous people, linguistic and cultural minorities, nomads, rural dwellers, and the disabled. There is a high correlation between poverty and illiteracy. In this perspective, empowerment is the key. For all those women and men who live without access to basic reading and writing skills, literacy opens up new horizons of opportunity, improves standards of life and contributes to processes of social change and poverty eradication.

However, despite clear evidence of the power of literacy to transform individual lives and patterns of social development, in many parts of the world there is neither the political will nor the resources to make youth and adult literacy an area of priority action. In consequence, those whose lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills is not being addressed – almost one in six adults – are being told that their rights, their needs and their hopes do not count. This is an unconscionable situation whose blatant injustice must not be allowed to continue.


Fortunately, there are many governments, civil society organizations, enterprises, community groups and individuals who understand the benefits of literacy and are conscientious in their support of literacy programmes. Many persons work anonymously, quietly and steadily to help others to acquire literacy and numeracy skills and the chance to embark on the adventure of learning. International Literacy Day is an occasion to salute and applaud their efforts and to encourage them to sustain their commitment. By tutoring and mentoring others, literacy workers – whether professional or voluntary – are important catalysts of change who are making a real difference to the lives of others.

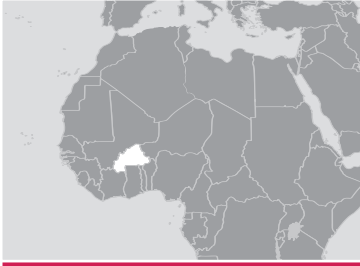
Literacy produces these human benefits with and through the learners themselves. As many studies have found, literacy is an empowering force that serves to increase self-esteem, confidence and assertiveness and helps to build a sense of personal competence and independence together with better awareness of one's rights. Literacy gives enhanced autonomy to individuals in both the family and community context.

These human benefits of literacy give rise to consequences of significance for society as a whole. Thus, the self-esteem generated by literacy skills facilitates social and political participation and is, in fact, associated with greater interest in national and community activities, influencing attitudes and practices in the political sphere. In many and varied contexts, literacy has demonstrated its extraordinary power to equip individuals to participate more actively and more effectively.

In this era of widening disparities, literacy brings not only greater self-esteem but also opportunities to those who have been disenfranchised, marginalized and neglected: neo-literates acquire greater capacity and skills to raise their income levels, build sustainable livelihoods, gain access to health and educational services, and engage in the public arena. Indeed, literacy is vital for securing access to political, economic and cultural opportunities, and this is particularly the case for women thanks to the enabling and transformative impact of literacy on their lives.

Each year, International Literacy Day is an occasion for worldwide mobilization for literacy. Today, I call upon governments, intergovernmental organizations, development partners, employers, trade unions and civil society organizations everywhere to stop the neglect of youth and adult literacy and to strengthen their commitment to literacy. Literacy is not just about reading and writing, it is about self-respect and human dignity and about opportunities that give hope to individuals, families, communities and entire societies. Literacy, an integral part of the right to education, has shown itself time and time again to be a vital tool of empowerment. It is time for the right to education of all persons, of whatever age, to be realized in practice.





BURKINA FASO

Tin Tua's self-help philosophy makes communities bloom

The association Tin Tua was commended by the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize for its tangible achievements and innovative methods in gender and sustainable community development and for its work in enriching the literate environment.



© Tin Tua

IN GULIMANCEMA, one of the languages spoken in eastern Burkina Faso, Tin Tua means “let’s help ourselves develop.” From the outset, Tin Tua’s principle has been to “see big but start small,” a strategy that has paid off. This NGO, which is specialized in literacy and non-formal education, has been awarded one of the 2009 UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prizes. Today, Tin Tua’s programmes reach some 40,000 learners every year, half of them women, across some 750 villages and hamlets of this country where the literacy rate is one of the lowest in the world at 26 per cent – and only 18 per cent for women.

Community participation is one of the hallmarks of the programme, which started in 1986. Based on needs identified by villagers themselves, Tin Tua has developed a curriculum in five local languages covering basic literacy and numeracy skills along with practical knowledge about health, hygiene, human rights, gender and farming. Facilitators follow three weeks of training to teach the programmes that run over the course of two sessions lasting between 50 and 75 days, each of 300 hours. Learners are expected to make a financial contribution to participate. Once they have completed the full course, they can choose to continue with literacy classes in French – also developed by Tin Tua – making them eligible to sit for national exams.

