

**HANDBOOK**

**Non-formal Adult  
Education Facilitators**



**MODULE ONE**

**Community  
Mobilization**



## Overview

When we start working as a facilitator of a non-formal education programme, what is the first thing we do? What did you do when you first came to your learning centre?

To start a non-formal education programme, we must know something about the community and its people in order to obtain their support of our activities. If our centre is not a part of the community, then it will be very difficult for us to run the programme successfully. The community is the most important entry point for us to start our work.

In this module, we learn what the community is and what possibilities we can find there.

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Before going to these sections, we start with a story of two different villages that introduces us to the real situation we may face in our work.

## The Story of Two Villages

*My name is Chai. I work in the district literacy office. With great anticipation and enthusiasm, I reached the village of Koka. I saw children grazing the buffaloes and some men sitting under a tree smoking. I greeted them and asked, 'I am looking for the literacy centre. Can you tell me where it is?'*

*They looked at each other blankly.*

*After asking many other people, I finally met the literacy instructor, Siti. She was quite surprised to find me in her village. "Sir, why did you come so far? I would have come to your office. You only had to ask. Please, come and have a cup of tea."*

*I thanked her but told her that I wanted to see the literacy centre and talk to some of the learners. Strangely, I felt that she did not like this idea.*

*"Learners? Oh, at this time, where will I find the learners? They come to the centre only at night and of course you cannot stay till then."*

*"Well," I replied, "let us go and look at the literacy centre then." Upon my insistence, we moved towards the centre. When we got there, it looked unswept and dirty. Siti opened the door. It was dark inside. I saw bundles of literacy books stacked in the room. The walls were bare.*

*I quickly stepped out, shocked at the state of things. Siti rushed up to me. "Sir, sir, I have to run this centre under very difficult circumstances. I have to go from house to house and beg them but still the learners don't come. But don't worry, sir, they have promised me that they will start coming next month."*

*I began walking back. What had gone wrong? Why were the village people so disinterested in the literacy programme? Why didn't they know what Siti was doing? Why weren't the learners coming to class?*

*I reached home with all these questions in my mind.*

*After a few days I visited another village, Nan. I remembered Koka and worried about what the state of literacy would be like at Nan. When I reached Nan, the scene was like any other village. The children were playing. But hey, what was this? A group of men and women were cleaning the area around the well. I went up to them and said, "I am looking for the literacy centre. Can you direct me to it?"*

*"Oh! Our centre! Yes! Yes! Look, there it is across the road. But who are you looking for? We are all learners at the centre."*

*“Well! I am looking for all of you and for your facilitator. Where is he? And what are you doing?”*

*“Our facilitator has gone to the town to invite a doctor from the district hospital to come to our village and give a talk. Lately there have been a lot of cases of diarrhoea here. In our literacy class we decided to clean this area.”*

*I walked to the literacy centre. The building looked like the one in Koka, yet it was different. Inside the room, a class was in progress. I asked my companion. “If the facilitator isn’t here in the village, who is this teaching? Who are these learners?” My companion replied, “These are learners who are in the second class. The person teaching them also lives in the village. There are many other volunteers who help to run the centre. So you see we have many ‘teachers’.”*

*In the meantime, the facilitator, Mohan, arrived. He was happy to see me and to know that I had come to see the centre. He asked me to meet the learners and proudly showed me the work they had done. He then asked me to stay for the village education committee meeting, which was due to take place later in the day.*



*I decided to stay. During the meeting they discussed how to find the resources to build a bigger community learning centre. Where and how would they sell the products made in the literacy centre? The village community had also donated two bookshelves to store the books of the learners. As I walked out of the village, I was filled with new hope and happiness.*

*Having read the story of two villages, how do you feel? Which of the villages in the story is your village like? Is it like Koka or is it like Nan?*



## Section 1 : What is a community?

*Today is a special day in Chai's village. All the people have gathered together to celebrate the first day of the harvest. They have organized a common lunch and cultural programme. Today they will sing*

*traditional songs and dance together. Each year everybody attends without fail. It gives them a chance to meet at a common place to discuss common issues and find solutions.*

Like Chai, we all live in a community. There are different things that bind us together. Let us try to identify some of these.

For example, some of the common factors that bind us to our communities, or that we may have in common with the other people living around us, include:

- beliefs and values
- language
- territory
- religion
- culture
- occupations

Can you think of other things we may have in common with our neighbours?



