Rationale

Low levels of literacy have been a persistent problem in India, despite the implementation of strong and sustained government programmes to tackle this issue. The National Literacy Mission launched in 1988 with the purpose of imparting functional literacy to non-literate between the ages of 15 and 35 years produced 127.45 million literates. As a result, the literacy rate jumped by 12% between the Census of India undertaken in 1991 and that in 2001, from 52.21% to 64.84%.

But the sheer numbers of illiterates recorded in the 2001 Census, putting the number of illiterates in 15 years and above age group at 259.52 million, called for further introspection. This was compounded by the fact that wide disparities were reflected in terms of gender, social groups and regions. Thus, notwithstanding the progress achieved, India still has a long way to go to reach the world average rate of literacy, which is 84%. In the context of Andhra Pradesh, the significance of adult literacy is pronounced, as according to the 2001 Census, the state had a literacy rate of 60.47% and a gender gap of 19.89%.

The Saakshar Bharat programme, launched at the all-India level in 2009, was conceptualised with the goal of creating a learning society with focus on non-literate and neo-literates in the age group of 15 years and above with a special focus on women. This programme seeks to reach 80% literacy in the target group along with reducing gender disparity in literacy to less than 10% by 2012. The programme also aims to reduce other socio and regional disparities.

Objectives

The main objective of the programme is to impart functional literacy and numeracy to non-literate and neo-literate adults. It also seeks to enable neo-literate adults to continue their learning beyond basic literacy and acquire equivalency to the formal educational system. The programme strives to impart relevant skill development programmes to non-literates and neo-literates improve their earning and living conditions. It also aims to promote a learning society by providing opportunities to neo-literate adults for continuing education.

Key Stakeholders

The key stakeholders of the programme are the National Literacy Mission, State Literacy Mission, volunteer teachers, preraks or coordinators, state resource centres, change makers in the community or local NGOs and neo-literates above 15 years of age, especially women.

Figure 1: Key stakeholders of Saakshar Bharat

Non-literate and Neo-literates above 15 years of age, especially women

National Literacy Mission

State Literacy Mission

Volunteer Teachers

Preraks/Coordinators

State Resource Centres

Change makers in the community or local NGOs

* The field work for this case study was conducted in Andhra Pradesh before the state of Telengana was carved out of it in June 2014.
**Implementation Strategy**

The basic literacy programme was launched in 19 districts—Adilabad, Anantapur, Chittoor, Guntur, Karimnagar, Khammam, Kurnool, Mahbubnagar, Medak, Nalgonda, Nizamabad, Prakasam, Rangareddy, Sri Potti Sriramulu Nellore, Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, Warangal, YSR of Andhra Pradesh, having less than 50% female literacy in 2011. The programme focusses on four components including basic literacy, vocational skills, equivalency to formal education, and continued education. The programme seeks to achieve these goals by boosting the neo-literates' capacity through libraries and newspapers at Adult Education Centres (AECs).

**a. Process Flow**

The process started with the constitution of the management committees at various levels, right from the national level to the Panchayat level. At the state level the Directorate of Adult Education acts as the secretariat of the State Literacy Mission Authority, followed by the Zilla Lok Siksha Samithi (ZLSS) at the district level, the Mandal Lok Siksha Samithi (MLSS) at the *mandal* level and the Gram Panchayat Lok Siksha Samithi (GPLSS) at the Gram Panchayat (GP) level.

This was followed by the opening of bank accounts for these committees. The allocation of funds is activity based, and funds are disbursed directly by the APSLMA to the account of committees at each level starting from the state level down to the Panchayat level, with clear authorisation for spending of funds marked against the activities to be undertaken.

The next step was to conduct a survey of the number of non-literates at the village level, which is followed by opening of AECs at every village Panchayat with a population of 5,000. Each AEC is supported by two preraks. Simultaneously, the teaching-learning materials for basic education are prepared by the State Resource Centre (SRC).

The National Literacy Mission Authority in collaboration with the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) conducts assessment tests for the learners enrolled in basic learning programmes. Held bi-annually, six tests have been conducted so far with more than 50 lakh neo-literates qualifying these tests.