Tin Tua’s greatest achievement lies in the manifold changes brought into the daily lives of villagers. The programme has enabled farmers to



Photos © Tin Tua



better manage food production at the village level, for example, by taking measures to stock cereals in order to avoid speculation in times of famine. It has trained health workers, notably in the field of maternal health. Tin Tua staff say that girls who follow the programme are less likely to accept forced or early marriage. Neo-literates produce practical reading materials, while the programme has encouraged the setting up of mobile libraries. Evaluations show that the literacy rate in villages where Tin Tua has worked is around 40 per cent – well above the national average – and with a low dropout rate of 7 per cent.

Tin Tua targets youth and adults above 15 but also early school leavers between 9 and 15 years of age. According to the programme, out of 100 children in this region, only about half are likely to attend school and even less go beyond the third year. Tin Tua has developed a specific course for these children. It has also set up a method used in the country's "satellite schools" aimed at first teaching children in their mother tongue and gradually making the transition to French. As such, it has helped to improve the overall education system and to build bridges between the formal and non-formal paths. It has enabled some 1400 youth to acquire an official national qualification as a result of following literacy classes in French.

The NGO is now sharing its experience with Benin, Togo, and Niger – all countries with low literacy rates where Tin Tua's methods and outlook are likely to make a difference.

Cynthia GUTTMAN



INDIA

Indian village women find a voice

A rural fortnightly newspaper written, edited, illustrated, produced, marketed and distributed by marginalized, rural and low caste women: this is “Khabar Lahariya”, for which the Indian NGO Nirantar was awarded the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize.



© Nirantar

IT WAS A PROJECT doomed to failure: a newspaper written, produced and sold by poor, “low-caste,” rural and barely literate women – in a local language. Now, it has won international recognition through the award of the 2009 UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize. ‘Khabar Lahariya’ (the name means “News Waves”) was launched in May 2002 and today the 8-page fortnightly newspaper is a thriving and respected concern with a readership of over 25,000 in more than 400 villages in the Chitrakoot and Banda districts of Uttar Pradesh, northern India.

It is also a tribute to women who have fought caste, gender, traditional role models and lack of education to give themselves and their communities a voice. Nirantar, the women’s organisation instrumental in making the project work, is this year’s winner of the 2009 UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize.

Nirantar was founded in October 1993 with the aim of promoting literacy and education for women’s empowerment. In 2002, the organization began selecting women with varying levels of literacy and from socially marginalised backgrounds such as Dalit, Kol and Muslim communities to work as journalists; they were offered intensive training on literacy skills, reporting, writing and editing.

In 2004 Nirantar and Khabar Lahariya began courses on the creation of newspapers, newsletters and broadsheets. Courses are arranged in two modules of 14 and 7 days to suit the needs of local groups and for



Photos: © Nirantar

neo-literate and semi-literate women; facilitators are paid a monthly salary. Participants are also trained to use the internet and to operate cameras which they take with them on their reporting beat.

One of Khabar Lahariya's strengths is that it is journalism by the village, of the village, for the village. The women known as "barefoot patrakars (reporters)" write about everything, from plans for a cement company which will ruin a green spot, to women being paid to vote in local elections to the Iraq war. Readers have used some of the articles published in the newspaper to demand action and greater information; local officials have been pulled up for negligence and people have received compensation and redress in some cases.

When it comes to reporting on subjects that touch women such as rape and gender violence, there is a new balance to the reporting. In March 2004, their work was rewarded when they received the Chameli Devi Jain Award, one of India's highest journalism honours.

The Khabar Lahariya group is the only independent rural women's media collective in the country. The newspaper now boasts a pool of trained women

journalists who provide resource support to other groups and the success of the project has inspired collectives of rural women in other parts of the country – Rajasthan and Bihar – to initiate production of a monthly rural newspaper.

Writer and women's activist Farah Naqvi, who has captured the story in her book "Waves in the Hinterland, the journey of a newspaper", sums up the women's story like this: "They have battled with their inner demons and with the images thrust upon them by the world. Images which told them that journalists are only educated men, demons that fed on fear and applauded and laughed every time they failed."