### Exercise: Let us write about our community.

- Name of our village \_\_\_\_\_
- Language we speak \_\_\_\_\_
- Festivals we celebrate \_\_\_\_\_
- Religions \_\_\_\_\_
- Beliefs and values \_\_\_\_\_
- Villages surrounding our area \_\_\_\_\_
- Occupations \_\_\_\_\_
- Issues \_\_\_\_\_
- Resources \_\_\_\_\_

## What roles can the community play?

As you know, our most valuable resource in the community is our own people. They can make decisions about the development of the village. Cooperation among community people is important to develop the community's self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

The community has an important role to identify and use available resources in the village, and to plan and act accordingly. Where there is a mechanism of local self-government, important decisions are usually made at the local level by the local people themselves.



### Activity

What are the main roles our community can play?

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## Section 2 : Why is community mobilization necessary?



In the story of Nan, we observed how the people were cleaning the area around the well. They made that decision themselves. The people of the village were helping each other. Also, if parents did not have time to read to their children, then a village elder was willing to do so. Similarly, it is common to see people working on each other's fields, helping to plough and harvest. A strong community feeling is also evident at times of crisis and change for families, such as marriage and death.

Proper management of resources is the best possible way for the development of the community. We call this "community mobilization," where people plan and do things. They take charge, transforming their community and their lives.

Community mobilization allows people in the community to:

- identify needs and promote community interests.
- promote good leadership and democratic decision making.
- identify specific groups for undertaking specific problems.
- identify all the available resources in the community.
- plan the best use of the available resources.
- enable the community to better govern itself.



## Exercise

What are some of the different reasons for mobilizing our community?

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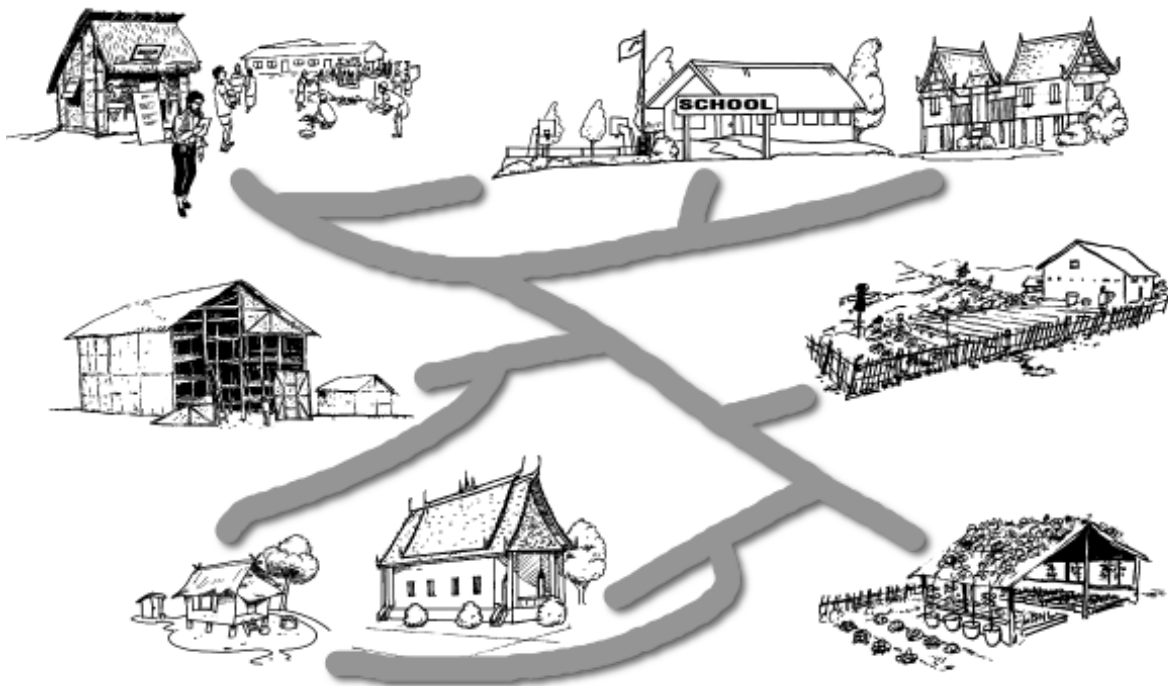
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## Section 3 : How can we identify and mobilize local resources?



