

THE LITERACY ISSUE  
FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES on READING & WRITING

## Five Challenges to Women's Literacy ,

Deepening the Issues and Objectives of ILY .....  
 Sobering Thoughts: Literacy for What? Strategies With '5  
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 Section 4: Building the Network ..4 .  
 Section 5: Resources Innl11-nlnlulnnl-lul111Ulllallnllunll'1111ft11  
 tool for social change and empowerment of  
 women.  
 The Women's Program office is located in  
 Toronto, Canada with a staff of three full-time  
 workers. Special projects are coordinated by key  
 contact groups and individuals in different re-  
 gions. Overall direction and planning is provided  
 by an international advisory committee.  
 The International Council for Adult Educa-  
 tion (ICAE) is an international nongovernmental  
 organization with national member associations  
 in over 90 countries, and networks in a variety of  
 areas, including : peace, literacy, community  
 health and population education, women's . . ;  
 and participatory research as well 3?  
 Women's Program. A" networks -- 4.  
 organized and coordinated by individuals in  
 different regions of the world.  
 this issue of Voices Rising SIDA. ,  
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 Churches.

## THE LITERACY ISSUE:

### Feminist Perspectives on Reading and Writing

In what ways is literacy an issue for women? What are the practical and theoretical implications of a gender perspective in this field of educational work? These are the broad questions addressed by the articles, reviews and resources in this special issue of *Voices Rising*. 1990, International Literacy Year, and the new decade which it heralds, presents an opportunity for reflection on the feminist challenge to literacy theory and practice, for in the ways in which literacy workers are reformulating literacy as a women's issue and for ensuring that this re-visioning is taken up more broadly within our movement.

One teeming theme in the following pages is that of critique--the exposure by women practitioners and learners of the multiple ways women have been excluded from literacy--from its achievements, its programs, its measurements, its conceptualization, from definitions of its relevance and meaning, from its methodologies and strategies. A second theme, not surprisingly, is innovation--the diverse and creative attempts to redress women's marginalization and to integrate women's interests and perspectives into the very meaning of the term illiteracy, (and its obverse, illiteracy), into pedagogies, into the personal desires and political possibilities of literacy acquisition. The examples we include represent but a sprinkling of the creative energy and skill literacy practitioners and learners are bringing to this field.

There has been a shift over recent years in how questions of women and literacy are being posed, one that parallels the broader feminist critique of education. Earlier feminist questioning was very practical, and drew attention to the high incidence of what is officially defined as illiteracy among women, as opposed to men, in most countries; the logistical difficulties women face in even attending school or adult literacy classes; the threats of violence, physical and psychological, that women are often subject to when striving to become literate; and the irrelevance of the content of many literacy programs to the daily realities and needs of women's lives. Literacy programs were shown to reinforce oppressive and limiting gender stereotypes and to oftentimes rely on teaching and learning practices that further silence and discourage women. These revelations and the issues they raise for literacy workers and programs are summarised in *Illiteracy, A Tool for Empowerment of Women?* by Agneta Lind.

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Inevitably, the illumination of women's specific experience of literacy and illiteracy as distinct from that of men led to a more profound critique. The emphasis shifted away from attempting to understand literacy as a problem for/of women--with an implicit notion that illiteracy, like poverty, are ultimately the fault of those who experience them. There is now more concern to understand the ideological assumptions and judgements loaded into the concepts of illiteracy and illiteracy in different social contexts, and within that to see how women are silenced by and precluded from these social constructions of what it means to be illiterate? In this way literacy/illiteracy become part of the process of organizing and reinforcing gender, race and class subordination.

The promotion of literacy--and the promise that it holds out--is couched differently depending on social and political circumstances. In the ideology of capitalist industrialized countries, literacy is presumed to offer individual advancement? or in more progressive terms, personal empowerment? But as feminists are showing, the relationship between the acquisition of

reading and writing skills and empowerment is different for women than for men, and depends, among other things, on increased economic opportunity and a reorganization of domestic relations. In countries of the South, the attempts at functional literacy often associated with national development policies often further disadvantage women whose lives are centred in the non-productive Sphere (see Lind). We have also seen in recent years how gender relations limit possibilities for women's empowerment even in situations where literacy is presented as an aspect of popular political mobilization--such as within oppositional social movements or pre- and post-revolutionary moments (see iKhulumani Makhosikazi' from South Africa and Womorrow Will Be Different from Chile).

This is not to suggest that learning to read and write, or more broadly, the acquisition of literacy, is not empowering for women--individually and collectively. But neither can it be taken for granted. It is in the tension between the potential and the limitations of literacy that feminist literacy workers and women learners face a major challenge, finding ways to work together to redefine how--in each specific social context--literacy can embrace and further women's practice.

A EDITORIAL

cal and stratlgtr gentler tntcrstst Only  
from this base we can expect to develop  
approaches to literacy literacy truly em-  
powering for women and men.

Al'ler Agnclu l,ind's overview. The ur-  
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my programs in South Africa, (hllct 21nd  
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non-govcrnmcntal initiatives. We look  
forward to hearing your VICWS.

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daily lives, as well as within the broader  
structures of oppression that govern their  
lives.

But the questions remain: What is the  
relation between women's cmpowcrmcn  
and literacy? What arc the implications of  
a gender perspective in literacy? Letts  
continue to share and learn from our differ-  
cmu)rltcxts, approaches and politics. What  
is your cxpcricncc'? What problems arc you  
coming up against? What makes you mad?

What small or large successes can you  
xharc? What questions do you want dis-  
cussed and debated through the network?

Thank you to Susan Turner

who coordinated and edited the  
material for this issue. and also,  
to the activists from the Toronto  
literacy community who met  
with us twice early on in the  
process to help provide a frame-  
work and ideas for content.  
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The Women,s

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You might be  
interested to know  
that:

. Several women from our network attended the first ICAE three-week international leadership workshop in international adult education which took place in Santiago, Chile, September 1989. In fact there was, quite surprisingly to all, a majority of women. The workshop was coordinated by Teresa Marshall, coordinator of the ICAE Health and Popular Education network and Lynda Yanz from the Women's Program.

0 In late October, the Women's Program held its first Advisory Committee Meeting in Toronto to discuss program priorities and recommendations from the first draft of an organizational review. Twenty key contacts from regional networks and working committees attended. Two important outcomes were: a draft Statement of Mission which we will be circulating for improvement and endorsement over the next months, and a plan of work for an important new program initiative, an international gender and popular education research project? (See insert).

6 On November 3 we hosted 1st Up In Arms, Women's Organizations Worldwide Confront the Funding Crisis? a public forum to stimulate discussion and debate on the current trends and policies of international development agencies, and their implications for women's organizing, at national, regional and international levels. See the next Voices Rising, for excerpts from presentations. Send us your insights and questions so that we can catalyze a broader debate and more effective strategizing on how to front the pressures on women's organizing internationally.  
VOICES RISING JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1990  
Program

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Two special  
initiatives in 1990:

0 In February 14 women from our network (from the West Bank, Egypt, India, Thailand, Mexico, Peru, Quebec, Rwanda, Tanzania, Mali, Canada and Zimbabwe) will take part in a two-week exchange visit to literacy and health programs in Tanzania and Mali. The project is being co-sponsored with the Women's Network of the African Association for Literacy and Adult Education (AALAE).

o In May, the Women's Program, working with the Center for Women's Resources in the Philippines, will sponsor an Asia regional 2-week training program for representatives of groups engaged in educational/organizing work with women. The aim is to share the effective and empowering methods and strategies that women have developed.

Staff changes in the  
Women's Program  
Toronto office



Jane Gurr, who has been working with us for the past three years, has decided to move to Ottawa. She'll continue to coordinate the Africaexchange visit. Sigrid Blohm, who has been doing all the Women's Program design and layout for over two years now, will be leaving us for an eight month trip which will take her to Nicaragua, the Soviet Union and Asia.

Dena Hamid has joined us as receptionist and bookkeeper. Dena's roots are in Trinidad; she's recently moved to Toronto from England; and is currently working with a schooling project in the South Sudan and as a community radio journalist for a weekly program called 'Third Wave'.

That leaves Lynda, Shannon Brooke and Dena 'womanning' the office, since current financial realities make it impossible to think about quickly replacing those we're losing. Ruth Lara, Linzi Manicom, Katebi Kidd, Anibal Viton and David Smith continue to help us out on part-time and volunteer bases.

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LITERACY - A Tool for  
Empowerment of  
Women?

From her paper presented at the  
Symposium on Women and Literacy:  
Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, Stockholm,  
June 1989.

Literacy is one of the First steps in  
a process of enabling women to  
take control over their own lives,  
participate on a more equal basis  
in society, and eventually free them-  
selves from economic exploitation  
and patriarchal oppression. In  
addition to social justice, human  
rights and equality, there are many  
other human, social and economic  
reasons to urge governments and  
organizations to take special ac-  
tions to make literacy education  
for women and girls a priority  
objective during International  
Literacy Year and afterwards.

Gender Disparities

Sixty three percent of the world's approxi-  
mately one billion illiterate people is fe-  
male; the official estimate is 561 million  
women (UNESCO 1988). And the propor-  
tion of women illiterates is steadily grow-  
ing. In absolute numbers the greatest in-  
crease in women's illiteracy was in Asia:  
109 million between 1960 and 1985. In  
those same years the number of illiterate  
women in Africa rose by 44 percent, from  
68 to 98 million; the increase among males  
was much smaller. In Latin America the  
increase and difference between women  
and men is negligible. The statistics high-  
light the de facto discrimination against  
women in education. Various forms of pa-  
by Agneta Lind, SIDA,  
Educational Division

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patriarchal and economic oppression subordi-  
nate women according to the history and  
culture of each country and region. Influ-  
ences from pre-colonial traditions, as well  
as colonial and post-colonial imperialist  
conditions all account for the specific situ-  
ation of poor illiterate women today.  
Lack of access to school accounts for  
most adult illiteracy. The traditional sex  
division of roles in the family and in the so-  
ciety exclude most girls from learning liter-  
acy through schooling. When girls enrol in  
schools, education often reinforces their  
subordination. Even if the open discrimina-  
tion practiced during colonial days is less  
common today, patriarchal ideologies and  
social systems that discriminate against  
women have persisted. Many researchers  
have shown how education systems repro-  
duce not only the social class power struc-  
ture, but also the existing gender differ-  
ences. A truly equal access to formal school-  
ing is still a right that must be pursued, and  
literacy for women needs systematic criti-  
cal research.

Women's Response to  
Literacy Activities in Different  
Contexts

Between 70 and 90 percent of enrolled literacy learners in many African countries are women. But women's dropout rate is high and their attendance irregular. Studies show that it takes longer for women than for men to become "functionally literate?" Women's motivation for literacy is partly linked to changes in the social roles of men and women. Women in many Third World countries are now active in areas that men previously monopolized. With the migration of men to towns to take up employment, women have been left in charge. Women in this situation see literacy as an instrument for coping with their increased responsibilities. Women also want to be able to read their husbands' letters and to write back without the help of others. In South Asia women participate less than men in literacy. The hindrances of poverty, religious and cultural traditions, and the social and political milieu, impose a strict enforcement of the economic and social subjugation of women. Without there being accompanying social change, literacy does not present a way out of the existing subordination of women. Women are certainly aware that the common constraints on their participation in literacy - lack of time, overwork, male resistance - are not easily overcome. Successful cases such as the Self-Employed Women's Association in India show that only when literacy is linked to making women aware of the causes of their oppression, and at the same time to organizing and training them for self-reliance activities, does it become a strongly felt and acted upon economic need. But everywhere the multiple traditional and new roles of women prevent them from regular attendance and efficient learning. Women are overburdened with domestic tasks, cooking and cleaning, childrearing, cultivating and subsistence and income-earning activities. Just the fact of giving birth frequently leaves little time and energy for additional projects like literacy. It means frequent interruptions to attend to

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children who are at home and when mothers bring their smallest children to literacy classes, their concentration on learning is weakened.

Women lack self-confidence and are relatively isolated from literate environments. Women learners often express their weak confidence in learning by blaming themselves for their learning difficulties, saying, for example, 'my head is no good for learning' or 'I like to study but nothing stays in my head?'

While more common among women, this attitude inculcated by colonialism is also idespread among male learners. However, many men benefit from having more contact outside of the rural home environment than women. Women, on the other hand, have little exposure to public communication and to other languages than their mother tongue. Many more men than women communicate in the official language due to patriarchal traditions of men being the talkspokesmen and women expected to stay silent in public, the mobility of men as compared to women's homebound isolation, and the fact that men are often than women have been to primary school for some time during their childhood. Even if women are strongly motivated to learn the official national language, learning literacy and a second language at the same time considerably complicates the process of literacy acquisition. Furthermore, the use of new literacy skills and hence literacy retention is severely limited by the lack of access to easy reading and writing materials. Almost all printed communication for public use in official languages is too complex in structure, vocabulary and presentation for a newly literate person. This is very discouraging to self-confidence and further efforts to learn.

Moreover, women are discouraged by the attitudes of men, often including the male teacher, towards their capacities in the classroom. Husbands and guardians often forbid women to take part in literacy classes. Men are afraid of the challenge to their power position within the family. Such challenges can lead men to violent reactions against women. Fear of husbands or other males violent reactions against women's independent activities, such as literacy, prevents women from participating in literacy and/or further training. This is a very important issue which needs more attention.

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Teaching methods and attitudes play an essential role in literacy participation and sustaining participation among women in particular. The role of female teachers for female learners and the question whether separate female learning groups encourage learning and participation among women are important issues.

#### The Role of Political

##### Mobilization and Community Support

Although the need to explain the relevance of literacy in pre-literacy mobilization campaigns is essential, it is more important to create a situation where the need for literacy is felt or where the use of literacy becomes evident, or to select areas for literacy where such a situation already exists in order to ensure sustained motivation and participation. The insertion of literacy activities into a process of social and political reform or other development-related efforts aiming at solving felt needs, encourages participation and motivation. In Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Tanzania, Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia, literacy was part of a national policy for overcoming poverty and injustice. Both the state and the citizens expected literacy to be one of many factors which would improve social, political and economic conditions and help develop human and material resources. National commitment or political will expressed through the state and/or popular movement, incorporating all sectors of the society, and the capacity to organize and mobilize the people and other resources for literacy, were crucial for high levels of participation of women and men.

In such campaigns the teaching methods were traditional but the contents have been focussed on national issues, including equal rights and women's emancipation and equal participation in all spheres of society. But just as in other literacy strategies, the sustaining of literacy among women in particular proves difficult. In the post-campaign situation, just like in other contexts, women tend to be pushed out at a gradually increasing rate along the path through the process of literacy and post-literacy.

PHOTO MAR! KNOLL MISSION

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Literacy Linked to  
other "Developmentt,  
Activities

Many literacy programs today are based on the concept of "fundamental education" that was promoted by UNESCO and other agencies from 1946-1964, and adopted to describe a broad field of development activities, including non-formal literacy programs. This concept became merged with the community development ideology that stressed that literacy must be used for some "practical" activity in order to produce development. More selective and economic-oriented literacy programs draw on the work-oriented functional approach, tried out by UNESCO in eleven countries from 1967 to 1972 to find ways of transforming literacy into an effective instrument for economic development.