"They have not only redefined the very male notion of citizenship but turned the very notion of women in India on its head."

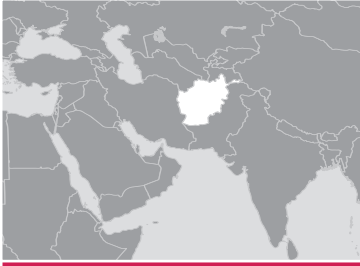
Extract from Khabar Lahariya – *Me and my bicycle*

*Listen, listen sister a village story full of delight
Where women ride cycles come day or come night
They feel no shame or shyness in learning to ride
It takes hard work not to fall off the side*

*First I used to sit at the back
Now my beloved does the same*

*Look how my world has changed, my sweet
You, who thought I belonged at your feet.*

Mary DE SOUSA



AFGHANISTAN

Afghan minority language project succeeds against the odds

The Pashai Language Development Project was awarded the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy for its meaningful literacy, livelihood education, income generation and public health and nutrition education activities in a country in conflict.



© SERVE Afghanistan

WARFARE, strong cultural resistance to female education and lack of a writing system for the dialect being used have failed to derail a language development project for Afghanistan's ethnic minority, the Pashai.

The Pashai Language Development Project, which has secured one of UNESCO's Confucius Prizes for Literacy, is a community-owned initiative which delivers meaningful literacy as well as livelihood, public health and nutrition education to around 1,000 Pashai men and women every year.

The Pashai are an ethnic minority group living in Eastern Afghanistan. Pashto is the language of politics, economics and education in the region and until the Pashai programme was initiated, Pashai in some areas had no access to adult education and women and girls were denied formal and non-formal education of any kind.

Particularly hard hit were women who lost their husbands in the country's long series of wars and were left to raise their families with little or no means of securing an income.

The project was started in 1999 by the charity SERVE in response to community members' request for an adult literacy programme. In 2006, with support from the provincial government, the project expanded to include Pashai language literacy classes for girls and to begin the process of creating a Pashai and Pashto bilingual education programme within the formal education system.



Photos: © SERVE Afghanistan



The main goals of the project are that literate individuals, male and female, will make use of print literature in their own language and in Pashto to access and share ideas and information, that community members will be equipped for productive employment opportunities and that Pashai will form part of the multilingual education curriculum in government schools.

Mary DE SOUSA

Despite the country's current conflict situation, the project has managed to maintain its emphasis on education, especially for women and girls. Participants learn to use written material in their local language and in Pashto. Orthography for Pashai has been developed and is now being tested and the project also runs an animal husbandry course in tandem with the bilingual education programme. Local community members of both sexes with limited formal education are trained as teachers for literacy classes.


PHILIPPINES

Putting the “All” into Education for All in the Philippines

The Municipal Literacy Coordinating Council, Municipality of Agoo, won the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy for its Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning Programme.



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FROM FISHERMEN TO HOMEMAKERS, from pre-schoolers to dropouts, from teachers to municipal workers – not forgetting the very young, the very old and the marginalized – the entire local population in the Municipality of Agoo in La Union, the Philippines, has the chance to become literate or upgrade their skills thanks to its municipal authority. Agoo’s Municipal Literacy Coordinating Council puts the “All” into Education for All with its ambitious Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning Programme which serves the region’s 49 barangays, or villages. After garnering several national literacy awards, the programme has now won one of the awards of the 2009 UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy.

On one end of the spectrum, a structured literacy and post-literacy programme has considerably reduced the illiteracy in the region. On the other, scholarships are made available for children who might not otherwise pursue their studies. In between, income-generating programmes cover everything from welding to therapeutic massage, and include several indigenous crafts.

The holistic vision of the programme is evident in the six learning strands within the Accreditation and Equivalency Sub-Programme, namely communication skills, critical thinking and problem-solving, sustainable use of resources and productivity, self-development, a sense of community and expanding one’s world vision.



© MICC

Education and training opportunities also include childcare, hygiene and prevention of infectious diseases. Farmers do capability training, enabling them to increase their yield and income. Teachers and municipal workers are encouraged to upgrade their skills, notably in computer literacy.