Andhra Pradesh launched its equivalency programme in January 2014 as a pilot, which is being implemented in

**Table 1: Progress of Saakshar Bharat**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Beneficiaries</th>
<th>79,52,984</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Cost</td>
<td>Rs. 5,91,70,49,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of AECs</td>
<td>18921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Districts</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Blocks</td>
<td>945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of GPs</td>
<td>18921</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Andhra Pradesh State Literacy Mission Authority

**Figure 2: Management structure of Saakshar Bharat**

![Management Structure](source: Andhra Pradesh State Literacy Mission Authority)
one centre in each mandal. The equivalency component of the programme aims to mainstream neo-learners into the formal schooling system. It envisages completion of course A (equivalent to Standard 3 of formal school) and course B (equivalent to Standard 5) to be completed in one year.

The equivalency programme is still at a nascent stage with Primers A and B prepared by the Andhra Pradesh Open Schooling Society. This component will also involve an assessment test at the end of the year and the qualified candidates will go on to level C (equivalent to Standard 8).

The fourth component of the Saakshar Bharat programme is vocational training. The training under this component is being provided in collaboration with the Jan Shikshan Sansthan. Skills such as tailoring, soap-making, beautician courses and zari-zardosi courses are being imparted under this component. This component is financed through the state resources and Government of India (GoI) does not provide any financial resources for this component. APSLMA earmarks Rs. 6000 for each AEC to be utilised for vocational training activities.

b. Awareness

Since adult education requires a change in perception among target beneficiaries about the need for literacy, the process of awareness generation is critical. A state-wide campaign, ‘Saakshar Bharat Yatra’, has been organised in collaboration with the Bharat Gnaana Vignana Smithi in Chittoor, YSR Kadapa, Kurnool, Mahaboobnagar and Rangareddy districts to mobilise learners. Similarly, Yatras have been organised in Vishakhapatnam as well. Participation of ministers and senior officials ensured wide coverage by media. A motivational film was also made and shown during the awareness generation drives.

c. Trainings

Training is an important component of this initiative. The training process starts with identifying and training the resource persons and master trainers at the state level. At this level, the trainings are provided by SRCs located in Hyderabad and Vishakhapatnam. These resource persons and master trainers then begin training the state, district, and mandal-level trainers. The trainings are also organised for preraks at the mandal level. As new initiative Manna TV (State government channel) is used to provide training, orientation and guidance to almost 37,000 functionaries on various aspects of the programme.

d. Monitoring

An effective mechanism for monitoring is in place to ensure smooth implementation of the programme.

The Director, Adult Education, holds a Monthly Review Meeting on the 7th of every month with the Secretaries of the Zilla Lok Shikshan Sansthas. Similarly, the District Collector; Deputy Director, Adult Education; and CEO, Zilla Parishad, hold review meetings at the district level with mandal coordinators on the 5th of every month.

At the divisional level, similar meetings are held by the divisional in-charges such as project officers/assistant project officers of the adult education mission fortnightly. Mandel development officers and adult education supervisors hold review meetings with village coordinators on the 27th, 28th and 29th of every month.

Along with the traditional mechanism of monitoring, a web-based MIS system has also been developed. It is a web-flow based-system that connects all major stakeholders to the Panchayat level. This system is designed to facilitate physical and financial planning,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Examination</th>
<th>No. of learners attended</th>
<th>No. of successful learners</th>
<th>% Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06-03-2011</td>
<td>10.08 lakh</td>
<td>5.54 lakh</td>
<td>54.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-08-2011</td>
<td>10.07 lakh</td>
<td>5.63 lakh</td>
<td>55.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-03-2012</td>
<td>16.41 lakh</td>
<td>12.48 lakh</td>
<td>76.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-08-2012</td>
<td>16.10 lakh</td>
<td>11.56 lakh</td>
<td>71.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-03-2013</td>
<td>11.67 lakh</td>
<td>8.40 lakh</td>
<td>71.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-08-2013</td>
<td>13.88 lakh</td>
<td>Results awaited</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78.31 lakh</td>
<td>43.61 lakh</td>
<td>67.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Andhra Pradesh State Literacy Mission Authority
monitor and review the progress and evaluate the impact of the programme from the grassroots level onwards.

The MIS also enables a real time assessment through the online feedback component, facilitating corrective interventions. However, a mid-term assessment study, conducted by Indian Institute of Management -Bangalore, highlights challenges that hinder an effective working of this MIS system such as passwords, error messages and lack of computer literacy among the intended citizen-users and mandal-level functionaries and connectivity issues.

Resources Utilised

The Saakshar Bharat programme in Andhra Pradesh has been well established in terms of human resources. Since its launch in 2011, 37,842 preraks, 3,05,694 volunteer teachers, 37,842 master trainers and 1,890 resource persons have been appointed.