The meaning of "functionality" was limited to improved vocational skills of a target group mostly employed workers, in a specific economic activity. In many cases literacy was functionalized in terms of industry, mechanized agriculture, or skilled crafts, virtually excluding any female participation. Modern sector development in the Third World is heavily weighted towards men, and literacy, integrated into development programs, was also geared to men.

A more common approach today is government-promoted general literacy programs with fairly diverse objectives. They are often large-scale, "politically cool" programs that provide access to those who want literacy, and where illiteracy is not seen as an immediate, major obstacle to the economy. Women are often an important target group. The curriculum is usually oriented to subjects that the state is comfortable with - health care, nutrition and agriculture.

Studies of traditional income generating programs find that they are often not generating much income and that literacy is seldom made a priority. In many state-

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run, as well as NGO-sponsored programs, the philosophy is that literacy is not an aim in itself, and so literacy should be integrated into other meaningful activities. Literacy and numeracy become necessary tools for learning more, controlling money and participating in community activities. However, in this approach literacy instruction often becomes neglected,

since the participating women are expected to be involved in so many activities at the same time. Women organized in many integrated projects neither manage to generate income nor to learn literacy skills. Priorities have to be defined according to each context. BRAC in Bangladesh, as well as many women's organizations in India, has concluded that literacy is not a priority. It has been discovered there that women find literacy instruction meaningful only when projects that actually improve women's conditions have been going on successfully for some years and have raised awareness of the accompanying need for literacy. In other cases, for example in Latin America, women have been mobilised and recruited for the purpose of literacy but the lessons in practice have concentrated more on awareness and/or knowledge transfer about social and political conditions and agendas; the participants find

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have felt deceived because they expected to learn to read, write and calculate.

Women's Literacy

Motivation

Women literacy learners, responses to questions about motivation include the desire to help children to study; more self-reliance and control over personal life; liberation from isolation and absolute submission to received authority; and the wish to be actors in society in the same way as men. Several experiences, particularly in the context of social transformation and political mobilization for literacy and equality between women and men, show the importance for women of coming together to discuss common problems through literacy participation.

Before we could hardly go out. As a young girl I was restricted to my home during several years. As married I had to wear my veil when I went out and that was not often. Now we have been let free. I am starting to get friends?

We are learning to read and write. It is fine. But we also get together and talk. That is still better?

Concluding Comments

Social and political contexts determine how and when literacy programs are relevant for women. Illiterate women often want to become literate, but relatively few manage to satisfy this wish because the constraints are overwhelming. Projects involving women probably have a better chance to function well if they include a number of women with enough education to be able to cope with training in leadership, organization, management, planning, bookkeeping and marketing. Illiterate women ought to have a

choice of either participating fully in proj-  
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ect activities or in literacy classes until they have attained literacy and numeracy skills.

A rotation scheme would help overcome the problems of not generating income, literacy or any other tangible results. And a process of conscientization, like that in the popular education approach, is also crucial. Special provisions and program designs are required, such as childcare during class time and intensive periods of instruction. The Burkina Faso Ministry of Rural Affairs, in an innovative approach, recruited over 13,000 women officials and members of women's groups, cooperatives, executive boards of female revolutionary committees as well as village midwives, to teach literacy in ten national languages in 470 centres. Literacy instruction took place at boarding centres during four phases of twelve days each, with weekly breaks during which participants could return home to their families. The campaign was successful in spite of problems created by possessive husbands, negative influences exerted by adversaries of female emancipation, as well as the exhausting demands of being a wife and mother. More than 40 percent of the learners were nursing mothers, so women had to bring others to look after the children brought to the centres. Food rations were often insufficient, but the level of learning was considered excellent.

In spite of well-justified warnings that traditional welfare approaches of basic non-formal education for women reproduce women's subordination rather than empowering or emancipating them, the importance of teaching women survival skills related to literacy as well as health and nutrition, must not be underestimated. Such training provides necessary tools for further empowering activities of awareness-raising and participation, as well as for struggles for equality and social justice. Literacy is a necessary tool in this process, even if it does not solve fundamental development problems. We must pay great attention to women's particular needs and constraints in research and action. We must promote action research combined with the training of researchers, trainers, and instructors so that we might better understand female learners' specific situations.

Recently literate women on the south coast of Kenya explained the advantages of having learnt to read, write and calculate by referring to their new abilities to sign their names, to travel, control money transactions, read medical prescriptions and instructions, and their resulting feeling of pride and self-reliance. *Our eyes have been opened?* (Learners' Panel, International Task Force On Literacy meeting, April 1989)

*With literacy, people don't earn more but everything they know is in their heads. They can go any-*

where, do anything, ask things,  
enter in. When people don't know  
reading and writing, they are  
afraid? (Interview with Cristina  
Mavale, factory worker in Maputo,  
in Marshall 1988)

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PHOTO MARGARET RANDALL

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KHULUMANI

MAKHOSIKAZI

### WOMEN AND LITERACY

.....some South African women speak  
In November 1988 (') (LAW (Congress  
of South African Writers) held a twoday  
conference on Women and Writing. 'l'hey  
invited progressive literacy organizations  
to talk on the topic of Women and Liter-  
acy. To prepare for the conference, the  
English Literacy Project (HIP) ran a  
series of workshops with a group of women  
learners to explore the relationship of  
literacy and gender. We came to the  
understanding that what affects literacy  
learning has a lot more to do with racial  
and economic factors than gender fac-  
tors.

What follows is a discussion of these work-  
shops. But before we launch into this dis-  
cussion we would like to describe ELPK  
work within a context of the extent of  
illiteracy in South Africa.

#### Literacy in South Africa

Nine million South Africans are illiterate.  
That is 9 million people over the age of 20  
have had less than five years of formal  
schooling. The racial proportion of this  
number is significant.

0 47% of aliricans

o 27% of coloured

O 15% otiasians and

O 2% of whites are classified as illiterate.

The racial disparity in these figures is  
predictable. They clearly reflect the priori-  
ties of an apartheid education system which  
promotes white education and neglects black  
education.

Workshopped by

ELP Learners and Staff

Written by Dawn Norton

and Carola Steinberg

Only 1% () 1 all illiterate people are. in  
literacy programs. Most of these are run by  
the state. However, there are some pro-  
gressive literacy DFOJCCIS in the country  
whose literacy work is part of the struggle  
against apartheid

#### The English Literacy Project

ELP offers a service to adults who have  
missed out on basic txlucation. We. work  
with trade unions toorgani/e literacy classes  
at various workplaces. We produce basic  
English readers, workbooks and a news-  
paper for adults. We believe that literacy  
must work towards the empowerment of  
workers, so that they are informed and  
active in the democratic movement.

Since we do our work

in a context of active iced-  
batri: and interchange be"

tween ELP and learners

and since our learners are

mostly unionized workers,

they have had a deeply

politicising effect on our

materials.

When ELP started off

in 1983 our focus was on

teaching English. reading

and writing. We produced  
ESL workbooks and  
teacher training in South  
African images and con-  
tent, but based on the Brit-  
ish model of functional,  
skill-based English language learning. In  
1986 we initiated a learners' committee  
with reps from each class.  
It soon emerged that learners wanted  
more than English. They asked for general  
education, including current affairs, politi-  
cal topics and numeracy. So we started  
writing articles which provided people with  
information to discuss a variety of social and  
political issues of concern to them. Classes  
spent hours reading about and discussing the  
new Labour Law, wage increases, skin light-  
ening creams, the history of the struggle, the  
state of emergency the topics are endless,  
Discussions happen in people's own lan-  
guage or in broken English--the learning of  
English and literacy has been incorporated  
into understanding and challenging the  
changes that are happening in our society.  
Exploring Literacy and  
Gender

Over the years, ELP staff often said it would  
be important to talk about women's issues in  
our classes. Occasionally a discussion on  
men/women relations would erupt in a class,  
but we never had the focus or energy to take  
it further. So we took it as a stimulus for  
action when COSAW invited ELP to pre-  
sent a paper on women and literacy.  
ELP chose to workshop 3 plays with a  
group of women learners who would per-  
form at the conference. We did not want to  
speak on behalf of four learners. We thought  
that the learners in performance would voice  
the issues around their experience as women  
attending literacy classes.  
We invited all ELP women learners to a  
Saturday workshop. Most of the women  
who came were  
from one  
workplace--a  
chicken factory  
where they are  
employed as un-  
skilled labourer.  
At the end of the  
first workshop  
there had been a  
lot of discussion but  
no play and the  
group agreed to  
meet again to pre-  
pare the presenta-  
tion for COSAW.  
Attendance at  
the workshops fluc-  
tuated, generally decreasing. We remained  
optimistic that we could pull off a play. Yet  
at the final workshop, when the learners  
were to transform talking into performance,  
the ELP staff outnumbered the learners. So  
we changed plans and presented a paper to  
the conference on what we had learned from  
the women learners.

## SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF LITERACY

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What follows is a description of the process ELP staff and learners went through to explore the theme of women and literacy and our analysis of the outcomes of the workshops.

The first part of the workshop dealt with women's attitudes to themselves and to men. As an icebreaker we discussed whether, if we had a choice, we would choose to be men or women?

Two thirds of the women chose to be women. They saw themselves as strong and competent and responsible, particularly in the role of mother and breadwinner.

A third of the women said no, actually, they'd rather be men. They said that men care only for themselves, keep their pay packets to themselves and drink at the pub. The women wanted the irresponsibility that men can indulge in.

Later the learners agreed that although women work more than men and shoulder more responsibility, generally in this society, men had more power.

The next step in the workshop was to look at the factors which affect literacy learning. The women had a variety of reasons for attending classes. There were functional goals: learn to help children with homework, read directions to get to meetings, operate bank machines, fill-in forms. There were personal goals: do things for myself, speak to managers at work and speak up for myself. There was economic necessity: educated people can get better jobs and better wages. And there were overall political aims: we want to understand things better.

The women's motivation to learn was very strong. When asked what helped them in their learning, they responded:

0 We are determined.

0 We want to overcome our oppression.

0 There will be less chance to be intimidated.

0 We want to learn things that only men used to learn.

And they all agreed with one learner who said:

In the past a woman got married and she had few worries because her husband looked after her and her children. But today, things are different. Today, women have to look after their children and after their husbands. And to do that, women need a good job in order to make money. And

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therefore women need a good education.

The Obstacles

But the obstacles they needed to overcome in their search for knowledge were formidable. We categorised these obstacles into three main factors:

First, political and economic. Some of the statements that the women made were:

9 The government oppresses us blacks because they need people to do the dirty work.

6 The government and management are not interested in education for adults like us.  
9 The government does not build enough schools for black school children.  
0 I worry in class because we have no money.

0 I must do overtime work.  
So the learners put blame (and quite rightly so) on the governments deliberate strategy of educational under-provision for black adults and children.  
Second, organizational and personal.

Women mentioned:

6 There is no time off from work to attend classes.

0 There's no transport after class.

0 I miss classes because of many funerals.

0 Other workers laugh at me when I go to class.

9 My children laugh at me because I am too old to learn.

0 The lessons are not interesting for me.

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0 Learning is difficult because I don't have enough education.

The learners agreed that all these factors affected both men and women. However they argued that attending classes was more difficult for women than men.

Then third, gender factors. Here the women made three main points:

0 Too much work to do at home—too much cooking, cleaning, looking after children and doing everything.

0 Husbands who get cross when supper is late, or are jealous and don't want their wives to attend literacy classes if they themselves are illiterate, or who think that their wives are seeing other men instead of attending class.

0 Falling pregnant and looking after small children.

We looked at the problems specifically affecting women, and discussed ways of dealing with them. It was these very problems and possible solutions that we had wanted to develop into drama. But this line of thinking didn't get us very far. The women demanded work-time off for itemizing. But other than that, they spoke about doing more housework on the weekends or cooking the day before so that they had time for classes. Not once did any learner suggest that their husbands help around the house or cook or look after sick children. Ironically, the solutions presented by

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the women required them doing even more work.

What did we at ELP learn?

We learned that learners are far more conscientised around issues of race and class than around gender.

The sorts of things that women talked about in relation to their learning had more to do with living in South Africa, than about being women per se. Racial discrimination and poverty are more immediate daily experiences of injustice than sexual inequalities.

We learned that gender roles are clearly defined and unchallenged.

The issue which affected only women and not men was domestic work. This restricted their time commitments to literacy classes. The women's solution to make time to attend the classes, ironically meant extra work in the home. They did not consider including men in domestic work. Gender roles were perceived to be a "given" and part of the "unatural order" of things. Thus domestic burdens and the double load that women endure--of work at the work place and work at home--go unchallenged.

We learned that our entry point into gender issues should have been around immediate, concrete concerns.

These could be issues that have already been mentioned in classes: lobola payments, contraception, child care or sexual harassment. Through discussion around these issues, learners could overcome the traditional problem of women seeing their experience as purely personal and from there develop an analysis of gender and the different power relations between men and women. Then maybe women would feel they had a right to challenge men's lack of domestic assistance or men's attitudes to their attending class.

ii Women and Learning, was too abstract. It was a typical case of us imposing an issue rather than responding to what organically arises from the classes. The question now for us is whether initiating discussion around gender in order to develop a feminist analysis of learners' lives when the issues haven't emerged from the learners themselves is a leftist form of political propaganda or cultural imposition?

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# SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF LITERACY

1 In Conclusion

t The workshops confirmed

tEv for us that women's issues are tangential

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w.-. V 4L Keep, 5/244- 0/nJ, "my maga/Am political information. Certainly women's r\_ \_ 14/ 0,61% noiho/hypt0 (7,21 5,5,, ngMCQw 7 k7 issues come into that, but they are unlikely

to be central.

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I women's voices in COSATU (Congress of

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South African Trade Unions). What ELP

needs to do is take the discussions that are

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English level that would provide information

and a starting point for women's issues.

h' m' ' We are part of a society that is caught

V ,\_ E - - V e up in national and economic liberation as

the highest priorities. Women's issues will

only become important in literacy classes

once they have become important in the

national arena of political organizations

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TOMORROW WILL BE  
DIFFERENT:

A Literacy

Course for Women

An experience from Santiago, Chile

Tomorrow Will Be Different is a gift for Spanish-speaking women. who struggle endlessly all over the world to raise the level of women's literacy. It is a manual for women's empowerment by women and as such it is one more force for the women's global movement, that wants urgently to rebuild this planet before it is destroyed by the patriarchs.

This is a work that broadens horizons and shatters the barriers to women's literacy and education. questioning. analyzing and reflecting on the society. from a woman's perspective. It offers alternative ways. which can be created by women to improve their lives and transform a future for all the people, at the same time that they learn to read and write. Its precise methodology and clear instructions makes this book an invaluable tool for women popular educators.

In the International Literacy Year. this book gives us a seed to grow in the field of alternative education and of women's literacy by women.