*I am a facilitator working in the literacy programme in Patua village. It has a school that provides education for learners up to class seven. The big problem here is the high dropout and illiteracy rate. After receiving training in community mobilization, I thought, "Can I get the community to tackle this problem? Are there any resources available in my community to do this?"*

*The first thing I tried was to get complete information about my village. With the help of village people, we drew a map of the whole village on the ground and identified different houses, institutions, religious places,*

*wells, ponds and other sites. We used different colours, stones, leaves and other materials to identify these places.*

*We also used this map for finding out the educational status of the village. How many people live in one house? How many children live in each house and how many are going to school? How many adults are illiterate? What are the occupations of the family members and what is their income? We also identified the local skills available.*

*This gave us a lot of information about the village and its available resources.*

## What might we find on the map of Patua?

There may be:

- the number of houses and the location of each house in the village
- the number of people in each household
- the number of children (male and female) going to school and the number of children not going to school for each house
- the number of literate and illiterate adults (male and female)
- the occupations and income of each family
- the skills available in each family
- the infrastructure of the village, e.g., preschool centre, school, community centre, place of worship, youth club, shops, health centre, roads
- bodies of water, such as wells, ponds or rivers
- crops and seasons for sowing and harvesting



**Exercise: Look at the map and story of Patua.  
Let us try to do the same activity for our village.  
Remember, the questions to answer are:**

1. What do we want to identify in our village?

- Number of illiterates
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

2. Who will help us make a village map?

- Schoolteacher
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Having completed the village map, we can sit together with community members and discuss the issues involved. This discussion will help us identify and better understand the issues and resources available in the community.

This process of developing the village map is called '**micro planning**'. Besides '**village mapping**', we can use other ways to get information about the village. For example, we can use:

- surveys
- participatory needs identification
- focus group discussion
- interviews
- house-to-house visits
- secondary data (newsletters, reports, etc.)
- observation

Details of these methods are discussed in Module 2.

### **How can we plan from the information obtained?**

With the information obtained, we can then plan, mobilize resources and assign responsibilities for each task. In this way, we can find appropriate solutions to the problems. For example, if the village has a problem with adult illiteracy, the following actions could be taken:

- forming a village education committee
- establishing a literacy centre after identifying a location
- identifying local persons who can help in different activities at the centre
- motivating village people make contributions in money and kind to repair the literacy centre building
- conducting various activities to encourage adult learners to come to the centre
- collecting used writing boards for learners

## Who can help us mobilize the community?

For community mobilization, we can look for support for our literacy programme in many places, including:

- individuals
- voluntary groups
- local government
- business groups
- school groups
- religious groups
- political parties

**Community Support**



### Activity

We can identify the resources available in our village.

For example, what are our:

human resources \_\_\_\_\_

financial resources \_\_\_\_\_

infrastructure \_\_\_\_\_

materials \_\_\_\_\_

other \_\_\_\_\_



## Section 4 : How can we involve the community in the literacy programme?

*Go to people  
 Love with them  
 Live with them  
 Learn with them  
 Link your knowledge with theirs  
 Start with what they have  
 When you finish your job  
 The people will say  
 We did it all by ourselves*

(A proverb adapted from the words of Lao Tsu, China)

Learners are central to our literacy programmes. If learners do not come to the classes, then the programme cannot be successful. The role of the community in ensuring that learners come to the classes is very important. A favourable environment can help in achieving this objective.

Let us look at some of the things done by different facilitators in different places. Perhaps you can add some of your ideas as well.

### **Promoting awareness**

*In order to make people aware of the literacy programmes in Budi village, a Literacy Festival was organized. Facilitators and potential learners from all over the district attended. They played games such as mental mathematics and quiz competitions based on local knowledge. There were also tug-of-war games played between villages as well as displays of local handicrafts. This festival encouraged people to enroll in the literacy centre's programmes.*

***In another village:*** *It was 12 October 1999, World Six Billion Day. The world's population had just reached six billion. The village facilitator used this occasion to organize the local artists to perform street plays and puppet shows. These performances created awareness about different population issues. A procession went through the village with posters and banners. Schoolchildren brought their parents to the village square. The close linkage between literacy and population was discussed. Finally, everyone took an oath to make each family in the village literate.*





### Activity

Keeping the available resources of our village in mind, what possible activities could we plan to ensure that adult learners come to the literacy centre?

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## Section 5 : How can we establish effective linkages with other development programmes?