In addition to these appointments, 76 district coordinators and 945 mandal coordinators have been appointed in all the Saakshar Bharat districts. A critical factor in the successful implementation of Saakshar Bharat has been the existence of the Directorate of Adult Education since the 1980s. This ensures availability of a dedicated team with over 30 years of experience in the adult education sector. The infrastructure, financial as well as human resources of this Directorate were utilised in the implementation of the programme.

Table 3: Resources utilised

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Total (Rs. in Crores)</th>
<th>GOI Share (75%)</th>
<th>State Share (25%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total approved cost</td>
<td>877.23</td>
<td>657.93</td>
<td>219.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount Sanctioned so far</td>
<td>514.91</td>
<td>403.49</td>
<td>111.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure</td>
<td>355.86</td>
<td>334.21</td>
<td>111.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Andhra Pradesh State Literacy Mission Authority

Impact

Improvement in literacy rate: The initiative has significantly impacted the overall literacy rate in the state of Andhra Pradesh as it has improved from 60.47% in 2001 to 67.02% in 2011 with a 6.55 percentage increase.

Reduction in gender gap in literacy: An analysis of gender disaggregated data on literacy in the state shows that the male literacy rate increased from 70.32% in 2001 to 74.88% in 2011 showing a 4.56 percentage increase. Similarly, female literacy increased from 50.43% in 2001 to 59.15% in 2011 showing a marked increase of 8.72%. The gender gap also decreased significantly from 19.89% in 2001 to 15.73 in 2011, marking a decrease of 4.16%.

Increase in enrollment: The enrollment rate has seen a progressive increase from 2010-11 through 2012-13 and achievement rate is also high and keeps increasing in tandem with the increase in enrollment (Figure 4).

The vocational skills component of Saakshar Bharat programme has also shown significant impact as depicted in Table 4.
Key Challenges

The attitude of the targeted population towards literacy was the biggest challenge. The first step of bringing people, especially women, from their homes to the literacy centres was critical for implementing and sustaining the programme. This was countered by extensive awareness generation campaigns and intensive engagement of preraks with the community. While the initial entry of the targeted population into adult education centres is a challenge, a continuous effort is required to retain them in the learning process. This is again a challenge since the learning material and the environment need to be conducive to their needs.

Aspects such as equivalency and continued education have been started in order to address this challenge. It is hoped that the basic certificates that will be provided to programme beneficiaries achieving different qualifications will garner greater recognition and respect for the learning attained at these centres. These certificates could be used by neo-learners in pursuit of jobs.

Replicability and Sustainability

Adult education is critical for India to eradicate illiteracy and to ensure greater opportunities for progress to the marginalised sections of society. By addressing this need, the Saakshar Bharat programme makes a unique

People speak...

Chandrakala, Velimela Village

Madam (prerak) came to tell us that we should come to the centre in the evenings and spend time with her. It would be good for us and we will learn how to read and write. Initially I was scared as I did not know how to read or write. Now I have started on Primer A. My children also encourage me to continue.
and essential contribution towards the country’s growth and development. The programme uses an effective mechanism to mainstream those adults who did not have the opportunity to become literate. In the post-Right-to-Education era, this service gets redefined as a duty of the State rather than a service. The ‘Andhra Model’ and the sheer numbers that are being targeted enhance the chances of replicability in states like Uttar Pradesh.

**Conclusion**

The energy and passion with which the Saakshar Bharat programme has been implemented in Andhra Pradesh can be gauged from the initiatives that have been taken up in different districts to enhance its reach and impact.

The District Collector of Vizianagaram initiated a special intensive literacy drive to cover 4,00,000 learners, primarily MGNREGA beneficiaries, by involving civil society organisations. The ZLSS has conducted the NIOS assessment test in March 2012 for all learners in Vizianagaram.

For this activity, Vizianagaram district was recognised in the *Limca Book of Records*. Similarly, the District Collector of Mahaboobnagar initiated a special literacy drive in low literacy *mandals* such as Gattu, Leeja, Maldakaland and Dharur to cover 1.50 lakh non-literate. Such high levels of passion on the part of the state and district administrations to ameliorate illiteracy have made a significant impact on the literacy canvas of the state.

**Fact Sheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nodal Implementing Agency</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh National Literacy Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical Coverage</td>
<td>19 Districts of Andhra Pradesh State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Groups</td>
<td>Women and Minority groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Implementation</td>
<td>2009 - Present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>