(from the Prologue, by Carolyn Lehman)

This manual is the product of a growing understanding of the meaning of being a woman in a patriarchal world. We have lived for years near the women in the marginalized areas of Santiago; their life has taught us, even more clearly, the nature of domination and the true courage to confront it. With them, we have felt the effects of marginalization; with them we have experienced the helplessness and fear in the face of institutionalized violence; we have cried with them when they told us of their horror of being raped or battered, and we

excerpted from a book by

Peggy Moran and Monica

Hingston

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have struggled with them to be treated with dignity.

In a society that allows and promotes such oppression of women, the illiterate woman is the one who is more oppressed. For that reason we decided to develop this literacy program, which contains a consciousness raising process that will help women to reflect on their reality, to develop a critical conscience and to take a more active role in the transformation of society.

The motivation to make this literacy course originated in 1986 when some women participating in Casa Soliales (a centre for the marginalized areas) groups did not know to read and write. They told us how embarrassed and isolated they felt because they could not fully participate in the groups and other activities. It was a particular oppression, among other oppressions. They asked us to teach them.

We wanted to respond to their request but not with just any literacy program, but with one made from a women's perspective. We found one partially developed by two Chilean women. Based on what they had done we developed a methodology.

In August 1986, eleven women began the program, their courage moved us as did their persistence, desire and efforts. Their stories are similar to those of many, many oppressed and marginalized women, living in a country tormented by 14 years of military dictatorship, where the effects of unemployment, hunger, illness, persecution threats and deaths doubly affect women living in poverty.

They came embarrassed for not being able to read at their age and with the fear of maybe not being able to learn. They were between 26 and 56 years of age. No one had more than three years of school: many had never used a pencil. Some had been victims of abuse in their childhood; one of them was deaf as a result of a beating suffered from her partner, another one lived with her alcoholic step-father, others had been humiliated by their teachers and some had been pulled out of school, or simply never went to school in order to care for their younger siblings or work. All these contributed to a great sense of insecurity, as well as the daily concerns for surviving, the difficulties of being able to study at home, the situation in the country, which were obstacles difficult to overcome.

In spite of so many barriers, they grew as women, they acquired new perspectives and they advanced in their ability to read and write. There was a rich exchange that boosted the development of a critical consciousness. The generative words in the methodology were taken from the reality and experience of the Chilean women.

We lived exceptional moments. There were disappointments and successes, cries and laughs. We did relaxation exercises to reduce stress. We shared personal stories and we grew in our love, appreciation and friendship to each other. One very cold morning a woman arrived with bread she had cooked herself, and without saying anything, she cut it and gave us each a piece. Bread and roses

Nine of the eleven women completed the four months receiving a certificate in a ceremony. Three of them kept meeting during 1987, once a week to work on reading units. After evaluating the pilot program used in 1986, we saw the need of promoting literacy amongst more pobladoras and OW multiplying groups and locations. In 1987 we decided to create a new program. The methodology is based on Paulo Freire's and it is detailed enough to allow its use by women willing to work in the literacy field. We have chosen to create the program for women and from their perspective because women are, amongst the poor and oppressed, the most abandoned, oppressed and isolated. We hope that, if this work multiplies, for many women and for the

whole world, tomorrow will be different.

(from the Introduction)

The manual details 17 lessons around themes  
and generative words. Tomorrow will be  
Different is available by writing Monica  
Hingston, Correo Central Casilla 52414,  
Santiago Chile.

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SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF LITERACY  
KEEPING THE CIRCLE

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Native Women's Resource Centre,  
Toronto, Canada

Over the last few years Native women in Canada have increased their organizing strength and visibility in both the Native and women's movement. They've fought as part of these movements as well as confronted the discrimination and silencing they continue to face within them. Women in cities and Native communities in every province across the country have worked to support struggles for self-determination, they have been at the forefront of battles for improved housing and health care, to stop kidnapping by state officials of Native children from their home communities and against continuing police harassment. Native women have taken difficult stands against violence, even where this might threaten to divide it; they have also challenged the women's movement to address its racism and exclusion of Native women.

The Native Women's Resource Centre is unique, the only one of its kind in Canada geared to the special needs and concerns of Native Women in Toronto.

Lynda Yanz talked with two workers from the literacy program about the Centre.

Carrie Tabobondung: I come from a reserve called Parry Island, and after I finished high school I went to the University of  
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Regina to the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College to start my Indian social work degree. After a year, I went back to the reserve and then came here to look for a job. When I first started the job I didn't really know much about literacy. I knew the problem was there, but I didn't know what to do. I've gradually found out, but am still learning a lot.

Donna Marshall: I worked at the Department of Indian Affairs, so needless to say I soon needed a different job. It was really hard at first. Carrie had just started too. But once you get going, and keep your ears open you start to grasp. Then when I started reading the stuff it was like, no kidding, as if we didn't know this before.

Lynda Yanz: What do you do here at the Centre?

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Carrie: The Native Women's Resource Centre provides short term, emergency services as well as longer term support. Services include assistance with welfare, housing, employment, literacy, referral, job search, day care, food, clothing, household items and support of women who are being abused. Many of the women who use the Centre are in transition, either from reserve to City or from city to city. We also organize other activities such as the women's circle which is a monthly support group and weekly Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. The family

worker provides one-to-one counselling.

Donna: Housing is a big problem in Toronto.

And when you look at where we live within the City, it's mostly in areas where there are low rental housing projects. Native people move around a lot and housing is always a problem, made worse by the high cost of living in Toronto. So at the Centre we try to help. We also have a food bank. We give out food when people come by, to help tide them over and loan out bus tokens so people can get around.

Those are the people our literacy program wants to reach. A lot of our learners last year came from Pedoban Lodge, a Native alcohol treatment centre. So many of our learners were from there we ended up getting involved in a lot of different activities and issues.

PHOTO LYNDA VANZ

## SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF LITERACY

Lynda: Why a Native women's resource centre?

Donna: A lot of the Native organizations focus on "families" which includes women naturally, but what happens is that they are organized by men. You have lots of situations where there are no women on the boards. How can they address a woman's needs without any women? That's part of

The NWRC is based on our belief in the traditional teachings of the Elders. We believe these teachings are essential to the continued survival of Indigenous people. We also believe in the ability of Native Women to Initiate, Manage and Provide our own service.

We now believe all Native Women have unique qualities and knowledge to share with others based on individual experiences.

the problem. The other really obvious problem is the society we live in: it's a white middle-class society. Native women come from a different history and culture and the result is that we really get the short end of the stick. Not only do we have to deal with sexist discrimination but also racism. Being a Native woman myself I've felt. . . live come to a lot of dead ends in my life. So why a Native women's resource centre? Maybe because it's important just to be letting Native women know that they're not the only ones out there. They're not the only ones. There is a collective of women they can count on, and through that more and more Native women's issues are being voiced.

Carrie: The Centre got started by a group of Native women who got together to discuss their concerns about the quality and use of services already being provided in Toronto. The problem was that there was

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nothing specifically for Native women. The Centre opened months later in October 1985.

Donna: Now there is a lot more women using the Centre and our program is getting better known which means there's more demand. But we continue to have a problem with money and staff. We have no core funding. When you have such a high turnover of staff it creates stress for the rest of the staff who are left, and probably most for the administrator. There is such a high turnover of staff and board. To me that's really tragic. There is no foundation.

Carrie: I think a lot of the turnover is because of the different government programs we're forced to hire people on.

Donna: It's oppressive to have someone working under those programs and know that she's not going to be working for that long, that the programs are going to end and she's going to go right back to where she was. We have two workers on a provincial

government program. What happens to them when the times up? Where do we get money to keep them on?

Lynda: What about the Literacy Program?

Carrie: The program started in 1987 because the Board saw literacy as an educational tool for Native women.

Education is one specific need that we found was apparent in the Native community. Many people may already know how to read and write but its important to extend those skills, and build self-esteem.

Donna: This past year weK'e had about 35 leam-ers. Some of them have finished, have reached their goals; others havenlt. I wouldnlt say it was half and half, maybe a quarter didnlt reach the goals that they set out.

Carrie: The program is learner centered, based on the leamerls needs and interests. A learner coming into the program is matched with a volunteer tutor. We coordinate their first meeting and make sure everything is going smooth in the match. Tutors report back monthly to the coordinator on how things are going. Sometimes it doesnlt work, so we try to get another tutor for the learner. It happens sometimes; every-thingis not perfect.

Lynda: What training do tutors gel?

Carrie: We havent done much training in this last year because we still had enough trained tutors. were planning to have a training session for all the tutors. It will cover the basics of assessing learners, tips on how to teach, ideas about activities. And we teach them about the leamers-- what to expect, like low self-esteem and how they might feel about themselves. We' also talk about the Native culture, how important it is. We want them to understand that the way Native people learn is different from non-Natives.

At this point a lot of our tutors are non-Native, so in the tutor training we talk about Native culture, and the education system--how it started and how Native people got involved, how they were forced into the residential system and the effect that has had on us.

Native children were systematically separated from their families and home communities to attend federal government residential schools oftenthousands of miles away from.

home.1 We stress that tutors need to be able to understand where were coming from.

Donna: We try to



broaden their horizon  
and make the tutors  
aware of the way we  
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to accomplish all that we want our literacy  
program to do, but weTre hoping to start  
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ing our people.

NWRC, CANADA

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## SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF LITERACY

Plus you're dealing with a lot of angry and frustrated people. And that hinders their learning capabilities. Sometimes they're not willing to keep going. You've got to look at it from a holistic point of view. We were not just looking at the difference between the way Native and white children are educated. We were about changing the education system altogether, changing the whole approach to learning and teaching. And we think everyone has a lot to learn from what we're doing.

In the education system you are taught do's and don'ts and shoulds. You don't experience things, you're taught based on somebody else's opinion. So it can be that opinion is forced on you, and it can become confusing as you go from teacher to teacher, from grade to grade. In the older days, for Native people basically taught their children through experience and they wouldn't have to ask why, you wouldn't have to explain it because. Instead you learn about how it is in the experience.

For example, when I was younger I had problems with reading. Now I'm a good reader but I didn't get good marks and I couldn't understand that. I think that was due to my shyness, and it showed when I had to read aloud in class, which is how your reading marks are set. So I got penalized. That's not really fair.

Carrie: The business of having report cards and being evaluated by white people . . . that's how Native people start to feel inferior to the teachers, like they're not on the same level, the teachers are up there and you're down here. We were never taught that way to begin with; we were always taught by living and seeing rather than memorizing.

Donna: We feel like we've been robbed by the education system. Besides how we were treated there is the fact that you don't learn about Native people. And in history all you learn is the textbook "Indian". We massacred; they conquered. I hated going to my history classes. I still don't have any use for history that is not written by our people. It is still based on an attitude of a different race and colour, an attitude of superiority. Our children still go to school and read about drunken Indians. There's nothing about Native lives and cultures.

Lynda: The scope of the Program seems a  
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lot broader than "literacy" as simply reading and writing.

Carrie: It varies so much. Learners are at different levels. You can have a basic learner that has only had Grade 5, and then you get other people in the program who are older and have finished high school or Grade

10. They may have kept a lot of those skills yet want to improve on them. Besides the formal stuff, we also do the in-staff work, proof-reading letters and reports. Some of the staff also need to improve on their writing and speaking skills. We can provide workshops to help improve on this.

In the future we're hoping to do more group work with the learners. We're looking into mother-tongue literacy in Ojibway

Locations of Ontario Reserves

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Or Cree although you find a lot of Iroquois and Mohawk as well from Changanaway and Six Nations reserves which are quite close. Toronto is the gathering place of a lot of different Native nations.

Donna: The problem is that the Ministry, where we get our funds from, doesn't recognize Native languages as legitimate second or first languages. It's just English and French. So we wouldn't be able to get funds for this. We're trying to find other funding sources but are planning to just start it anyway. You can't wait around for the government to recognize Native languages as legitimate for literacy.

We also feel it's important to have a program that allows people to learn about

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# SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF LITERACY

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a small library where a lot ol the materials  
LlrL' by Native people. live Just started to sel  
up a liling system where weW/e set up liles  
on tlworld," uFirst Nations" and Hwomen's"  
issues, things like that. People want to l'intl  
out thitIs really happening; they want to  
he educated, not in u liziiitussy way, hut Ill  
termsol reality. lknow mysell thutls where  
lid want to stun.

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I Walk in the History of my People

by Chrystos)k

(Iarrie: were also trying to develop our

own curriculum for our leumers and lor

leumers in other programs The ()ntuno

Native Literacy (Ioztlition is 2m umhrellii

organi/ution for all the Ontario Native

Programs and a lot ol their concerns are

dealing with curriculum and educating the

public on Native literacy issues.

There (er women locked in my joints

for refusing to speak to the police

My red blood full of those

arrested in Flight shot

My tendons stretched brittle with anger

do not look like white roots of peace

In my marrow are hungry faces

who live on land the whites don,t want

In my marrow women who walk 5 miles every day for water

In my militOW the swollen hands of my people who are not allowed

to hunt

to move

to be

In the sczirs of my knees you can 566

children torn from their families

hludgeoned into govenmmnt schools

You czm see through the pins in my bones

that we are prisoners of a long war

My knee is so badly wounded no one will look at it

The pus of the past oozes from every pore

'Ilhis infection has gone on for at least 300 years

Our sacred beliefs have been made into pencils

names of Cities gas stations

My knee is wounded so badly that I limp constantly

Anger is my crutch I hold myself upright with it

My knee is wounded

see

How I Am Still Walking

Donna: I'd like to see our literacy program

us it kind oli model l'or while learners us

well. Where they would say uoht we like

this way oli learning" Weire trying to

change the C(lllCllllltm system altogether, to

change the whole approach to learning and

teaching. We think everyone hits LI lot to

leum from what we're doing.

('urrie: And hopefully other people will

use our approach.

Donna: But recogni/e it tllS a Native ap-

proach.

l'lllllllllllllll W/ tlllllllllllllllll

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////V//X/XKV/Mi  
ummma ///// Mum ummuum  
(from N0! Vanishing published by Press Gang. Vancouver. I988)  
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On the Training of Tutors  
for Woments Literacy:

A Womanls Experience with Women in  
Greece

ttI have worked in Greece as a tutor in  
the program for illiterate women who  
lived in a depressed urban area of Athens.  
Within the framework of this program I  
have developed experimental teaching  
aterial. I am sending you an article  
\_ about this experience with the hope that  
it may be useful to others?,  
For the implementation of an adult literacy  
program undertaken in 1984 by the Gen-  
eral Secretariat for Popular Education there  
were two basic requirements: the develop-  
ment of suitable teaching material, and the  
instruction of tutors in matters relating to  
educational theory and teaching methods.

Within the framework of this program  
I undertook the development of experi-  
mental teaching material for use with adult  
illiterate women, while working as a tutor  
in a class of illiterate women that func-  
tioned in a depressed urban area of Athens  
or one school years The development of  
the teaching material was based on the  
study of the educational theory and teach-  
ing method of Paulo Freire, and on teach-  
ing in the literacy class.