*Mila was a learner in our centre, making steady progress. But her family was very poor. Mila asked me, the facilitator of the centre, whether the literacy programme could help her end poverty. Mila's problem became an issue for discussion in the centre.*

*I visited several government departments and found out the government schemes for loans and training for people like Mila. She started to learn how to cut and polish cubic zirconia (American diamonds), which are used for jewellery.*

*Together we went to the local bank and applied for a loan. Eventually, Mila was the proud owner of a gem-cutting machine. Mila received training for using the machine from the government department and became quite competent at her work. She began selling the gems earning up to Rs.1,500 per month.*

*Seeing Mila, other learners also decided to approach the government departments. This helped me not only to keep the literacy centre running but also helped the learners to improve their financial status.*

*In our literacy class, we discussed the range of available assistance that the government departments offered, and the learners took up different trades.*

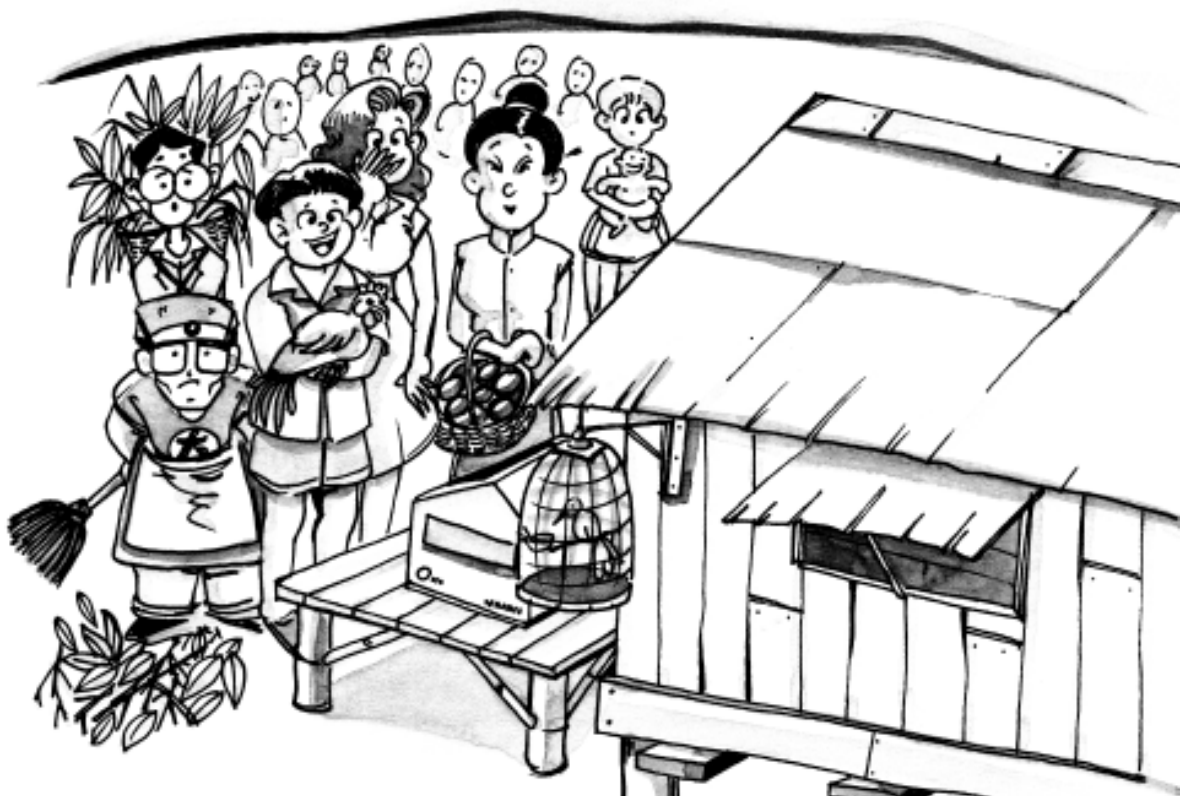
*With the help of the government, the coming together of people at the literacy centre gave them an opportunity to plan for the whole village.*



## What did we learn?

As we have seen in the story above, learners come to the literacy centre for different reasons. We can ask these questions:

- Is literacy learning alone sufficient to attract all learners?
- Are learners looking for economic benefits?
- Does the literacy centre help a learner to develop new skills while strengthening existing skills?
- Does the literacy centre give them a chance to find out about the existing policies and schemes of the government and other non-governmental organizations?
- Are literacy centres a platform for the learners to express the needs of their village?
- Does literacy come first and then development follows, or does development come first and literacy follows? Or can both situations occur at the same time?