Many of the programmes are conducted in the four Community Learning Centres which serve the region. Activities in the summer day-schools for younger children take place “under the mango tree”. Travelling teachers and mobile libraries ensure that the unreached are reached.

The leadership of the municipal authorities in identifying potential beneficiaries and in coordinating activities to offer them an education relevant to their needs has been credited as a key factor in raising literacy levels and sustaining lifelong learning in the region.

The diversity of the programme is mirrored by that of its funding sources. The Municipality of Agoo coordinates the activities of many national agencies and non-governmental organizations: local, provincial and national government agencies provide half of the funding, a dozen NGOs provide a further 25 per cent, donors account for 20 per cent and the private

sector gives 5 per cent. This variety contributes to the project’s sustainability and was found “exemplary” by the jury for the literacy prizes.

In providing a sustainable literate environment for all, the Municipality of Agoo is entirely in accordance with the ‘literacy and empowerment’ theme in the calendar of the United Nations Literacy Decade. The key to its ambitious, all-embracing programme is that it does not consider literacy in isolation but as part of continuing education and learning throughout life.

Jean O’SULLIVAN



BHUTAN

Literacy makes happiness

The Non-Formal and Continuing Education Programme run by the Ministry of Education of Bhutan received an Honourable Mention of the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy for its holistic approach to literacy and its success in reaching remote areas.



© Ministry of Education

IN THE HIMALAYAN KINGDOM OF BHUTAN, literacy is one of the factors of gross national happiness, the guiding development philosophy that aims to improve the quality of life of all citizens.

The principle has guided the national non-formal and continuing education programme that has been awarded an Honourable Mention of the 2009 UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy.

The programme, now run by the Ministry of Education, was launched in 1992 in five pilot centres, where teaching focused on the promotion of Zhungkha, the national language. Since then, it has reached 135,000 learners, of whom 70 per cent are women, and has led to the establishment of 700 non-formal education centres.

After starting from scratch, the programme now includes a structured curriculum with about 30 different readers developed on a wide variety of subjects. The basic literacy programme reaches adults with no literacy skills and students with less than three years of school. The one-year course offers literacy and numeracy along with skills related to health, hygiene, agriculture, forestry, family planning and the environment. The post-literacy programme is a nine-month course that builds on the previous one, with a strong focus on disseminating practical information on a range of subjects, including health, hygiene, HIV and AIDS, and early childhood care and development, all with the aim of improving people's quality of life. Instructors are trained to make learning lively, with demonstrations, discussions, story telling and drama.



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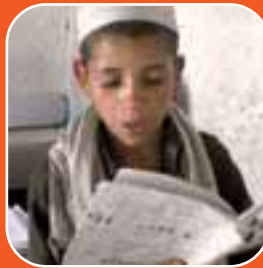
There is also a flexible self-learning programme that runs in 22 community learning centres – small two-room buildings constructed with the participation of communities and housing a number of activities for literacy promotion and life skills development. Here, the programme provides materials, sewing machines and other equipment for skills training such as carpentry, along with reading corners and library books to help learners keep up their literacy skills.

Many of the learners work in agriculture and decide on the best time and place for holding classes – if there is no community centre or nearby school, they are often held in someone's house or in a temporary shed built by the villagers.

The programme has had a visible impact in this mountainous, landlocked country where the population is widely scattered, making the provision of social services difficult. It has played a crucial role in spreading messages about HIV and AIDS prevention, safe motherhood and childcare. Women have taken on responsibilities, some becoming members of the National Assembly and acting as agents of change in their communities by being able to discuss development issues in their villages. Improvements in personal hygiene and involvement in income-generating activities have been observed, along with the more personal breakthroughs, such as being able to write letters to friends and family members.

The programme is steadily scaling up but only to the extent that communities ask for it. The government insists that communities take the first step in establishing the programme because this builds ownership and ensures sustainability. Learners are also encouraged to express their needs. According to the programme, many are now eager to learn basic English in order to become more proficient with modern technologies, from mobile phones to computers – another step on the road to happiness.

Cynthia GUTTMAN



The Power of Literacy

UNESCO wishes to express its profound appreciation and deepest thanks to:

- **THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA** whose generous support has made it possible to award the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize since 1989.
- **THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA** whose generous support has made it possible to award the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy since 2005.

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