I believe that this combination of the-  
ory and practical classroom experience  
constitutes the correct method for the pro-  
duction of teaching materials for adult illit-  
eracy. A fundamental component of the  
training must be the analysis of the method  
used in the production of teaching materi-  
als so that the tutor is able to adapt the  
available material or produce new material  
according to the needs and interests of the  
illiterate women. s

by Danae Vaikoosi

VOICES RISING JANUARY/FEBRL'ARY 1990

Training Tutors for Woments  
Literacy

In May 1986, about eighty educators, most  
of them school teachers, took part in four  
five-day seminars arranged by the General  
Secretariat of Popular Education. During  
these seminars photocopies of the teaching  
material were distributed and discussed with  
the tutors along with other matters relating  
to the teaching of literacy.

The problems that arose for tutors dur-  
ing these training seminars were:

(a) The majority of the school-teachers  
taking part thought that primary school books  
were most suitable for women illiterates,  
believing at the same time that literacy is  
simply the mechanical acquisition of the  
ability to read and write. They  
also believed that discussion  
with the learners in an adult  
literacy class; was a waste of  
time; they ignored the fact  
that through the discussions  
they would be able to pin-  
point the needs of the learn-  
ers, to cultivate the capacity  
of the learners to express them-  
selves, to find starting-points

for the lessons, to develop their own teaching material, and to create a pleasant and familiar environment during the lessons.

(b) The view that there should be different teaching material adapted to different groups needs and interests was not easily understood or accepted. Extensive discussion of the need to modify the teaching material to suit the needs and interests of a given literacy class and to connect it to current affairs also proved necessary. Not all the participants were convinced of it.

(c) Participants asked many questions of this sort: 'How many times a week will

the class be held?', 'How much material should be covered?', 'How long will the material be repeated?' and so on. It was evident that their experience of school-teaching made them want a detailed program which would lay down exactly what was to be taught and the time limits within which it should be covered.

(d) The majority of the teachers were ignorant of teaching and educational methods appropriate to adults. Many of the participants clung to school-teaching methods which are suitable only for primary school children.

(e) Many of the teachers failed to appreciate the significance of some of the special problems that one often meets in an adult literacy class, for example:

Each of the students in a literacy class is at a different level, depending on what kind of work he or she does, what interests he or she has and how many attempts he or she has made alone to learn to read and write. For the tutor this means that teaching must be carried out on an individual basis.

The illiterate usually have little self-confidence regarding their ability to learn to read and write. They need constant encouragement from the tutor who must stress their capacity to do a whole range of other things successfully.

Those who attend a literacy class have everyday obligations and responsibilities and come, consequently, to the lesson after a tiring day. It is natural therefore for their performance to be somewhat reduced and for them to want the lesson to be lively, interesting and pleasant, to relate to their needs and to give them some immediate sense of satisfaction, such as through learning to write their address or to read an advertisement in a newspaper. It was necessary, then, to keep pointing out the need for a positive "atmosphere" to exist during the course of literacy classes.

My second experience of training tutors of women's literacy was connected with my work in the educational program of a non-state agency, KEMEA (Centre for

Study and Self-Education).

KEMEA organised a one-year training program. The participants included unem-

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ployed youths and graduates under twenty-five years of age. On completion of their course, one group of participants was to work in various special environments such as prisons, psychiatric clinics or - in collaboration with youth centres and women's organizations - in literacy classes for young people and women.

Before their training in women's literacy, the group of participants had attended seminars on sociology and education. During the training period the problems mentioned earlier relating to the reproduction of school practices did not arise; there were no teachers among the participants. On the contrary, starting with their own memories of school, the participants recognised and accepted the need for a different educational process in adult literacy classes both with regard to teaching methods and teaching material. What appeared to be the basic problem was the excessive weight they attached to the significance of a dialogue during the course of the lesson - which turned into a fetish and a touch-stone for every problem - at the expense of teaching and the necessary teaching techniques. They became absorbed in theoretical inquiries and issues and were often uninterested in teaching methods, which of course are essential for the teaching of reading and writing. In contrast with the schoolteacher trainees, with whom there was the danger of their turning literacy into an arid technique, the trainees with no teaching experience were in danger of getting lost in endless discussions.

(a request for contributions)

Why not think about sending us:

Q Informally written profiles (500 to 750 words) of your organization or work, including your constituencies, approach, difficulties you confront, successes, lessons learned, broader social and political context or any other relevant information.

Q. Articles (1000 to 2000 words) that detail and analyze issues or themes in women's education work - theoretical reflections on the practical.

Q Materials your organization has published, or materials you have found interesting and useful in your work for annotation or review. These can be English, French or Spanish books, magazines, reports, or bibliographies.

Q Reviews (500 to 1000 words) of publications you've found useful. (Or let us know if we can call on you to write a review for an upcoming issue.)

Q Letters briefly telling us what you are up to, what you might need from others in the network, criticisms, questions, disagreements, new ideas. Informally written, of course.

Q Announcements and Calls to Action

If you want more detail or would like to explore an idea for an article please write to us attention Vaz'wx Rising. Deadlines for the next issues are April and August 1990.

EXCUSE ME . . .

BUT YOUR VOICE IS RISING!

Voice Rising is published twice, soon to be three times per year (January, June, October) in English, French and Spanish. We welcome and need your contributions. Some proposals

On the basis of my experience in training tutors I am submitting for discussion these proposals:

(3) The training of tutors must combine theoretical knowledge and teaching practice.

(b) The education experiences and interests of the trainees must be taken into consideration as well as the particular problems which arise on each occasion.

(c) The participant trainees must be

made sensitive to the special problems faced  
by the illiterate women.

((1) The training of tutors must take  
place in an atmosphere comparable to the  
atmosphere that they, as tutors, will have to  
create in the literacy classes.

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VOICES RISLVG JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1990

EXPANDING THE  
GENERATIVE WORD"

PROCESS: Women's

Iron Will, Haiti

This article was previously published under the title 'Women's Literacy project in Haiti' in Adult Education and Development 31, 1988:25-34, a half-yearly journal published by the German Adult Education Association. The article is a shortened version of the original, which is in German. Anyone interested in more background information or a copy of the article, write to Beate at her address below.

The literacy project in Haiti was carried out over a period of two years (1986-1988) with three groups (rural and urban), each with approximately 15 participants. The project was conceived and carried out by a group of ten Haitian women. While the preparation was carried out by one group without any financial assistance, the execution and evaluation (14 months) was financed by a Dutch organization that has supported various projects in Haiti. Beate Schmidt was coordinator and educational advisor.

Aims of the project were:

- 1) To provide reading, writing and arithmetical material related to the everyday life and the specific problems of the women participating.
- 2) To give women the opportunity to get to know each other, to discuss their problems, to organize themselves and to plan long-term joint activities.
- 3) To support women interested in planning suitable income-yielding activities through by Beate Schmidt

VOICES RISING JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1990

the establishment of a fund from which revolving credit at low interest could be made available.

Selection of the target groups

Three target groups were planned for participation in the project in order to collect sufficient data to facilitate a comparison between the groups. At the start of the project there were two groups in Port-au-Prince and one group in the country, about five hours drive away. All groups arose through personal contact; the women were eager to learn to read and write, so that no motivation work was necessary. A further, significant selection criterion was the more or less homogenous structure of the group in relation to their economic activities. This meant that eventual joint activities would be easier.

The women in one group were market women who sold mainly food items. None of them had an income exceeding US\$30 a month. The women in the second group were, with one exception, unemployed. All had attended school for one year but had left because their parents were no longer able to pay the fees. Motivation for participation in a literacy course varied. One frequently mentioned reason was not having to be ashamed any more at not

being able to read and thus being taken for ignorant.

#### Outline of a provisional learning program

The literacy program was directed, as far as possible, at the interests of the participants. The following steps were taken in the initial meetings with the women, questions regarding organization were clarified and the project introduced. The tutors took down an exact account of the women's situation in order to gain insight into their problems. These general discussions on their situation as women were recorded, evaluated according to linguistic criteria and classified thematically. Apart from this, the women were given a preliminary test to determine their reading and writing abilities. In these classes an initial introduction to reading and writing vowels took place. The actual program was then prepared on a weekly basis so that the weekly evaluation could be taken into consideration in the planning of the next class. All the classes were recorded so that the wealth of information resulting from the discussions could be evaluated afterwards. In this way, certain themes could be dealt with in more depth and persistent problems connected with individual sounds or letters attended to more systematically.

The program consisted of three phases:

- 1) The aim of the first phase was to be able to read and write all vowels and consonants and to form simple words and sentences with them.
- 2) The aim of the second phase was to read and write words and sentences containing combined consonants as, for example, in *gwoses* (pregnancy) or *legliz* (church).
- 3) In the third phase emphasis was placed on writing stories and the practical application of skills in everyday life.

We also planned to teach basic calculation skills by way of practical activities, such as calculating revenue and expenditure for the organization of a party.

In the first informal talks with the women, three main themes crystallized. They related to their work, reproduction, and participation. Sub-themes were compiled which together made up the program. Each theme was introduced by way of a generative word within a sentence.

Work: The participants analyze their working situation. They draw up an exact time-study to provide information on activities which are the most time-consuming and where eventual changes can be made. We ask, 1) Can the introduction of suitable technology be a first step in reducing the workload of women? 2) We study the causes for women's double and treble workload and the significance of the organization for realizing their own interests.

Respect and self-respect: Although women in Haiti play an important role in society and the economy, the predominant image of women - easily recognizable from Haitian proverbs - is negative. The women analyze what effect this negative attitude towards women has on their own view of themselves and how they can overcome the consequences. Leading Haitian women and their struggle for equality are discussed.

Content

Content

Reproduction: This comprises all themes concerning relationships, sexuality, pregnancy, birth and so on. The women have the opportunity to get to know their bodies better in order to have more control over family planning. The important role of women in health care is discussed as well as the problem of women being superseded in this practice by modern medicine.

Content

Content

Participation: We discuss women's participation in decision making processes at all levels of society. Balance of power and the rights of women are analyzed.

Women form their own ideas on development and draw up strategies for putting them into practice.

Evaluation of the project

The participating groups differed considerably with respect to interest, cooperation, dynamics and attendance. A feature shared by all women was the iron will to learn to read and write and the subsequent hope that their problems would then be solved. At the beginning of the project, their interests were very individual; each person wanted to gain the most personal profit from the course. During the classes a feeling of trust emerged and the readiness to try something out together; perhaps due to the insight that it is easier to seek a solution to problems together.

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The life of a woman

The inferiority of female work, underpaid or not paid at all. double and treble workload of women.

The tools which women use for their work.

The woman as pillar of the family.

Image of women in society.

International Women's Day.

Relationship between man and woman.

Violence towards women.

Menstruation and pregnancy  
Contraception and abortion.  
Division of power between  
women and men.  
What laws can women appeal to?  
Forms of organization for putting  
development into practice.

"Work" Examples:

Word

lavi (life)

znuti (tool)

"Respect and Self-Respect" Examples:

Word

fanm vunyan

uil max

"Reproduction" Examples:

Word

kenbe (to rape)

"Participation" Examples:

Word

lalwa (law)

The ideal occasion for the first joint  
utest of courage was International Women's  
Day. Many national organizations arranged  
events and, thanks to the intensive publicity  
work of many newly established women's  
groups, practically the whole population was  
informed about it.

Two of the project groups became in-  
volved in festivities. The Port-au-Pn'nee group  
wrote a small play entitled 'liclansanm

(Together). It was about a woman who en-  
couraged fellow women to join her in open-  
ing up a small business with their collective  
capital. The business runs well, the women  
make a small profit and they leave the stage  
dancing and singing. This 11-minute play  
was greeted enthusiastically by the audi-  
ence. The group of rural women organized a  
lovely festival for their village and visitors  
beseleve (to bend, to lift)

polamilan (pillar)

fczufc (relationship)

gwoses (pregnancy)

dilalasyon (abortion)

pouvwa (power)

tetanxanm (together)

—  
from surrounding districts.  
They had learnt dances and  
written plays and poems about  
the situation of rural women.

On the day before the  
festival the school director  
refused to let them have the  
hall that he had previously  
promised them. The women  
were not prepared, however,  
to be robbed of their festival,  
and without a moment's hesi-  
tation they stormed the school  
building and forced the di-  
rector to hand over the key.  
The festival was a great suc-  
cess. In both groups these  
experiences helped to build  
up the self-confidence of the  
women. '

Although more attention "  
has been given to problems  
surrounding literacy work

with women in recent times,  
there is still a lack of initia-  
tive aimed at changing  
women's situations. The ini-  
tiative should be grasped and  
developed by women them-  
selves so that they have their  
development in their own  
hands.

The concept introduced  
here is coupled with the hope  
that reading and writing skills  
will be used as a tool in se-  
curing a dignified human  
existence for women and thus  
for all people. Such a tool,  
however, can only function in a context  
where the social and political conditions  
linked to the well-being of everyone, exist.

I am very interested in contacting  
women working on the development of  
literacy materials geared towards women's  
needs for an exchange of information and  
experiences.

Beale Schmidt.

Buchenweg 20

5307 W Nierderbach

West Germany

VOICES RISING JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1990

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PUBLISHING WOMENS  
STORIES

Parkdale Project Read, Toronto, Canada  
h

VOICES RISING JANUARY/FEBRL'ARY 1990

Janet Ryan has been a learner at Park-  
dale Project Read in Toronto, Canada  
and works to get other people involved in  
literacy programs. She is currently edit-  
ing a book that she wrote and preparing it  
for publication. SheIs Speaking Out is  
about Janetts life and the difficulties she  
has encountered in not being able to read  
and write. The book will be published by  
Parkdale Project Read in early 1990.

I diant give up yet. I still went looking for  
a job. I found a job making soap. Two  
months later, I got laid off because there was  
no work, I went to the unemployment office  
and I looked on the board and I couldntt read  
what was on the board. I went home and  
cried and my Mom said, ItWhat happened?n  
ttI canIt fmd a job and when I ask for  
help they say twhat do you need help with to  
find a job? I tell the people at the unem-  
ployment office I can,t read the job board.  
They say the they dontt have the time to help  
me read the job board and that makes me  
feel bad and sad that there was nothing there  
for me?

o o  
0:. 0.0 0..

I moved into High Park and thatIs where  
my new life began. I was just doing my  
laundry one day and thatts where I saw the  
number for a literacy program.

0:. oz. .z.

I started a literacy program in Parkdale  
at the Parkdale Public Library on Queen  
Street West. The staff were good to me and  
it was a new beginning and a new life for me.  
I really enjoy leaming to read and write.

. .  
.g. ... ..

And I got involved in planning Intema-  
tional Literacy Day. And it was a lot of fun  
and a lot of work and I learned a lot of new  
ways to help other people get into literacy  
programs.

Excerpt from She's Speaking Out: What is it  
like to be lllileraze? by Janet Ryan.



Betsy Trumpener works at Parkdale Project Read and is helping Janet with her book.

Betsy: How did you get started writing your .t'tory?

Janet: One of the stall'at Parkdale Project Read asked me. I would probably never have thought to do it myself. I just wrote down things that had happened in my life. The people at Parkdale said, llDonlt worry about the spelling, we can go back and change things later? It took me about a year to write a book. ljust wrote a hit every week. When I had it all written, I worked with tutors. I just made u few changes, adding a few things and correcting the spelling. I made a list of some learners, stall) and tutors, in the program. I had them read it and offer suggestions.