## What can facilitators do?

Some of the activities we, as facilitators, can carry out include:

- inviting the local development officials to the literacy centre for discussions
- collecting and distributing information/materials about different development schemes that are suitable for the newly literate
- responding to villagers who want help with projects they are undertaking
- helping the newly literate to fill in forms and accompanying them when they go to development departments/agencies
- organizing events for community involvement (such as those given in Section 4) with officials of development departments
- organizing field visits to model centres of different development departments and agencies
- sending learners for skill training conducted by different development departments and agencies
- organizing camps and campaigns for community development
- enrolling learners in youth clubs, social organizations or cooperatives

As a facilitator, we can inform and guide the learners and other members of the community. Our role is that of a link between the community and other development programmes. The literacy centre needs to be the place in the village where learners come to find answers to development issues.

This is why facilitators have to know about the different development programmes in the community, such as those in public health, irrigation, agriculture, banking and loans, small-scale industry and women's empowerment. Our knowledge of these will not only help individual learners but will help the whole village. Thus, we can become the window through which our learners can get information. So it is important that we have a good network of contacts.



## Activity

The village of Dudu is located in a remote area. One of the major problems faced by the villagers is that there is no road. As a facilitator, how would you plan to help the learners to construct a road?

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As a facilitator, there are different options that we can adopt:

1. Organizing the community into a work force that will build the road.
2. Contacting the department concerned.
3. Raising funds for construction.
4. Any other options?

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## Section 6 : How can we make the learning centre more interesting?



In addition to activities for learners in the learning centre, we can organize some interesting activities involving the community members. These could be planned with our learners, the local government office or the development extension office. Here are some examples:

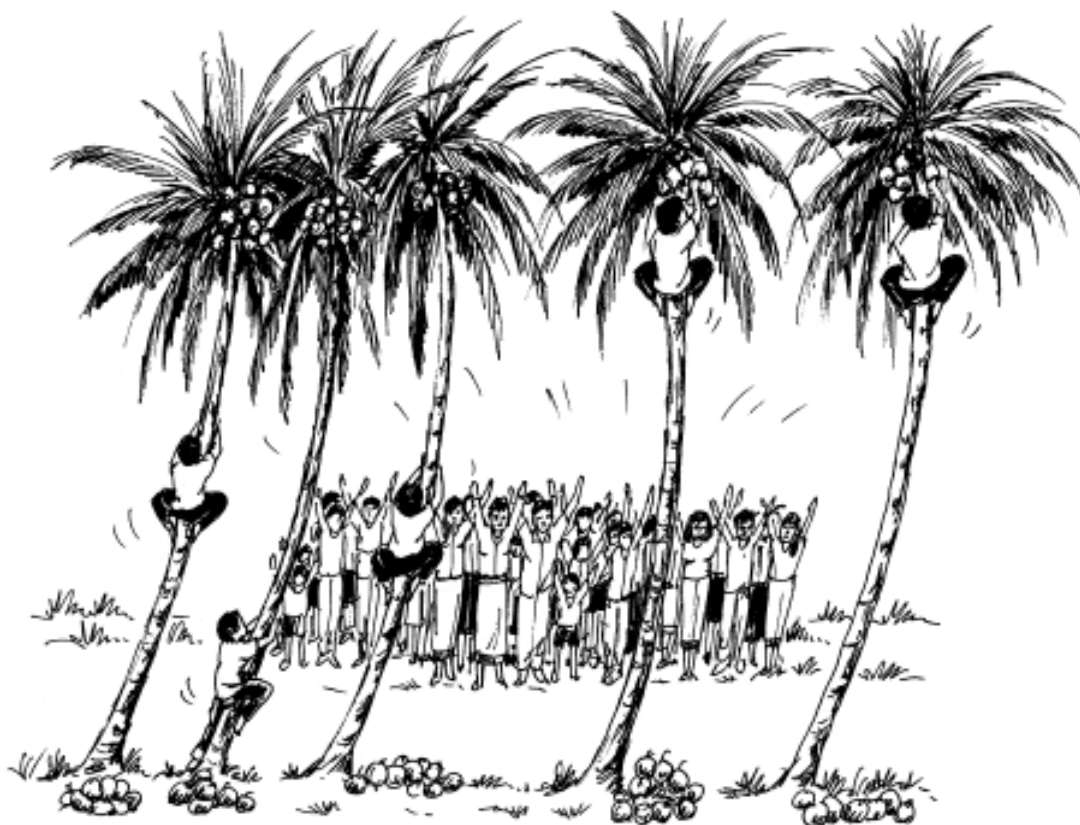
**Reading promotion:** A facilitator organized a “read aloud” session for a group of neo-literate people in the village. First, she organized motivational folk songs and plays. Then, some of the educated people of the village brought their own books to read to the group. The facilitator placed a box in the centre and asked people to donate books for the neo-literate library. Soon the box was full. Many of the educated youth of the village volunteered to read aloud to the learners in their spare time. One of the old ladies of the village who could not read said that she would recite poems and tell stories to the children while their mothers studied at the centre.