Betsy: Do you think ht'int' a woman has ttfft'trled the way that you write?

Janet: I think men donl put their feelings in as much as woman do, so I think therels lots of things in my book that a man might not have put in. He'd be too embarrassed.

Betsy: What would you say to women in literacy programx who might never have thought of writing a .t'tory and getting it puhlt'xhed (l3a hook?

Janet: I would tell them: I thought the same way you probably feel, but I encourage you to give it a try. Afterwards, you'll feel really good about yourself. I feel good because Ilve written a book on my own and had no one tell me what to say.

Parkdale Project Read

Is It Her Voice If

She Speaks Their

Words?

Going thmugh life and not finding your experiences represented is what lite eracy learners experience. It is powerful when literacy learners get together in groups and name their experiences. We have learned from feminism the power of getting together with people who think and speak the same as you do: when your experiences are confirmed you knew you are not crazy.

Language experience stories told by learners to tutors are part of good pedagogy. The stories create effective learning exercises for literacy students. They may also be shared with other learners because they are good learning materials. Learners find these stories interesting \_ when they see their own struggles reflected. Because the language of learners is used in the stories they are easy to read. Language experience stories can also provide a source of inexpensive and creative reading material where materials are sorely needed.

But these stories, if they are part of critical pedagogy, will also have another dimension. This dimension will reflect the intention to bring learners, language into the public sphere. It is within this sphere that the stories demonstrate their power and make visible the class, race and gender bias in language.

It is a transformative act to document learners' lives, to publish oral histories and to bring them into the public realm. Through this act we are challenging what is considered to be literature.

Elaine Gaber-Katz

and Jenny

1303 Queen St. West Toronto, Ontario

Parkdale Project

Read

Parkdale Project Read is a 9 year old community literacy program located in the neighbourhood of Parkdale in Toronto, Canada. About 40 pairs of adult learners and volunteer tutors work together in our program. Another 30 learners attend small learning groups and literacy drop-ins at various times during the week. One of these groups is a Women's Group. Another group meets weekly to work on and generate learner writing.

Our program's purpose is to empower people, by means of improved literacy skills, to participate more fully in decisions that affect their lives. We encourage learners to make decisions about how and what they learn and also to participate in the organization and development of the program. As in other community programs, learners sit on our Board of Directors, help to hire new staff, and participate in program committees,

Learner participation in the program keeps us honest - and aware of some of our shortcomings. The daytime Women's Group, for example, developed out of our growing awareness that many women learners were not being served by our traditional programming.

Betsy Trumpener

(416) 531-6308

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VOICES RISING JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1990

DEVELOPING REA

xxNh

DING

AND WRITING SKILLS

SISTRENS Research Workshop

SISTRENS response to problems is collective, creative and dynamic. When some of the actresses were having difficulty scripting their scenes, the group organized a research workshop in reading skills - a workshop which incorporated dance, calisthenics and games as part of the learning process.

Honor Ford-Smith, a member of SISTREN Theatre Collective, tells of the groups experiences:

The workshop had as its objective the creation of dramatic exercises which would teach comprehension and reading skills and develop the critical consciousness of the student. This was the first research workshop in which SISTREN participated... During the groups first major production, Bellywoman Bangarang, the women were asked to script scenes they had created from their own experiences. At this point, I learned that some of the women in the project had more developed reading skills than others. These actresses were able to help others script their scenes and by the end of the production, interest in reading about their personal experiences motivated many to practice their new skills. By the time we got to our second major production, everyone could read her own script. The research workshop investigated what took place in this process more carefully. In workshop, a wide range of work was done. Physical exercises were based on the shape of the letters. Calisthenics were developed based on the alphabet and, in one case, a dance created from the spelling of the letters of words. Rhythmic sounds and games accompanied these so that' let- by Honor Ford-Smith

VOICES RISING JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1990

ters and sounds were identified. Writing exercises were linked to exercises in conflict resolution, personal awareness and group development. A great many of the exercises have been developed from Augusto Boal's method of problem solving skits. In these, the group develops to a climax a skit on a particular theme. They then stop and ask the rest of the group how the problem should be solved. After a discussion, the solution is enacted.

Reading exercises were often taken from the newspaper. The study of articles in the paper and their accompanying pictures is another example of the type of exercise the group used. After looking at a picture, the women acted out what went before and after the moment captured in the scene. They then read, in character, the newspaper report, and commented on its truthfulness in discussion.

The results of these workshops were recorded by the members of SISTREN and some of the scenes scripted. All writing was done in Creole, since the Creole lan-

guage is the womenis main medium of communication. The Creole was then uanse lated into English. Writing in dialect, with its improvised spelling and immediate flavour, the women learned to write a form of English which had previously been considered ubad, coarse and vulgar? In fact, Jamaican Creole is a variation of English with its own strict rules of grammar, a language which retains much of the Twi construction of its creators. By writing a language which had hitherto been that of a non-literate people, the women broke the silence.

From Worldlit: Newsletter of World Literacy of Canada  
692 Coxwell Ave.  
Toronto, Ontario  
CANADA M4C 3B6  
PHOTO SISTREN

'?

# A LITERACY KIT FOR PEASANT WOMEN IN MEXICO

In the last decade, peasant women in Mexico have begun to develop their own organizations. They are increasingly struggling for their specific gender concerns, without (having to) participate with men in the struggle for land and survival, and against repression.

Peasant women's high level of illiteracy (total and functional) is an obstacle to this process, literacy is becoming more seriously as a legitimate concern. To learn to read and write requires consistency and discipline and it is difficult to find appropriate material. Local teachers' unions (educators).

(In this reality, the project for a Dialogical Learning Manual a project to develop a 'Dialogue' Kit to meet the needs of peasant women involved in a variety of organizational processes. With the financial support of a Christian women's group in Stein, Germany, LQLA was produced. It is a manual for facilitators, including a poster for generative words.

The three-woman team in charge of this project tried to capture the theoretical advances in the field of adult literacy. The basic methodology is the one developed by Paulo Freire. The kit intends to link the learning process to an examination and transformation of the reality of the peasants for whom the kit was produced.

The main theme is peasant women's reality. The process begins with a "discovery" of peasant women's identity in terms of what is being done in their daily lives inside and outside their homes. A reflection on family relationships follows. Relationships with their mates, with their children and with their communities traditions and by Leonor Aide Concha, Maria del Carmen Monies, and Sylvia Van Dyck

customs. The kit is followed by a critical examination of education, health and health services. Finally, there is a structural analysis of the Mexican reality (social classes, repression, who owns what in the country, history, etc).

Local and methodological (level) aspects are important in the process. Each lesson (which can be developed in several sessions according to the groups' pace) includes a photo on the theme, a generative word, a reading on the topic, questions for discussion, and writing and reading exercises. The kit includes 31 lessons. Reading is in print writing by hand. It was intended that each lesson include only one new linguistic element. Beginning with the most simple and first-unit Spanish forms.

The manual for facilitators is a support resource for literacy educators training. It is expected that the week-long workshop developed in conjunction with the manual will enable women who read and write to facilitate literacy training for the illiterate women in their organizations.

WC have already hold the first training workshop for literacy educators. WC are eagerly waiting for the results to show in practice what resulted from this first group of volunteers taking on the challenge of this difficult process together with their communities.

LMU/vrcs para ('l Dirilngn ll/Vnmml for Dlunguv/ is a women's mm-gnvcrmmcnl organization. of ('Iirim'un lmrkgrmmnd. peasant and popular woman's groups in I/u't'r ('lumtional arid nryrmizing (fffnrls; MIT/crcs Para ('I Dialogn Apurmdu Pmlu/ lU-Wj

039/0, Maxim

Mr'xirfo DF

Lola Manual

We know that there are many women who don't read and write.

This situation puts limits on women to solve certain problems, to learn new things and to improve their lives.

Women who do not read and write, as any other women,

0 know and do many things

0 can do some accounting in their mind

0 they know what they want and what they need.

Women who do not read and write

have amassed a great deal of experience throughout their lives. Not reading and writing has not prevented them from:

0 developing their memory .

0 passing on their knowledge

9 doing some accounting

0 developing their social consciousness

o developing popular organization to transform local conditions

0 building women's organizations

What these women have not been able to achieve is to learn to read and write to have more information, which is available in a written form and to communicate their own experience to other people in writing.

WC want to help women to achieve this.

In some cases. it is believed that illiteracy means that adults can't learn to recognize letters and words or to write them. This is true, but it is only part of it, because literacy's goals broader. Literacy aims to achieve that an adult:

0 Understands what she is reading .

0 Expresses what she thinks in a written form

0 Applies reading and writing to her daily life.

For women to be interested in literacy, it will be necessary to link what they are learning with:

0 The search for solutions to their problems and needs.

0 What they would like to do with reading and writing.

Women who want to become literate will have the opportunity to join the a group to reflect on their problems, search for solutions and to listen to others and thus strengthen and broaden their knowledge.

This is a different way of learning.

Excerpt from LOLA, Manual

VOICES RLSLXG JANLTARY/FEBRL'ARY 1990

The moment the United Nations declared 1990 as International Literacy Year, the international literacy movement began to consider how the Year could strengthen the movement in every corner of the world. The UN. plan of action is to help Member States in all regions to eradicate illiteracy by the year 2000." A UNESCO statement says that the International Literacy Year (ILY) should not be a celebration but a summons to action? UNESCO will be encouraging action among member states and increasing public awareness and popular participation.

In this framework, the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) initiated an International Task Force on Literacy (ITFL) to facilitate the involvement of primarily non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the grassroots of the literacy movement in preparations for the Year. The Task Force envisions a year which will mark the beginning of a 10 year intensive effort to: dramatically reduce illiteracy in the world; mobilize resources from the grassroots and factory floors through governments and educational institutions; recognize that illiteracy is a problem of both industrialized and non-industrialized nations; not confuse a campaign against illiteracy with a campaign against illiterate people; link literacy to the achievements of social, economic and political democracy; strengthen the organizations of women, the poor, the jobless and the landless; result in increased empowerment of people, not increased dependency; and result most importantly in strengthened permanent structures for promoting literacy and adult education at governmental and non-governmental levels.

(excerpted from 1990: International Literacy Year)

1990: International Literacy Year

International  
Literacy  
Year

Agenda,  
Comments,  
Challenges

structures for promoting literacy and adult education at governmental and non-governmental levels.

(excerpted from 1990: International Literacy Year)

1990: International Literacy Year is the newsletter of the International Task Force on Literacy. The newsletter is available in English, French and Spanish free of charge by writing to the ITFL Coordinating Office, 720 Bathurst Street, Suite 500, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5S 2R4.

A report entitled *A Practical Guide for Non-Governmental Organizations, UNESCO Clubs, Associated Schools and Other Interested Groups* has been prepared by the NGO Standing Committee. It contains suggestions for activities for International Literacy Year. This and other reports on preparations for ILY can be obtained by writing to: Secretariat for International Literacy Year, UNESCO House, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France.

The definition of empowerment means not only the ability to have individual

action but the ability to see the problem as a group problem and therefore to see the collective dimensions of the problem and the 130553!)le for collective solutions to the problem.

Nettie S tromquist

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The challenges facing women's literacy are formidable. But this does not mean that they cannot be met. They will have to be taken into account simultaneously and they will need persistent attention. Action without theory, decoding/encoding skills without an understanding of how oppression emerges and persists, the unquestioned use of state agencies, the accumulation of unanswered questions regarding literacy process, and legislation without enactment, are fundamental and actual conditions that inhibit the social transformation required to make women's literacy a part of the social order.

These five challenges are based on Nellie Stromquist's presentation "Women and Literacy, What Next?" at the 1989 Symposium on Women and Literacy: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, Stockholm, Sweden, and on the revised written version 'Challenges to the Attainment of Women's Literacy', Nellie Stromquist, School of Education, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089-0031 USA.

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#### FIVE CHALLENGES TO WOMEN'S LITERACY THE CHALLENGE OF FEMINIST THEORY.

Many empirical studies have generated a long list of factors influencing the condition of women and affecting women's primary and formal education - lack of time, lack of motivation, distance to school, family responsibilities, opposition by husbands or fathers and so on. Taken as obstacles to women's literacy, they become the basis for policy. But this confuses the immediate manifestations of women's subordination with fundamental factors behind them. Solutions that accommodate women's lack of time are short term and actually accommodate a status quo detrimental to women. The challenge of feminist theory is to uncover the systematic mechanisms behind such obstacles." Feminist scholars have identified two mutually supportive and powerful mechanisms of subordination; the sexual division of labour and the control of women's sexuality. These concepts increase our analytical power to understand how conditions of

women is subordi-  
nation persist and  
how change will  
take more than just  
in ingenious program  
design. Feminist  
theory helps us locate obstacles in spe-  
cific man-made institutions that form the  
society in which we live, so we can take a  
more sceptical analytical look at the state,  
the diffuse set of social forces that we call  
culture, the family, education. In the family  
and in the community or society, a notion of  
virginity, a sexual double standard, women's  
lack of physical mobility and physical vio-  
lence in the household produce a psycho-  
logical constraint on women's activities.  
and a real control of their activities via their  
sexuality. We need to use a conceptual  
framework that looks behind the obstacles  
to women's literacy and women's develop-  
ment to a systematic order of control.

#### THE CHALLENGE OF STRATEGY.

With the global eco-  
nomic and financial  
crises and because of  
the sexual division of  
labour, women bear the burden of repro-  
duction as well as take on productive re-  
sponsibilities and struggle for rights in labour  
legislation. How can we be  
sensitive to the tensions in  
women's responsibilities? How  
do we make sure that they are  
not simply engaged in a solu-  
tion of basic needs but are  
moving towards a social re-  
structuring? The strategic chal-  
lenge is how to develop pro-  
ductive programs that allow  
women to have access to finan-  
cial resources, to remunerated  
wages, but at the same time not  
make the mistake of simply  
moving the problem from re-  
production to production. The  
first strategic challenge to lit-  
eracy programs is how to combine women's  
practical (reproductive) needs and their stra-  
tegic needs (changing the sexual division of  
labour, the conditions of women as work-  
ers, their legal rights, and their rights as  
VOICES RISING JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1990

autonomous citizens). A second strategic 'challenge is to design literacy programs that combine political/psychological knowledge with skills aimed at remunerative work, and income-generating projects that include not only literacy skills but such skills as collective organization and gender consciousness. A third strategic challenge is to understand and combat the false dichotomies in discourses on social and gender transformation - productivity versus equity, efficiency versus equity, women's empowerment versus the danger brought to their well-being by empowerment. A fourth strategic Challenge is to pay as much attention to the process of women's literacy as to the outcome. We need to be attentive to how women learn and be willing to utilize all existing spaces for action.

#### THE CHALLENGE OF IMPLEMENTING AGENCY SELECTION.

. If we want to have literacy for women, who gets to do it? Systematic studies of program implementation have been very few. Evaluations of UNESCO experimental programs conducted by government agencies in 11 countries for 2-5 years in the late sixties provide overwhelming evidence that some of the benefits that supposedly accrue from government action - coordination, a more rational and sophisticated teacher training, development of materials, outreach to a large number of populations in need, production of materials sensitive to the needs of various groups and coordination among the various levels of government, between education and agriculture, agriculture and health and so on - do not materialize. If we want to serve the needs of women in literacy programs, then it is sensible that social sectors other than the state should be given a role in the provision of education. Especially for women, non-governmental organizations run by women represent a very powerful avenue for the incorporation of changes, and for creative, innovative, holistic approaches to the education of women. Those who have given the greatest degree of invention and commitment have been NGOs, and they need to be given much more attention.

#### THE CHALLENGE OF RESEARCH.

Many issues remain to be investigated when we are trying to understand the condition of women. We need to have a much greater understanding of the household dynamics that affect the participation

of women and how the negotiation of decision making within the family affects how women enter literacy programs or wish to enter literacy programs. We still need to have much more evidence on what are effective techniques to deal with adult women, and on what is an effective mix of visual and text stimuli in the production of literacy programs. Literacy programs go beyond technical programs, but we still need that information. We need more information on the kinds of supportive settings that enable women to enter and sustain participation in a literacy program, and on the physical and psychological constraints on women's participation at the community level as well as the household level.

The research challenge is also to produce a knowledge which breaks the subject/object dichotomy, so that in the process illiterate women are part of, and become able to see themselves as a part of, larger processes that organize literacy/illiteracy.

#### THE CHALLENGE OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION.

. Policy provides leverage for action to gain women's legal rights in practice, where international pressure may be brought to bear such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, ratified by 54 countries. Significantly, most of the countries that have not yet ratified the convention include African and Arab countries with high rates of female illiteracy. While laws and official commitment exist, concrete programming lags. The challenge is to lobby governments to force their attention to programs, and to convince international aid agencies to use groups outside the state for the provision of literacy to women.

Welcome International Literacy Year 1990 as a measure to bring attention

and reflection to these problems and challenges. A decade will not be enough to gain the financial and organizational support required to meet them. States will have to work with women and NGOs, and men will have to be persuaded that we all stand to gain as a restructured social order emerges.

DEEPENING THE.  
ISSUES AND  
OBJECTIVES OF ILY

Much of the accepted wisdom about literacy needs to be critically examined in relation to advances and retreats in literacy over the past decades. The period prior to and during ILY could be seen as a time for intense questioning and debate. along with a solid program of research and evaluation. The findings from these activities would allow the international literacy movement to launch a decade of work on literacy between 1990 and 2000 on a much surer footing.

Literacy, Democracy and  
Empowerment

Empowerment through literacy is seen as having to do not only with empowerment in the larger society, but also in the power relations of learner/teacher or facilitator in the literacy classroom. If literacy is understood not only as reading and writing skills but also as having a voice a space for action in one's society, how do we understand the forces that impede literacy? In what ways do new literacy skills actually bring empowerment within families, communities, workplaces and societies? Does this work differently for women than for men? What chance is there of using new literacy skills in the current economic crisis when there are no books and no literate environment anyway?

Images Of Literacy and the  
Literate

Illiteracy often becomes part of a broad social pathology that implicitly or explicitly blames illiteracy for the social problems of unemployment, poor health, low productivity, weak family management, and school failure. There are war metaphors ("campaigns to eradicate illiteracy," "the battle of the book," "pencils as weapons?") There are health metaphors (illiteracy as a plague" or a scourge) What would more adequate images of literacy and the illiterate look like? How will this be different in the North and the South? Given the stigma of illiteracy in the industrialized countries, is there a danger that ILY publicity will result in driving illiterates underground? How can we build a communications strategy into the ITFL?

Liberatory Goals

Literacy programs understood as a process of liberation at times have shown more concern with conscientization than with actual reading and writing skills, while in reality both must be accomplished simultaneously. We need better articulation between governments, NGOs and popular social movements to get the right mix for realizing both technical/pedagogical goals and political/ideological goals.

Teachers

Are trained teachers a huge potential resource for literacy-or a guarantee of failure? In some countries teachers are seen as inextricably tied into authoritarian, tradi-

tional, vertical teaching processes, the antithesis of the pedagogy of empowerment espoused by popular educators.

#### South-North Exchanges

There are very different uses for literacy skills in the literacy environments (, industrialized and non-industrialized countries. We need to combat the marginalization of literacy workers in industrialized countries, within the world literacy movement in general, and in the specific context of ILY preparations. We need South-North exchanges in order to feed the long and rich experience and action on literacy in the South into the North.

#### Women's Literacy

Women's experiences of illiteracy and the doors opened to them by new literacy skills are fundamentally different from those  
VOICES RISLUG JOURNAL/FEbruary 1990

of men. New abilities to speak, read, write and count work for men in different ways than they do for women. And the willingness of illiterate women and men to make a time commitment to literacy is determined largely by their assessment of what kinds of doors will be opened to them by literacy. We need to create opportunities for women to speak about their experiences of literacy. This includes paying attention both to the assumptions about women's role in a society that silences literate women and also to the specific structural constraints of domestic labour and childcare that impede women's participation in literacy.

There are widespread practices of literacy throughout the world in very small groups, often of ten or twelve people at the local level. Given that NGOs tend to be very weakly linked, often this work in literacy finds NGOs reinventing the wheel. In some regions, such as Latin America, there has been a widespread NGO abandonment of literacy, with priorities now put on conscientization, cooperatives, women, health, etc. How do we understand this? And are these other activities appropriate points of entry for literacy at a later phase?

Research about actual literacy practices should be carried out and communicated in such a way as to have immediate usefulness for those involved in literacy at the grassroots. There should be concrete case studies of real successes and failures. Approaches should be based on action research and participatory evaluation models. Full use should be made of already existing research and evaluation structures, including existing ICAE networks, universities, institutes, and so on.

We need not question the utility of literacy. What we need are much clearer strategies for how and when, and with whom, for literacy to be effective within the larger process of strategies both for survival and economic/political/social change.

Judith is a member of the International Task Force on Literacy. This is an abridged version of her report to the Women's Leadership Development Seminar in International Adult Education, Quito, Ecuador, October 1988.

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LIBERATING THOUGHTS

Literacy For What?

Strategies With Women in Mind

Excerpts from a report by Lalita

-Ramdas, Society for Alternatives in

Education, New Delhi, India from her

report 1 \_\_the International Task Force

1111 Literacy,

April 1989

ad local rhetoric 18 no Substitute for change

i 1:; in practice For 1111110113 of people, reality

1901111111113 to be 21 life of toil Struggle, him.

iii health and little hope Learning to

and write 15a meaningless skill under

, circumstances where they can feed them-

. selves 01in by selling their 1211101111 and 11131 '

of their children and where struggles for



more justice are met with violence from  
'the same State that promised them so  
much

Literacy needs to be redefined drastical-  
ly Literacy cannot remain at the, level  
of learning the alphabet and signing. your  
11211116. Today 11161113211115 of groups are  
working at the lowest levels of the social  
Order with 01' without government support,  
to enable those people to obtain in  
reality all the promises of freedom and  
justice ,

. I 0: . :00 4

The view of literacy as an important tool  
of democratic rights liberation struggles.  
And equality for every citizen is not universal  
shared Regarding women and  
V State as a desirable goal How have women  
been involved in that decision? And how  
can literacy help to realize that goal?

0: . 9:4:

Can literacy provide jobs and employment  
11111111? Can literacy empower people to  
be legitimately theirs without inviting  
repression, violence and imprisonment?  
Can literacy counter patriarchy and truly  
lead to women's equality?  
' 9111 community workers are indifferent  
help them get decent space 01 a building  
01 books in the hands of each learner, or  
to deal with the drought or the revival of  
' sad (women burning themselves on their  
1115111111151 funeral pyres), and whether it  
will help them cope with violence in the  
community. Many have given up on adult  
literacy!) and believe we should mobilize  
efforts to ensure that children get a de-  
cent education and become literate, as  
the best method for long-term 21111111111121-  
" 1:1 1:0 4'

it is not enough to 11111 special programs  
for women. Some of the hope for women's  
literacy rests on hard work With men re-  
garding women's equality, We are fight-  
ing an ideological and practical battle  
over the views of women and their roles  
in society. Unless traditional values of  
attitudes towards women and women's  
roles in society are tackled directly and  
honestly, women will continue to be mere  
objects of development, or of literacy  
programs instead of active free-willing  
partners and participants of their own.

' e: 4. 9: . -

World organizations routinely and gran-  
diloquently declare International Year after  
International Year. Governments and UN  
groups whip into 21011011 Millions are  
spent 011 the production of glossy bro-  
chures campaigns, hand outs, seminars  
and conferences Activity peaks mid-  
year, The media keep the issue alive.  
Barely does the curtain come down 011  
the Year for Women, then preparations  
begin for the Year of the...Child, Dis-  
abled; Aged, Homeless. But what of  
business as 11311111"? Who draws up the  
balance sheet at the end of it 2111? Is it  
left to the busy accountants and auditors  
of countless organizations the world over?  
Lalaz'ta Ramdas

ITFL India Omm  
5/0 Indian AE Association  
I 748, Indra Praszha arg  
Mew Delhi - 1100002 INDIA . .  
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#### BUILDING THE NETWORK

"Building The Network" is a new section that will incorporate our letters and linking sections. Instead of simply excerpting from the letters we receive between production, we want to prod you to take on a more active role. This can be your space to share your ideas, experiences, and reflections on the challenges you face. You might also want to use the section to link up with similar groups, solicit support for or participation in a project, or announce work you are doing. We're well aware that many of you simply don't have the time to sit down and write full articles but our hope is that by providing a more informal space you'll feel it's more possible to take up the debate.

We want to hear about the articles you like and don't like as well as about pressing issues not addressed by Voices Rising. Let others in the network know what you're thinking and doing. Voices Rising will be all the richer for it.

#### KISIM SAVE SKUL BILONG

OL MERI:

Urban Skills Program for Women, Goroka,  
Papua New Guinea

I am an Australian Volunteer Abroad (AVA) employed by the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province. My job title is Field Training Officer and I came to Papua New Guinea in July 1988 to work with the YWCA to plan, develop and implement a non-formal education program for women in the Goroka YWCA's recently constructed multipurpose building. Through a process of consultation with local women and with individuals, agencies and organizations working with women, a program relevant to the women's needs has been gradually developed. The overwhelming request from the women theme solves for activities at the Training Centre was for "tok pisin" literacy. With this objective in sight, the urban skills program has been developed to incorporate, initially,

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literacy and later numeracy and practical skills such as how to open and operate a bank account, legal awareness and health care.

During the early days I wrote to agencies, organizations and individuals within the country and internationally working on Women in Development issues, initiating valuable networking links and acquiring the most recent and relevant information and material available on work with women and literacy. Development workers shouldn't have to reinvent the wheel every time we go into the field. With networking we learn from each other's success and failures; especially working with women, so much of our history gets lost."

We started with two groups of women from two different parts of Goroka: North Goroka and at neighbouring village, Masilakaufa. We now have five groups. Each group attends the Training Centre twice a week. Interest expressed by local women has been very high, and the eagerness with which these women arrive every day is very rewarding and inspiring.

Literacy is a real need in these women's lives. Women's illiteracy rates in Papua New Guinea are between 75-80 percent, so we have plenty of willing participants. Fifteen to fifty year olds are coming with equal keenness and almost all of them have never been to school before. Most of the women say that they never thought they'd get the opportunity to learn to read and write after having missed out on attending school as children.

The Training Centre has an experienced Kisim Save teacher, Anna Maben, who has been active in women's activities in Simbu Province previously. We are existing on very little money at the moment, and we have started the program with bare essentials only: mats, a blackboard, butcher's paper and chalk. We received a small grant from the Australian High Commission which has helped us purchase some Kisim Save literacy kits from Christian Books Melanesia, other pidgin books and teaching aids, and a little furniture. We are optimistic about a submission we have made to the National Government's Literacy Development Program, and also to the Australian YWCA for funding.

We have many ideas for the Training Centre. I am presently compiling a list of resource people who are willing to come and lead sessions regularly in their particular fields, for instance, a woman solicitor, health educator, a Christian Institute of Counselling volunteer. I am endeavouring to build up local resources so that the program can be maintained on its own.

I would like to organize a workshop to train Kisim Save teachers. There has been a lot of interest expressed by women leaders of particular church women's fellowship groups locally to learn how to teach so that they can introduce a Kisim Save program into their own work. By providing resources and training, we can encourage the opportunity for Kisim Save to be extended to a wider network of women.

Enabling women to become literate is an essential tool in encouraging women's development. Literacy rates are significant when looking at infant mortality and general health statistics, and it seems the two are

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directly linked I have found from personal experience of our Kisim Save Skul in Goroka that women's self esteem and confidence and general understanding of themselves and the world around them is hugely increased as they become literate. If women see themselves as capable and intelligent human beings, as they are beginning to, instead of tlemi meri tasol, mi samting mating? they will demand and command respect in this society.

Please feel free to contact me for further information about Kisim Save Skul Bilong Ol Meri. Or better still, drop in and see us if you're in the neighbourhood. Visitors are always most welcome, and then the women themselves can tell you about our ttlik lik skulf,

&ebbie Chapman

Field Training Officer

YWCA Goroka

P.O. Box 636,

Goroka, EHP,

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Ed Note: A more recent report from Debbie outlines numerous plans for the Next Year. These include:

1) In 1990, UN International Literacy Year, the Yls Women's Training Centre will be encouraging, supporting and initiating literacy projects wherever possible throughout Papua New Guinea. Publicity, information dissemination and visits will be used to encourage projects as well as direct sharing of ideas, resources and materials.

Q 2) A workshop is planned to train interested local women to initiate and run literacy projects. Funding has been received from the New Zealand High Commissioner and documentation and packaging will be able to be duplicated in other parts of the country. The Goroka Training Centre will become a resource centre as well as provide direct programming to the women of Goroka.

3) More production of material in ltok pisin with a view to commercial printing and distribution. This will encourage indigenous literature, and could be a source of raising funds for the Training Centre.

4) The establishment of a retail outlet for books so that the profits of the bookshop could go towards subsidizing the programs at the Training Centre.

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POPULAR EDUCATION

AMONG WOMEN NETWORK

Puno Peru

The articles in Voices Rising are excellent, mostly because they address the issue of literacy, which is essential to us in Peru. In Puno, where we live, on the shore of Titicaca Lake, in a cold and dry climate, the high rate of illiteracy is one of the indicators of the isolation and discrimination suffered by women. Our population lives mostly (70%) in rural areas, and more than half are women. In the

rural area the illiteracy rate is 54.4% and in the urban areas is 28.8% among women. Literacy work and training is difficult and our organization together with other organizations in Puno have created a district network for popular education among women.

All the organizations within the space of our network are advancing, contributing experiences, possibilities and a common concern in making it possible for women to participate more in the public life of the district and the region.

We need your support with documentation on literacy and perhaps with some funds that would contribute to reduce the high illiteracy rate. As well, we would like to know of events related to this problem and training possibilities for literacy educators in the Latin American language.

We will send you news of our experience in literacy and on popular education.

We enclose our Constitution. We want all those related to ICAE to know about them.