**Health care and local wisdom:** The women of a village decided to work on health care. They went to the literacy centre to ask for help, and the facilitator helped them gather and make use of their traditional knowledge of herbal medicine. Now they have been accepted as healers in their village as well as in neighbouring villages.

**A baby check-up camp** was organized by the literacy centre. A doctor was invited to check each baby's general state of health. Such an activity was received with great enthusiasm by the parents. Literacy facilitators used the occasion to encourage parents to learn more about the importance of education and health care.

**Tribal girls' education programme:** A number of tribal girls who had dropped out of school for various reasons were motivated to continue their education at the literacy centre. They went to the centre and asked the facilitator to help them learn. In order to facilitate their learning, a special curriculum was developed, which enabled these girls to join a regular school and study with other girls of their own age.

**Physical activity:** One literacy centre in the Philippines had a competition for adult male learners. They had to **climb coconut trees** and tear the husks off the coconuts as quickly as they could. One man husked fifty coconuts in thirty minutes! This physical activity unrelated to literacy nevertheless played an important role in keeping the centre active.



## **What did we learn?**

The examples above indicate the importance of the facilitator having close links with the community, community leaders and agencies. They also show the benefits of having the whole community involved and supporting the centre.

What interesting activities can your learning centres organize to mobilize the community for action?

## **How can we make our learning centre attractive?**

Besides reading and writing, an important aspect of the learning centre is to give learners an opportunity to meet, share experiences and learn from each other.

The learning centre is also a place for many activities:

- lectures / demonstration sessions / training
- sports and games
- cultural activities
- equivalency programmes
- skill development and income generating programmes
- providing information (for example, market prices for agricultural products)
- individual interest programmes
- programmes for improving the quality of life
- book exhibitions and exchanges
- spiritual activities such as meditation
- services for the entire community
- early childhood care

We can also organize different kinds of entertainment at the literacy centre. These could include some of the following:

- dances
- folk arts
- folk songs
- puppet shows
- plays
- music shows
- festival or fair



## Activity

What activities can we think of to encourage community members to come to our literacy centre?

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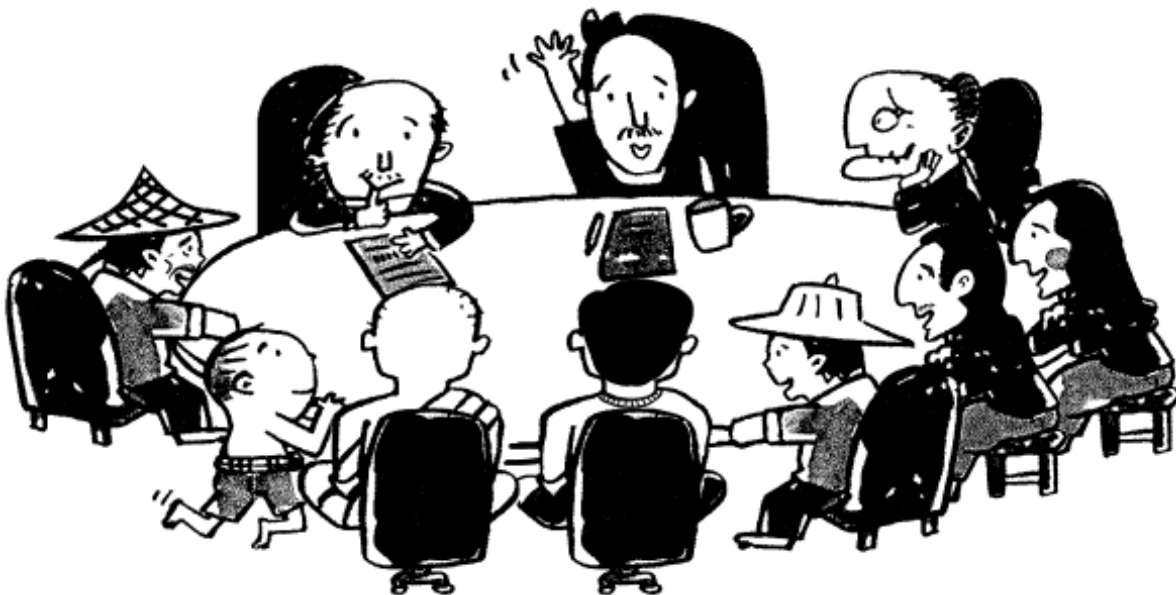
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## Section 7 : How can we involve local representatives and policy makers?