We are sending a copy of our declaration in support of women prisoners in South Africa.

Sonia Molina, President

Amparo Choquehuanca L., Secretary  
ORMUP

Calle Deza 750. Aptdo. 477,  
Puno, Peru

Our Constitution

On May 17, 1989, in Chucuyto-Puno (Peru) the Popular Education Network Among Women was created. Twenty-one delegates attended the inaugural event representing public, private, women's and women's peasant organizations in Puno.

During the debate, in which everyone participated, the most important opinions were:

0 That women are always manipulated, that financial support is conditioned to electoral work; that women in rural areas always need men's support for many formal procedures because they are afraid of expressing their needs before the institutions. That there is discrimination in food support to single and young mothers. That men in the communities charge their part for the procedures, but they do not allow women to do it by themselves, and that they drink too much.

9 That many women don't read or write and that priority should be given to the peasant sector because the peasant woman is over exploited and marginalized, without access to education, and that no one shows concern for their training or for allowing them to know their rights.

0 That to have access to assistance women must know how to read and write and the

mothers organizations operate only when  
there is food support.

9 That we must defend our own ways, our  
culture, our ways of nutrition, our folklore.

0 That women in the cities are in extreme  
poverty because prices have raised and there  
is not enough money for rent, food, and  
water and electricity services, and that we  
have to go out and protest in an organized  
way.

0 That we have to develop a solidarity  
practice among women and that within the  
network there are women that can help a lot  
in training.

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O That everything goes to the cities and nothing for the rural side, that there is a great deal of centralization and the red tape is cumbersome, and that in the city they spend too much money, forgetting about people in the country side. There is no work for women, they are not getting any opportunities for training. The rural woman is marginalized because she does not speak Spanish and always is tired of talking to city people.

6 That it is necessary for women to participate more fully in the production process and in all levels of public life, that women must be well informed.

u That many times women's participation is dependent on the leaders allowing it, who first ensure that it will be convenient for them that women know things; if there is no problem in this they will allow women's participation. The topic of political participation was widely discussed.

There was a discussion about the need for popular education as a positive alternative for women.

#### Network's Objectives

0 To promote social change through the practice of popular education among women.

0 To practice solidarity, coordination and experiences and resources sharing within the network and with other groups.

0 To contribute to women's organization, empowerment and participation in the process of transforming society.

Fields of work

Communication

Literacy

Health Care and Nutrition

Research and Resources

Production

Legal Training

Organization

Popular Culture

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#### Methodology:

Popular education will be based in popular knowledge and will be in constant evolution according to daily life and the national situation. Popular education is a means to achieve a global transformation of society, where the different forms of exploitation and oppression will be eliminated. Popular education allows for a coordination of popular sectors.

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North of

Malawi

I am writing on behalf of the Centre for Research and Documentation, a community resource organisation based in West Belfast in the North of Ireland. This organisation was set up last year when a group of Irish people who had been working in third world countries and community workers came together to discuss the links between the countries we had worked in and the current situation in Ireland and also to use the experience and insights we had gained in these countries upon our return to Ireland.



We are involved in many issues here throughout the country ranging from unemployment, emigration, repression, llwomen's issues" etc. We resource community groups here and organise exchanges between groups north and south. We also work a lot with womenls groups. I was wondering if you could put us on your mailing list and maybe send us a list of different international womenls groups, particularly in Central America. I was working there three years before coming home to lrelandl.

Anyway I look forward to hearing from you and ilithere is anything we can do from this end please do let me know. We keep a wide range of information (newspaper cuttings, articles etc.) on a variety of topics (political issues in the North and South of Ireland, discrimination, unemployment, emigration, third world, etc.) A large part of our work is organising programmes for international visitors from countries like Central America, South Africa, Vietnam, Philipppines to meet with local community groups here in the Nonh of Ireland and lo share perspectives.

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Co-ordinalor. ("enlre for Research and

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898 Glen Road

Belfast, Anlrim B'Ii/l

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We are a group of Brazilian Black Women working with low income Black Women in our region and we are organizing the 1st CONGRESS OF BLACK WOMEN FROM BAIXADA SANTISTA, days 11 to 14 of May, in Santos City, Sao Paulo State. We are interested in being in touch with ICAE (Women's Program) because in Br zil the illiteracy of the Black Women is vet? high: about 1/2 of all the Black Women here are illiterate. We want to change this see-nary and this Congress is a space for reflection and debate about this and other problems which confine Black Women to the lowest rank among the Brazilian workers. To give us solidarity and the experience of other countries would be a great advancement for our local strategies of empowerment.

Alzira Rufino

Encontro de Mulheres Negros da Baixada

Santista

c/o CEFAS

rua Vasco de Gama. 87

Santos. Sao Paulo

BRAZIL

VOICES RISING JANUARY/FEBRL'ARY 1990

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 VOICES RISING JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1990  
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 readers who are gmpphng with some of  
 these issues or have prepared training  
 materials that are both practically fea-  
 31313 as Well as 1101111311151 challenging  
 I m especially interested in materials that  
 combine both technical and organiza-  
 tional "knowledge on an integrated way;  
 Michelle Freedman  
 AGENDA: A Jaumal About Women and  
 Gender "  
 PO. Box 37332  
 Overport 4067  
 SOUTH AFRICA  
 We'd 3150 be interested in your reflec-  
 tions on Michelle's 11113511101151 Let's  
 start a discussion around these issues  
 in the pages of Voices Rising Send 115

copies 01' relevant rescm rces, letters 11nd  
articles;

(Adm

saw Voices Rising on my table when I  
came back to India after spending about 45  
days in Italy with 120 friends from 90  
countries. The bulletin not only gave us  
novel ideas & experiences but it is a strength  
and solidarity to us in our struggle with  
traditional Fishing Women for liberation.  
I met many women of USA, Europe  
and Australia having concern for the situ-  
ation for women in India. They encouraged  
me in my mission. My friends at home also  
share their frustrating experiences while  
working with the fishing women in India.  
Some times I am in confusion. What to do  
and what not to do.

Women in Indian counuyside live in  
deprivation. We intend to organise them  
into cohesive groups. We help them to  
undertand and articulate their situations.  
We facilitate them to recognise the forces  
that oppress them. We motivate them to be  
organised.

When we work with education, health,  
and other awareness programs, people in  
countryside ask for food, shelter and clothes.  
Unfortunately, we don't have resources to  
meet all these. The material needs of such  
people could not be met permanently, un-  
less our resources in India are genuinely  
distributed. People need to understand, realise  
this and to challenge the distributory chan-  
nel.

But unforuntately the degree of depri-  
vation is so acute that they don't have  
patience and power to wait for a new wave  
to come. They intend to have an immediate  
result. As a result the movement gets lost  
midway before it reaches the desired goal.  
However we learn from our frustration.

Our experience is more broad reading your  
report on building leadership. Hope this  
newsletter would be a media for us to reach  
with the friends, those who are also in the  
process of struggle for LIBERATING  
WOMEN.

With Solidarity,  
Laxmz'dhar Swain,  
CARD - Centre for Action Research and  
Documentation  
U353, Dumuduma Housing Board  
P.O. Aiginia  
Bhubaneswar, Orissa, 751002  
INDIA

WWW

3AM

GOSTARK

WC arc trying to tlt'vclop :tn C(11111kl11111111ul  
program fC1111Cd to womcn's txxucx, WC  
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topics such as: domestic work; working  
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would ltkc lo rccciue mlorniztliou :thoul  
stmtlzttr programs in olhcr countries.  
WC arc also providing ilircct xcrviccs  
lo hallcrctl wonicn and doing community  
educulion on violcncc against womcn. if  
you hztvc a hrochttrc zttldrcssing this prolm  
lcm, we would likc to rccctvc II.  
I hztvc givcn ll'uit-m Romy lo a woman  
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to utkc into account thc. lcvcl of formal  
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prcvcnt thcm taking full advantage ol' ar-  
ticles that arc u littlc hit too udvunccd I'or  
thcm.

I hopc we keep in touch.

Norma Jean Profit! M ,

MUSAl)E

Mull'rm Unidm c'n Salad y Dvmrrulln

Woman United for IIm/I/i and l)('V('/( )p-  
mm!

A/mrmdn / 7 , San RunuSn. Alcliu'la

('())S'I'A RICA

Please note that MUSAIW is looking to  
receivc materials and information about  
programs related to violence against  
women. VR

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epa

'l'ht- thcntc ol your Quito St'minur and thc  
mum locus ol lzttcxt ixsut' ol VR, "Building  
iA'iidchlllp, Building the Movcmcnl" rc-  
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know u grcttl dual zthoul Zinihahwian Silu-  
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ol' producing it popular text is interesting  
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SC11101111111111 scnt thcnt toinuny lirikndsworking  
in (lil'l'crct parts of Nepal. I have also  
cncourugai thcm to write to you, cspccizilly  
l ilSkC11 women (lcvclopmcnl workers here  
to go through it.

From my side, i will be sending you my  
comments, sharing your magazine among  
nttiny l'ricntls hcrc, encouraging others to  
contact you, and I would also translate

sonic relevant articles into Nepali and give them to publish in mztgzuincs hcrs.

Bimu/ Phunyu/

('ARIi-NEPAL

I).(). Box /()())I

K alhmundu

NEPAL

RXXXV

Cuba

We think is of great value to share expe-ri-ences among those of us working in popular education. For us it is very important to be included in your popular educators and activists network. because our Regional Centre in Havana, Cuba has been opening spaces in women's training in Latin Amer-icu.

Presently. taking into account the so-cial and political changes occurring in our region and womcnls important role both in popular struggles and organizations, we have committed ourselves to work in three main areas: Training (through threc-month courses in Havana, field courses for organi-zations who require them and workshops on specific topics such as, women, health care, methodology for womcnls skill dc-vclopment and others); Documentation (development of a documentation centr and making links with othersimilarccntrcs). Research on different women's issues.

We have done eighteen courses with the participation of more than 500 women from Latin American and Caribbean Or-ganiztions. These women are grouped in a network which will allow us to follow up the training process. We are sure that the links established with you will be of mutual support.

("antrepcidn Dumois

Director

F cdermridn Democrdtica Internacional de

Mw'crax. Cenlro Regional

Regional Centre. Women's International

Democratic F ederution

Calle 20 N9 117. entre la y 34, Miramar.

C iudad de La Ilabana, CUBA

VOICES RISING JANLIARY/FEBRL'ARY 1990

/WWWWW/WW

Ara animal

The Foundation for Study and Research about Women (FEIM) is formed by a group of professional women in different specialties. Since 1984 we have been working in women's training and mobilization in popular sectors in Argentina. We began in 1984 with the Program Women and Development in the Ministry of Health and Welfare. After the government changed in July 1989, we ceased working at the Ministry and concentrated our energies in FEIM and with other NGOs.

Our major experience has been training women as health care facilitators. Between 1985-86 we trained 500 women in Buenos Aires and the provinces of Rio Negro and Neuquen. These were 20-26 year old women who were trained in programs using a participatory methodology. Since 1988 we have been training older women (seniors) in Retiree Centres. We have had six seminars with 330 participants. These women have more concern and possibilities of working in the field than younger women. After the training we do a follow up, focusing on their organization in groups. Twenty per cent of the women trained are working in the field.

Another aspect of our work is the promotion of women's rights and training on this subject. Between 1985-89 we organized 2-day workshops in different parts of the country focusing on women's rights (as workers, in social security, health, family, education and politics) and how to apply them in the daily life.

Maribel Bianca, President

FEIM

Foundation for Women's Studies and Research

Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer.

Vte. Lopez 2602, p. 13 -

(1425) - Buenos Aires, ARGENTINA

Phone 802-3635

VOICES RISING JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1990

K

Zimbabwe

I enjoyed reading the Rising Voices. The contents are nothing but truth. The Sistrilen case, is what I mentioned on the 26th August at the Zimbabwe Women's Bureau Conference. International donor agencies' policies are very suppressive, as a result so much money has been spent on programs which don't meet our requirements and needs. This is an issue which the Women's Program can really voice out on our behalf. We in Africa need adult literacy and training in technical skills as mentioned in the questionnaire. Literacy and production should go hand in hand. We would like to be involved in The Women's Program as much as possible.

We will be setting up our offices on the 1st October 1989. A program has already been drawn up and we will be working in partnership with Foundation for International Training in Canada. For your infor-

mation it is the only organisation which has had an ear to listen to what we want. We are very excited as our approach will be a departure from what has been going on. Maybe some of the International donor agencies will believe that we mean what we have been talking about that what they want is not what we want.

Well, I think I have said quite a mouthful.

Esinet Mapondera,  
Zimbabwe Women Finance Trust

P.O. Box 8023

Causeway, Harare

ZIMBABWE

Fem

Our best regards from all of us working with women in the Amauta Association. The Amauta Association is a non-profit organization. We have been supporting popular organizations in our district, mainly those in the mining industry, mostly trade unions and the Miners Housewives Committees (Comite de Amas de Casa Mineras), which represent the miners wife or daughters, whose experience in labour struggles is widely known. Our objective is that these organizations work not only on labour issues but that they begin to address those issues related to women's problems and women's education. Thus we are working in training and advising these organizations to allow them to broaden their space of action. Our main work is to train facilitators in health care and law. We will be sending you an article on our experience.

Rubi Paredes D.

AMAUTA

C .C. Independencia

Esq. Av. Independencia - Calle Paucarpata

Block D Of. 433

Arequipa, PERU

1401 171 '

133;? Arum , '1

That lat rid

Thank you for your letter and a copy of Voices Rising. We are glad about the work the ICAE (Women's Program) is doing. We found the Voices Rising bulletin to have valuable experience taken from all corners of the world.

Our organization just have 10 years old on 16 May 1989. At present we have 1600 active members from a total company head count of 2000, about 90 percent of members are female. Therefore Adult Education Programme must be necessary for our members.

We would also like to share information and gain experience from other women's groups around the world. 1>Welcome to Thailand 2 for the World Assembly of Adult Educators in January, 1990.

In Solidarity,

Prapapan J umnakros

Signetics Workers Union

303 Chalongwatana Road

Bangkheng, Bangkok 10210

THAILAND

WWWWWWW

Philippines

Thank you very much for sending us a complimentttry copy of the Womchs Kit (sec Resources Section) Lllltl Networking Bulletin of the Womcnls Program) (l'omat Ritintz).

Your WMHICIYN Kit is very intercsttng until simple, so it is wry ttppropritttc roller-cncc cspccittlly lior peasants levcl. It will be llClp to tts in our curriculum tlcvclopntt'nt lior womcnls group hcr in Bicol. llcr in Bicol, we are also working with Antihan, u pcasant womcn'sorgunization working Wllll Gabriela National; though this organization is still in the fomizttive stttgtt. In a country like the Philippines wht'n utilitarian intcnsil'icst it is strongly lcclt in tlcc countqsidc. And it is the pottsttnt NCL'IOT who is greatly allotted, ospccittlly thcir organi/ation. WC welcome why much wc could sustained our linkage and informttv tton sharing. Since you are working with women sector, your cxpcricnccx matcrizils, shztrcd information will update and help us much in our deeper understanding with the women issue and thts will help us in our training workshop with the women sector.

%

Lorna Gt Santiago

Philippine Educational 'I'hmlcr Anonid-lion

PO. Box I63

chaxpi City

PHILIPPINES

ul wasn't talking . . . I was networking."

vidual practitioners using popular education. Now we want to take the next step and begin to implement it. Our plan is to organize- the database by geographical region and by areas  
A Network Database

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Many thanks to all the women who answered the ttActivating the Network" questionnaire, sent out with the last issue. The response was far greater than we expected! We appreciate everyone who took the time to let us know their thoughts, both supportive and critical. We will be using this information to strengthen Voices Rising and also to begin new initiatives to support women educators in their work.

For those of you who dtdnlt fill in and send back the questionnaire, itts not too late. We want to hcztr from everybody. Don't let the limitations of the questionnaire stop you. Any comments. questions or criticisms will be. useful.

Everyone who wrote back was excited about the potential international database of women's groups and indiof intcreSt (popular health, literacy, workers education, indigenous, etc). We are still working out details, so it is an ideal stage for you to have inpuL WOutd you fmd Such a database useful? If so, do you have suggestions? Would you like to be included in the databasa? How can we collaborate with already existing regional and international services? We will be linking the llpractitioners databasell with the bibliographical data base being developed by the Gender and Popular Education international comparative research project (see insert).

For information about the database write to Shannonbrooke Murphy at the Womenls ngram Toronto offtce.

VOICES RISING JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1990



Women and

Literacy

Canadian Woman Studies/Les

cahiers de la femme, Fall/Winter

1988 (Volume 9, Numbers 3&4).

Review by Kate Nonesuch and Evelyn

Battell, literacy instructors, Malaspina

College, Duncan, 8.0.

We like this issue on Women and Literacy.

It contains some 40 articles on the subject, plus reviews of films and books, and a short section of fiction and poetry.

We like it for many reasons. First, simply because it is a joy to see a discussion of literacy by so many feminists, a series of articles that takes up the differences in men's and women's experiences of

literacy and illiteracy. It is also good to see an issue that analyzes the social and

political causes of women's oppression

and its relationship to women's literacy.

Although many of the articles are

theoretical, all are firmly rooted in the experience of women in Canada. Many

women's stories are told in their own

words: women whose men interfere with

their going to school; women who are

isolated from other women because of

poverty, migration, religion, or socializa-

tion; women who go back to school

against overwhelming odds; women who

find in a literacy class the knowledge and

the power to regain some control of their

jobs, their families and their lives; and the

particular voices of native women, immi-

grant women, Mennonite women and

women of every colour.

We like it because it gives an idea of

VOICES RISING JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1990

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the range of literacy programs that oper-

ate in Canada, with an emphasis on pro-

grams that incorporate literacy learning

with politicization and movements for

social change.

We like it because it takes up the

concerns of Canadian literacy activists.

These concerns are recurring themes in

many of the articles, yet each author ap-

proaches them from a slightly different

point of view. Here we can only give a

brief outline of some of the questions

raised:

What is the matter with the Southam

Report on illiteracy? How does it divide

us from each other? What are the biases

in the report?

Why is literacy such a hot issue

these days in government and business

circles? How can we analyze the effects

these two big players will have on literacy

programming?

What is the matter with literacy

programs that "blame the victim"? Why

do some of our programs offer an individ-

ual solution to a problem that has causes

in our society and our political systems?

Why do we shy away from literacy work

that politicizes? What can we transfer

from literacy campaigns in revolutionary

settings to the Canadian context?

How do we structure programs that answer women's needs in terms of content, scheduling, transportation and daycare? How do we find or create materials that honour their experience? What is meant by "learner-centred" programming? How can a program be learner-centred if learners have little control over the program?

Questions of language, power and class come up again and again. Most literacy learners are working class and most instructors, tutors and programmers are middle class. However, most jobs available to women require a higher degree of literacy than those available to men; and most instructors and many programmers are women working in an area that requires a good education and doesn't pay very well, relatively speaking. These are some of the questions raised in these lively articles. The answers are not always clear, but the discussions are fascinating.

One of the triumphs of *Women and Literacy* is the interplay of ideas and information among the articles by different writers. Read them in any order; come back to them and you will find your reading of a second article has taught you a new way of looking at the first. Another highlight is the excerpts of texts and illustrations from books written by women in literacy classes.

If you are a feminist; if you are a literacy worker; if you are interested in the area where these two viewpoints mesh, read this book.

Available from:  
Canadian Woman Studies,  
212 Founders College  
York University  
4700 Keele Street  
Downsview, Ontario  
M3J 1P3

published by the Participatory Research Group and the ICAE Women's Program

*Women Learners in English as a Second Language* and literacy classes need their lives outside the classroom to be acknowledged and discussed. The material in this kit describes many everyday issues in women's lives and provides relevant and stimulating material so that women can improve their English skills while considering their real problems.

The *Women's Kit* is a series of eight booklets plus an introduction. Each booklet is made up of excerpts from materials written by women about their lives in Latin America, Africa, and England. Our aim is to encourage women to engage in discussion and critical thinking about their lives-as homemakers, paid workers; and mothers.

Booklet titles are: *Women's Days; Childcare; Health; Housework; Finding Paid Work; Working Conditions; Violence in the Home; and Women Working Together.*

Cost: \$40.00 Institutions; \$25. 00 /nd/'vidu-  
a/s; Free to Third Wor/d women's and  
popular education groups.  
Available from: the Women's Program  
394 Euclid Ave, Suite 308  
Toronto, Ontario  
CANADA MEG 289  
37

:

SIBAMBENE: The Voices of  
Women at Mboza

Hanllo Grlosel, text

Ellen Mangele, field assistance

Rosalyn Wilson, photographs, design  
and layout

Raven Press, P.O. Box 31134,  
Braamtonteln, Johannesburg, 2017,  
South Africa.

"Sibambene IS about experiences, and  
about pooled resources and learning. It IS  
a literacy which women at Mboza have  
created that IS of themselves.

S/bambene is a book produced With a  
group of women who have had no formal  
schooling They live In a rural community  
known as Mboza where they have  
recently started to attend literacy classes  
lthrough the text we learn about the  
realtries. the uncertainties. and the hope;  
of three generations of women.

The fact that It IS those who are  
literate who exercise control over texts  
serves to perpetuate the mystique of  
literacy This book IS an exploit attempt to  
challenge that mystique."

Canadian Literacy Materials for Women  
The Canadian Congress for Learning  
Opportunities for Women (CCLOW) is  
currently working on a project to develop  
an annotated directory of Canadian  
literacy materials for women The goal is  
to identify and collect high quality Canae  
dldn literacy materials that respond to and  
reflect the varied aspirations. Interests and  
learning needs of Canadran women  
literacy students.

When we first began this project, we  
were uncertain what we would find. We  
were aware, from an earlier CCLOW  
study. that there were very few Canadian  
literacy materials for women, but we also  
knew that some exciting new publishing  
efforts had been initiated. including some  
student writing and publishing We wanted  
to explore these and other potential  
sources of relevant materials. As a first  
step, we sent out a questionnaire to  
women's groups, literacy groups and  
others involved in women's literacy

38

education throughout Canada, The re-  
sponse has been overwhelmingly positive.  
With most respondents indicating support  
for the project Although many do not have  
materials to recommend. most indicate  
that they urgently need women's literacy  
materials for their programs.

A volunteer working group of women  
literacy practitioners and women experi-  
enced with literacy materials IS giving lead-  
ership to the project. This group has set up  
criteria to determine which materials Will be  
included in the directory, developed  
guidelines for selecting and assessing adult  
literacy materials for women in Canada,  
designed a book review format and set up  
a book review process that encourages the  
participation of women practitioners and  
learners. Book reviews are being written

locally In at least three different regions of  
the country-by individuals. by student/tutor  
pairs and by small groups, Whenever  
possible, literacy practitioners and literacy  
RING DING IN A TIGHT  
CORNER: Funding and  
Organizational Democracy in  
Sistren 1977-1988  
by Honor Ford-Smith

The Jamaican women's popular theatre  
group SISTREN has been internationally  
acclaimed both for its performances and  
as a successful example of grassroots  
women's organization. But SISTREN (and  
feminist organizations elsewhere) have  
not managed to contribute significantly to  
the transformation of gender relations in  
society.

In Ring Ding in a Tight Corner, Honor  
FordeSmith, former artistic director of  
SISTREN, sets out to analyze the  
limitations of SISTREN'S social impact. In  
her account of the group's historical and  
organizational development, she explores  
the way international agencies' funding  
policies exacerbated the internal contra-  
dictions of the collective structure; the  
complex ways the social relations of class,  
race and political allegiance affected  
democratic organization and manage-  
ment; and the external and internal  
conditions which limited the groups ability  
to respond to the needs of its members  
and constituency of Jamaican women.

Available from: The Women's Program.  
394 Euclid Ave, Suite 308, Toronto.  
Ontario, CANADA M5G 2B9

tutors are providing an opportunity for  
women literacy students to be involved in  
this book review process. The resulting  
directory will be a collection of reviews  
reflective of the various experiences and  
opinions of women in different parts of  
the country We look forward to receiving  
these reviews and to compiling the direc-  
tory early in 1990.

A copy of the directory will be  
distributed free of charge to all those who  
sent in information to the project and on a  
cost-recovery basis to others. For infor-  
mation or a copy of the directory. contact:  
The Literacy Materials for Women Project  
CCLOW

47 Main Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
Canada. M4E 3V6  
Telephone (416) 699-1909

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Funding Development: A  
Case Study From the Adult  
Literacy Organization of  
Zimbabwe  
by Shirley Ross  
Intermedia/NCCCC, New York, N.Y.,  
1987, 65pp.

This insightful and practical case study examines the funding experiences of the Adult Literacy Organization of Zimbabwe (ALoz) from 1978 to 1985. It was written, to respond to the dearth of material available on fundraising, from the perspective of Third World groups. The study includes an overview of the organizational and financial histories of ALoz, reflections from the experiences of an ALoz Program Officer as well as general descriptions and examples of funding development techniques, placed in the context of overall project development, from needs assessment to implementation and evaluation.

Available from: Intermedia, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y., 10115, USA

Buang Basadi, Khulumani

Makhosikazi, Women Speak:

Conference on Women and

Writing

Congress of South African Writers

Transvaal Region, 1988, 62pp.

This conference organized by the Transvaal region of the Congress of South African Writers in November 1988 offered women writers and cultural workers a forum to reflect on their role in the context of the national struggle for liberation. Special emphasis was placed on examining the position and experiences of women as writers in South Africa, and the portrayal of women in South African literature. The publication includes papers and poems presented at the conference along with excerpts of the discussions. It provides stimulating and informative insights into women's participation in literature and in the cultural and political life of South Africa generally.

Available from: English Literacy Project,  
314 Dunwell House, 35 Jorissen Street,  
Braamfontein 2017, Johannesburg, South Africa

VOICES RISING JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1990

Convergence, Special Issue

on Women and Non-Formal

Adult Education, Vol.11, No.4,

1 1988

International Council for Adult Education, 96pp.

The articles contained in this special issue focus on problems, trends and issues related to non-formal education and training programs for women in several countries and regions including Pakistan, Uganda, Canada, West Africa and Europe. The introductory article by Nelly P4 Stromquist provides an overview of the development of non-formal education for women, and the sometimes negative impact programs have had on women. Stromquist explores the question of what

kinds of non-formal education are needed by women, namely, those which empower women to understand their situation and undertake efforts to improve it.  
Cost: Single copies: US\$6, Subscriptions: \$21 yearly for Africa, Asia, Latin America, \$25 yearly elsewhere.

Available from: ICAE, 720 Bathurst Street, Suite 500, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M58 2R4,

Economic Literacy

Excerpted From Newsletter 42, "Making Connections: Economics and Women's Lives," June 1989 Of The Tribune: A Women and Development Quarterly.

Our lives are affected by the debt crisis, inflation, devaluations, and all of the economic crises that we hear about. But these issues are not the problem. They are symptoms or results of a larger economic system.

If we are going to work to make economic systems more responsive to people's needs, maybe we need to become economically literate?

Economic Literacy is...

- ' Understanding how the economy works and its relationship to our daily lives.

- " Understanding that the economy is not a neutral thing, nor is it beyond our control.

- " Understanding the connection between economic power and political power.

- ' Understanding how changes in the economy have different impacts on women and men. The debt crisis, inflation, devaluations and all economic policies need to be explored from a women's perspective.

- ' Understanding how women's work in the family and in the household is an integral part of the economy and must be given economic value.

- t Taking into consideration the sexual division of labour in the family, the household and the workforce.

You do not need to be an economist to educate yourself about economics and then organize training and educational sessions, public meetings and other initiatives to spread understanding of economic issues to thousands of women. In Making Connections: Economics and Women's Lives," specific training activities that you might want to use are suggested for building economic literacy.

For this issue and a listing of materials write to:

International Women's Tribune Centre,  
777 United Nations Plaza, New York, N Y 10017, USA.

Most IWTC publications are free to people from the Third World.

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#### V4 Resources

##### TRAINING FOR EMPOWERMENT

This kit is very powerful for us. The sharing of both methodologies and contexts is what makes it so significant. It is also an important tool for building South-South consciousness and the vital links we need between educators in Africa and Latin America. Shirley Walters, Centre of Continuing and Adult Education, University of the Western Cape, South Africa

The South-South exchange that took four Mozambican literacy workers to spend four months learning with popular educators in Nicaragua and Brazil had an important impact on literacy work in Mozambique. The four went back to work in a pilot centre for training literacy workers where their new insights and energies injected Vitality and creativity to literacy staff training.

Another outcome of the trip IS a kit of materials for training trainers called "Training for Empowerment." It offers a hands-on introduction to popular education through the eyes of the educators from Mozambique. It contains a User's Guide which emphasizes that it is not a training programme ready-made but a set of suggestions, to be adapted creatively to the user's context. There are 3 Background Papers, one reflecting on South-South exchanges as an approach to staff training, a second containing a message from Latin American popular educators to their African counterparts, and the third giving a brief overview of education in Mozambique.

The heart of the kit is made up of worksheets describing 9 Activities and Tools encountered in literacy work in Latin America. The nine worksheets each include a vignette of the Nicaraguan or Brazilian group meeting the activity, locating the activity firmly in its own context. There is some indication of the theoretical significance of the activity and detailed descriptions of how to use and

##### LITERACY FROM THE INSIDE OUT

By Rachel Martin

A record of one teacher's progress toward making her classroom practice align with her goals. Thoughts on what's working, what isn't, and the questions that remain. which together provide a curriculum development tool for other literacy workers immersed in the same process.

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USA

adapt these tools and activities for the user's Situation.

The final section of contains resources. These include written resources on both the theory and practice of popular



education and a description of the popular education groups that the educators from Mozambique met in Nicaragua and Brazil. The kit will also be of real interest to those training frontline workers in the field of co-operative, community and labour education.

The kit is being published by the National Directorate of Adult Education in Mozambique and the International Council for Adult Education. It is available in English, Portuguese and French

Available from: International Council for Adult Education

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