### What is the Village Education Committee?



In a village, the body that can be most representative of the whole village is the Village Education Committee (VEC). Such a committee can be made up of:

- elected members of different local bodies
- village head
- representatives of different communities in the village
- representatives of learners (women and men)
- village schoolteachers or preschool teachers
- learning centre facilitator
- village policy makers
- religious leaders

The committee can include 7-15 persons.



This committee can take up some of the following questions:

- Which groups in the village are being neglected with regard to education?
- Which activities can the committee undertake to improve the literacy centre?
- What can the committee do to encourage parents to send their children to school?
- When should the learning centre be open?
- How can the committee help in monitoring the operations of the literacy centre including the behaviour of the facilitator and the learners?

### Can we involve other members of the community?

*The barbers in an Indian community declared at a literacy meeting that they would not cut the hair of those adult learners who did not attend literacy classes regularly. At the same time, the flour mill owner, who was the **local elected representative**, declared he would not grind the grain of adult learners who did not regularly attend literacy classes.*

*The **village head** made his jeep available for visits organized by the centre to a library in town.*

*If any public representative came to meet the **Collector (District Administrative Head)** to discuss any problem in the village, the Collector would first ask about literacy in the village. He did not treat literacy as something separate or distinct from the development process and the needs of the people. The district administration took immediate steps to respond to the grievances voiced at the literacy centre. Even those who did not believe in literacy began to participate.*



Here are some other ways that the people's representatives can contribute to literacy programmes:

- They can help in the public awareness activities of the village.
- During their public addresses and meetings, the elected representatives can encourage the people to enroll in literacy classes.
- The people's representatives often have many resources available to use. These can be made available for literacy during village planning meetings.
- The elected representatives can serve as a pressure group to convince government officials to work for literacy and development programmes in the village. They can present problems and issues concerning the village at a higher level.
- Religious leaders can encourage people to donate or to take up voluntary work such as teaching or organizing cultural events as a part of their social service for literacy. At prayer meetings, the religious leaders can tell parents that it is their duty to educate themselves and their children.
- Often there is a shortage of space for holding training programmes for the learners. Facilities at hostels, schools and places of worship, for example, can be used for these programmes. Sometimes these institutions may be able to provide meals for the trainees on a voluntary basis.





## Activity

I suggest that the education committee in my village be made up of the following members:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_
13. \_\_\_\_\_
14. \_\_\_\_\_
15. \_\_\_\_\_



## Section 8 : How can we encourage marginalized groups to participate in literacy activities?



### **Women's empowerment**

*Thirty-seven-year-old Mila belongs to a conservative family. She is often seen wearing her white veil over her sari and cycling to her literacy class or to the gem-cutting centre. During the literacy classes, her facilitator encouraged her to learn how to ride a bicycle. Such freedom of movement was something she learnt about only in her literacy class.*

*In the literacy programmes in Patua, a group of women meet regularly. They pool some money per person*

*every week and make loans to each other. They also read a newsletter and other literacy materials, and discuss issues amongst themselves. Regular attendance in the literacy programmes is a must before anyone can be eligible for a loan. The learners keep track of each transaction. This common, shared need has tied literacy to the requirement of getting a loan. This activity has freed the women from being victims of the exploitative credit market.*

## ***Towards equal opportunities***

***An indigenous small fishing community*** is involved in a literacy programme. One of its activities is the preservation of mangroves in order to maintain the environmental balance in the area.

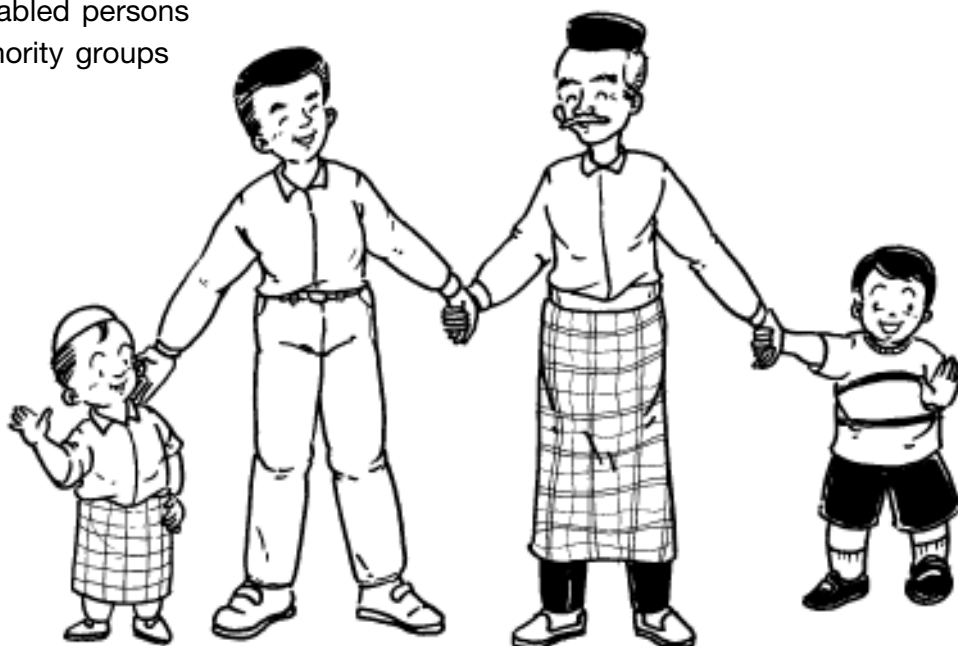
*A community located in central Thailand has a high literacy rate. However, most people with disabilities in the area have never attended formal school or literacy classes.*

*Following recent government policy, a local community learning centre started two kinds of programmes for **people with disabilities**. One is a vocational training programme in handicraft skills for those who can attend the centre and the other is a literacy programme for severely disabled persons who cannot attend. In the latter case, learning groups are set up with a facilitator visiting for 2 hours each day to provide assistance.*

## **Identification of marginalized groups**

In every community there are some groups that have been left out of the development process for one reason or the other. These groups have, over the years, been socially, economically and politically sidelined. These groups need special attention so they can be brought into mainstream society again. Some of these groups are:

- women
- economically deprived groups
- tribal/indigenous people
- disabled persons
- minority groups



## Why is literacy so important for marginalized groups?

The marginalized groups are often left out, not only of the educational process but of most development programmes in general. Adult illiteracy and the percentage of children not attending school are high in these groups. As a result, many of them have not been able to receive knowledge from the education system. In addition, this exclusion may also have deprived these groups of their independence, opportunities for informed decision making, and the capacity for self-reliance and social interaction.

Another problem is that such marginalized groups are often unable to find an appropriate platform to address their problems. The literacy programmes and the learning centre have given them the opportunity to come together. They are now able to use their collective strength to solve problems. Many women have formed groups to set up credit and thrift societies. Many communities have learnt new skills and have been able to increase their income. Coming together has enabled these groups to fight social and economic exploitation.



## Planning literacy programmes for marginalized groups

When dealing with these groups, here are some considerations that might prove helpful.

- As much as possible, include these groups in the existing centre instead of setting up a “special” place that usually takes time and money.
- Plan programmes according to the existing knowledge, experience, skills and interests of the learners.
- Identify programme activities that take into account each person’s individual uniqueness and build upon their strengths.
- Make sure that the programmes provide space and time for learners to reflect upon the issues concerning them.
- Organize programmes that go beyond simple literacy and contribute to improving the lives of the people.



### Activity

In your village, who are the main marginalized groups? Please list them.

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What special programmes can be planned for marginalized groups in the village?

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## **Concluding Remarks**

In this module, we have seen a variety of approaches for working with a community.

Community mobilization is not just for starting up a literacy programme. A successful programme needs continuous efforts to know more about the community and how we can effectively use its available resources for active and interesting learning activities at the centre.

While obtaining support from the community, we can explore cooperation with other development agencies. Being a member of the community, we may overlook its potential. So let us look around our community once again. The resources are there. Mobilize them for the good of the community.